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Conservative Radicals: The *Einwohnerwehr, Bund Bayern und Reich*, and the Limits of Paramilitary Politics in Bavaria, 1918-1928

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Conservative Radicals: The *Einwohnerwehr*, *Bund Bayern und Reich*, and the Limits of
Paramilitary Politics in Bavaria, 1918-1928

By

Roy G. Koepp

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Conservative Radicals: The *Einwohnerwehr*, *Bund Bayern und Reich*, and the Limits of
Paramilitary Politics in Bavaria, 1918-1928

Roy George Koepp, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Advisor: Alan E. Steinweis

In the years after the First World War numerous paramilitary organizations were set up in Bavaria with the expressed purpose of preventing a communist revolution in the state. Encouraged by Germany's and Bavaria's Social Democratic leaders, military officers and men of means formed *Freikorps* units to overturn the Spartacist revolt in Berlin in January 1919 and the *Räterepublik* in Munich in April 1919. After the specter of revolution receded these groups did not disband but reorganized themselves as paramilitary leagues. In Bavaria the most significant of these early organizations was the Civil Defense Guards, or *Einwohnerwehr*, which was succeeded after 1921 by *Bund Bayern und Reich*. In the years that followed both groups worked assiduously to impose their ideological imprint on Bavaria, but failed in the main. However, through their efforts they set patterns and helped propagate ideas that would later be taken up by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party.

This dissertation looks at the creation, growth, ideology, and activities of these two paramilitary associations from 1918 to 1928. Using archival sources from the Bavarian State Archives and the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, it argues that both groups subscribed to the culturally despairing *völkisch* nationalism that had been prevalent in Germany prior to World War I. These tendencies were combined with a desire to crush the political left and return to older forms of government, including the preservation of the federalist constitution of 1871, ideas that were not shared by every organization on the right. Instrumental in returning Bavaria to conservative rule in 1920, both groups failed to bring about their major goals in restoring the old regime to power. The closeness of both groups to the established authorities often undercut their efforts at

critical junctures, making both seem creatures of the state rather than true counterrevolutionary forces, something that the Nazis were increasingly able to exploit.

For my mother Sandra Koepp,

whose love and support made so much of this possible.

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There are many people who aided me over the course of the last three years as I completed this study of paramilitary organizations in post-World War I Bavaria. Without their guidance and assistance this work would have remained unfinished, and I am deeply indebted to all of them.

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The research for this dissertation was conducted in the archives of Bavarian State Archives (*Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv*) and the Institute of Contemporary History (*Institut für Zeitgeschichte*). I want to thank the staff of both archives for their patience and understanding in helping to acclimate myself to the world of German archives, and for providing me with great tips in terms of research and the printing of documents.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a study of paramilitary politics in Bavaria during the early and middle years of the Weimar Republic. In particular it is an examination of two organizations: the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich*. These two groups played an important role in fostering a climate of hatred and opposition to Germany's first democracy. Claiming to protect 'law and order' and the state from internal enemies bent on its destruction, both paramilitaries engaged in activities that had the effect of retarding the creation of a democratic republic in Bavaria, and overturning it when possible. In addition, both associations were critical to fanning the flames of discontent over the Treaty of Versailles, a dissatisfaction that was central to the world view of many ultranationalist Germans during the Weimar period and helped to shape their view of the republic. Finally, the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* gave respectability to ideas and tendencies that would be exploited by organizations, like the Nazi Party, which far more revolutionary in their goals.

However, for the Nazis to succeed, the *Einwohnerwehr* and its successor, *Bund Bayern und Reich*, had to fail. This, then, is a story of the limits of paramilitary politics in Bavaria in the 1920s. Despite the success both groups had as agents of the counterrevolution, the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* failed to achieve the ideological goals laid out by their respective leaderships. That agenda relied on a combination of old notions of federalism and states' rights carried over from the imperial period and a romantic, highly-stylized, and culturally despairing German nationalism that

had been amplified during the war years. As a result both organizations advocated solutions to the country's problems that were both conservative/reactionary (i.e., wanting to restore the previous form of government) and more radical (the creation of a *völkisch* utopia) at the same time. This study will look at the history of these associations, how each was founded, the respective ideological programs, and the activities of both groups to determine those factors that limited their success.

Historical Context

During the years following Germany's defeat in the First World War bands of young and middle-aged men streamed into paramilitaries, *Freikorps*, voluntary associations, and *Einwohnerwehren* to save a world that, for them, seemed to be ending. That world, the German Empire with its attendant kings and princes, had been supplanted at the end of World War I by a new government. This new regime, Germany's first true democracy, was brought into existence on the strength of revolution and proclaimed from the balcony of the Imperial Palace by a politician belonging to the Social Democratic Party, which prior to the war was considered illegitimate and illegal by a not insignificant number of Germans.¹

That fact made the Weimar Republic a monstrosity in the eyes of many Germans. For them the republic stood for everything that had gone wrong in their country: the lost war, the breakdown of civil order, the continued material deprivation, and most significantly the hated Treaty of Versailles. That agreement, signed in Paris on June 28, 1919, blamed Germany for starting the war, took territory from the country in the east,

¹ Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 19.

limited the size of its army, set up an army of occupation in the Rhineland, and forced it to pay reparations to the wartime allies.² In none of these instances did the men who joined paramilitary units blame the old imperial elites for this state of affairs, only Germany's new democratic leaders.

Anger over the loss of the war and the humiliation of a "harsh" peace were not the only factors leading men to join paramilitary groups. Just as important was the continued revolutionary fervor in Germany during the months following the end of the war. The republic had been brought to power by revolution and that fact, coupled with the continued deprivations of the allied blockade, meant that further revolutionary changes might be in store. For the new republican leaders the memories of the Russian Revolution, with its moderate and Bolshevik phases, were ever present. If order was not restored they feared it would lead to the bolshevization of the country, or worse, the complete breakdown of civil order. It was in order to prevent this development that the first paramilitary units were called into existence by a government composed of the liberal and socialist parties of the Weimar Coalition.³ Led by Philipp Scheidemann, under the supervision of President Friedrich Ebert, this regime had claimed for itself the mantle of revolution, but was doing everything possible to insure the continuity of the old German order.⁴

² Margaret MacMillan, *Paris, 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*, (New York: Random House, 2001), 157-93.

³ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 84-9. The Weimar Coalition was usually made up of three parties: the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which represented Germany's workers, the German Democratic Party (DDP), which spoke for the middle class and trended towards progressive politics, and the Center Party (Zentrum), that represented German Catholics. Smaller parties, like the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), sometimes joined this coalition, but played a lesser role compared to the major parties, *ibid.*

⁴ Detlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 28-33. One of the major themes in the historiography of the Weimar Republic was the continuity of elites from the old imperial to the republic itself. Many institutions that

The first widespread use of paramilitary organizations came with the Spartacist Uprising of January 1919. The revolt was the result of continuing discord between the Social Democrats and Independent Socialists over the course of the revolution. Stymied in their efforts for reform the Independent Socialists and their Spartacist allies, led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, rioted and seized much of Berlin in the process. The Social Democratic leaders, Friedrich Ebert and his defense minister Gustav Noske, used the *Freikorps* to put down the insurrection with great severity, executing Luxemburg and Liebknecht in the process.⁵

It was in suppressing the Spartacist Revolt in Berlin that government officials decided they needed a more dependable force to ensure domestic peace. The *Freikorps* had simply been too brutal in their suppression of the rebels. Almost immediately after the situation was secured emphasis shifted to the creation of the Civil Guards, or *Einwohnerwehr*. This organization had a much broader basis than the *Freikorps* units, drawing most of their manpower from the citizenry at large, as opposed to ex-soldiers as many *Freikorps* units had. Over the course of early 1919 units were set up throughout Germany.⁶

The most significant of these *Einwohnerwehren* would be set up in Bavaria. Not only would the organization be the largest in the country, but it would be the most important politically. The Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* would not only become the leading

served the republic were staffed by people with no real love for democracy and, thus, no loyalty to the new government. These included the army, the civil service, the judiciary, and academia. The decision for continuity, as opposed to using the worker's councils as an element of the new democratic republic, broke up the fragile coalition between the Social Democratic Party and the Independent Social Democratic Party (Independent Socialists) in December 1918, *ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* See also, James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 23-30 & 38-40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-8.

agents of law and order, but of the counterrevolution as well. That transformation would have a profound impact on the history of Bavaria and Germany. The state became in the 1920s and 30s the epicenter for right-wing political activity in the country. Most groups that hated the Weimar Republic had a strong presence in Munich and other Bavarian cities during this period.

Sources

This study is based heavily on archival research in the Bavarian State Archives (*Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv*) located in Munich, and its departments; I – files of the Ministry of Interior, including files on the *Einwohnerwehr*, the *Räterepublik*, *Bund Bayern und Reich* – including the Beer Hall Putsch, and general political disturbances; II – the files of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chancellery, including the private correspondence of Gustav von Kahr during his presidency in Bavaria from March 1920 to September 1921, the workers movement and the *Räterepublik*, forbidden organizations, the disarmament debate, and the files of the General State Commissioner (*Generalstaatskommissar*), an office held by Gustav von Kahr in the months leading up to the Beer Hall Putsch; IV – the war archive, which contains the complete records of both the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich*; and V – the collections and papers of leading political and historical figures of the period including Georg Escherich, the head of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr*, and his second in command Rudolf Kanzler.⁷

Additionally this study is based on archival research done at the Institute for Contemporary History (*Institut für Zeitgeschichte*) in Munich. This archive contains the

⁷ The collection of Rudolf Kanzler's papers are actually located in department five, but are listed in guides and this dissertation, as being part of the *Einwohnerwehr* archive.

main archive of the Nazi Party (*Hauptarchiv des NSDAP*) – from which files were obtained relating to *Bund Bayern und Reich*, the Working Group (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) and Fighting League (*Kampfbund*) from 1923, the Röhm-Pittinger dispute, and the Beer Hall Putsch. Additionally sources were obtained from the library of the Institute, which contained the regulations and program for both the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich*.

Finally this study is based on published materials located in the University of Nebraska library, and research libraries around the country. The most significant of these published materials is the memoirs of Rudolf Kanzler, *Bavaria's Struggle against Bolshevism*, which recounts his years as the number two man in the *Einwohnerwehr*. All secondary source material used in this study is used to either explain the historiographical disputes, as background material, or to fill in holes where archival material is missing or not available.

Overview of the Historical Literature

There are numerous works on the history of the Weimar Republic that try to explain the rise of the Nazis, and their role in the downfall of the republic. Two of the more recent attempts to analyze the failure of Weimar have been by the historians Detlev J.K. Peukert and Eric Weitz. Peukert's *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, argued that there was broad continuity from Imperial Germany to the Republic epitomized by the survival of old elites – bureaucracy, judiciary, army, to name a few. The decision made by the republican leaders to emphasize stability over chaos led them to make choices that helped set the stage for the paramilitaries that would be such a

feature of Weimar.⁸ Moreover, when the crisis years came, the decisions made by the early republican leaders led to a perfect storm of enraged elites and a loss of legitimacy that made Hitler's eventual triumph more likely.⁹

Meanwhile Eric Weitz, in *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, divided the history of Weimar politics into three phases: left-liberal, moderate conservative, and authoritarian conservative. The republic's eventual collapse was due primarily to a coming together of conservatives and radicals in a grand coalition to destroy the republic in the last phase. This occurred because old elites had lost control of the situation in the depression and was willing to countenance an alliance with the radical right. This had not happened during the 1920s due to the broad diversity amongst the radical right, epitomized by the paramilitaries. By the 1930s, however, the situation had changed because the Nazi Party had assimilated, or grown much larger, than many of these groups. This allowed more conservative interests to work more closely with the radical right in the last years of the republic.¹⁰

A wide diversity of literature also exists about the Nazi Party itself, divided up between general works on the party, biographies of Hitler, and on the party's rise to power. In terms of general histories, Michael Kater's *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919-1945*, is a comprehensive guide. Kater used comparative statistical analysis to prove that very little difference existed between the Nazi elite and common members of the party in their reasons for joining the party, but that significant difference existed between the leadership and common members in terms of social

⁸ Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 21-49.

⁹ *Ibid*, 266-7.

¹⁰ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 331-60.

class.¹¹ For biographies of Hitler Ian Kershaw's masterful *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, has become an instant classic. In it he argued that Hitler's ego was fed in these early years by worshipful subordinates, themselves willing to play a role that Hitler had carved out for them, who treated him in a messianic fashion, which led him to believe his own myth.¹² Geoffrey Pridham wrote a classic local study of the Nazi movement in Bavaria that argued while many of Hitler's most fervent followers came from Bavaria, the Nazi Party's ability to pull votes in the state varied by region, with more Catholic areas being resistant to Nazi appeals, while northern Bavaria proved more fertile.¹³

Narrowing the literature down to paramilitary movements also yields a wide diversity of scholarship. Here the focus on the Nazis' own paramilitary, the S.A. or the Brownshirts, dwarfs the scholarship of other organizations. Similarly there are several studies of German or Bavarian paramilitaries as a general movement, or a phenomenon of the Weimar period. These tend to include all the organizations that engaged in this type of political activity: *Freikorps*, *Einwohnerwehren*, and smaller conspiratorial groups. Finally, there are works that focus on individual paramilitary organizations.

As mentioned, the S.A. has received a lot of attention from historians. This is understandable considering the organization's role in helping the Nazis attain power, coupled with its sudden loss of prestige in 1934. Much of the historiography on the S.A.

¹¹ Michael H. Kater, *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919-1945*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 234-9.

¹² Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 591. Kershaw's work itself builds upon the work of German historian Albrecht Tyrell, who wrote that Hitler's consciousness as the *Führer* of the movement was the result of a long evolution of the leadership principle that began when Hitler gained total control over the party, Albrecht Tyrell, *Vom Trommler zum Führer: der Wandel von Hitlers Selbstverständnis zwischen 1919 und 1923 und die Entwicklung der NSDAP*, (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975), 9-16.

¹³ Geoffrey Pridham, *Hitler's Rise to Power: The Nazi Movement in Bavaria, 1923-1933*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 318-24.

has been dedicated to understanding the social basis for its membership.¹⁴ Conan Fischer, for instance, using archival resources throughout Germany, presented a detailed sociological profile of S.A. members from 1929 to 1935. He argued that the fantastic growth of the stormtroopers during these years was spurred by men “who took for granted the social and political advances achieved by Weimar, but experienced its economic failings first hand.”¹⁵ This had a tendency to blur class line as the Brownshirts offered a way to escape the misery of the Depression for many lower class youths, while giving the Nazis a way to project power into working class neighborhoods.¹⁶

Other works have emphasized the regional factors behind the growth of the Brownshirts, the role of violence, and the creation of what Bruce Campbell has called the political soldier. In *Die braunen Bataillone*, Peter Longerich argued that the S.A. went through several stages of growth, from the radical arm of the party in the early years to the primacy of the soldier after the seizure of power. Each phase changed the nature of the organization.¹⁷ Richard Bessel analyzed the role that violence played in the rise of Nazism, noting that the difference between the S.A. and groups like the *Freikorps* was that the Stormtroopers never employed violence to achieve power illegally.¹⁸ Meanwhile Eric Reiche looked at the growth the S.A. in Nuremberg, noting that the organization’s growth benefitted from the presence of a home grown movement that the Nazis co-opted

¹⁴ Peter Merkl, *The Making of a Stormtrooper*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). Merkl’s work builds upon the work of Theodore Abel, who studied 581 early Nazis for his monumental, *Political Violence under the Swastika*, but using social science methodology to reach his conclusions.

¹⁵ Conan Fischer, *Stormtroopers: A Social, Economic, and Ideological Analysis, 1929-35*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 223-5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Peter Longerich, *Die braunen Bataillone: Geschichte der SA*, (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989), 239-45.

¹⁸ Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany, 1925-1934*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 1-6. It must be noted that Prof. Bessel’s starting point for analysis was after the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, when the SA did try to help seize power violently.

and the placement of the annual party rally in Nuremberg.¹⁹ Finally Bruce Campbell looked at profiles of the 178 men at the top of the national organization to determine the definition of the “political soldier.” He concluded that what made the organization so successful was the unity of purpose amongst its leadership due to the fact that all had seen action in the army and thus had a nearly identical world view.²⁰

Less attention has been paid to the *Freikorps vis-à-vis* the S.A. These units, which had a very short existence, loom large in the historical imagination. Often they are lumped together by scholars with other paramilitary units like the *Einwohnerwehr*. This stands to reason as a good many *Freikorps* units reorganized themselves as paramilitaries once the danger had passed. Despite this, there are a couple of major works dealing specifically with the *Freikorps*. The first, and earliest, was by Robert G.L. Waite, who wrote a book called *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany, 1918-1923*.

Waite’s thesis was that the *Freikorps* soldiers were not ‘political soldiers’ as would be later claimed in the Nazi period, but freebooters who latched on to any ideology if it provided them the action they craved. Indeed Waite believed that to be their guiding principle, certainly not a thought out program. This explained how they could fight communism, but still show an affinity for its precepts. The same went for Nazism. The men who joined these units always looked for a great leader, and until Hitler emerged as

¹⁹ Eric G. Reiche, *The Development of the SA in Nürnberg, 1922-1934*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 222-30.

²⁰ Bruce Campbell, *The SA Generals and the Rise of Nazism*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 1-7.

that man, (not until very late), most shied away.²¹ Another major work was by Hagen Schulze, whose history of the *Freikorps* portrayed the organization in a more sympathetic light. He argued the tragedy of the Weimar Republic was that it was not able to find a way to come to an accommodation with the *Freikorps* fighters. The animosity of these units came to a head in the Kapp Putsch and irretrievably set these units against Weimar, which he argued set the stage for the success of Hitler and the Nazis.²²

For the purposes of this study the major historical literature is very diverse, dealing with a variety of works that include general studies, specific unit and organizational histories, or of individual events in the history of the paramilitary and patriotic movements. The *Einwohnerwehr* is analyzed in two individualized studies as well as some of the general works, while there has yet to be written any detailed study in English or German on *Bund Bayern und Reich* as a standalone group. The latter organization is discussed in the general works on the paramilitary movement, or in relation to specific events like the Beer Hall Putsch.

There have been several excellent monographs that deal with the general phenomenon of paramilitary politics. Each work reflects the focus of the author. The first major work produced in this vein was by the German historian Hans Fenske. Writing in 1969, his *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus in Bayern nach 1918*, is a local study of the entire paramilitary and patriotic, or *vaterländisch*, movements in Bavaria, though his principal focus was more on the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* than on other organizations like the Nazi Party. Based on archival research in

²¹ Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguards of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany, 1918-1923*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 264-82.

²² Hagen Schulze, *Freikorps und Republik, 1918-1920*, (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1969), 326-34.

the Bavarian State Archives and the Institute for Contemporary History, Fenske's monograph remains one of the better introductions to the subject, and remains the work most relevant to the topic of this study.

Fenske's thesis was that "national opposition" to the Weimar Republic ranged from groups that offered passive resistance to the republic to organizations that actively worked for its destruction. Both the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* fell into the latter group. Within this wing of the "national opposition" Fenske argued that a spectrum of opinion existed within the wider patriotic movement, with the Civil Guards being the most conservative of the paramilitaries, followed by *Bayern und Reich* which was more radical, and finally the Nazi Party as the most radical of these organizations.²³

It was in 1924, after the failed Putsch, that the extremism on the political right, as epitomized by the Nazis and their allies, morphed into outright fascism. *Bund Bayern und Reich* and the *Einwohnerwehr* were radical, by Fenske's estimation, but were not fascist. They were deadly opposed to the socialist government and political left in Bavaria, they flouted the Treaty of Versailles, they favored an expansionist foreign policy for Germany, and subscribed to a racially *völkisch* world view that (at least for *Bund Bayern und Reich*) sought to eliminate Jewish influence in society. However their radicalism was held back by the essentially conservative structure of its organization and parts of its program like the preservation of the federal structure of government. Without this, Fenske argued, the radical aspects of their program might have prevented them from gaining the respect and esteem of the governing elites. It would not be until the Beer Hall

²³ Hans Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus in Bayern nach 1918*, (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1969), 17-19.

Putsch of 1923, when such respectability was no longer needed, that one saw a true fascist movement emerge, as the Nazi Party had reached a critical mass and was able to make its case on its own.²⁴

Fenske viewed the history of the patriotic movement as a gradual evolution from conservatism to outright fascism. There are a couple issues, however, that he did not address that are taken up in this study. One was his analysis of the *Einwohnerwehr*'s formation. Specifically he omits many details on the formation of militias in the period before April 1919. This is particularly jarring as several proto-*Einwohnerwehren* were formed in months before the call went out to form paramilitary units.²⁵ Another weakness was the way the Beer Hall Putsch affected *Bund Bayern und Reich* internally in the years after 1923.²⁶ The difficulties between local units and the leadership was a major component of the organization's history in the two years following the putsch, and played an important role in setting the group on a different course. Fenske only glanced over these issues, a noticeable omission that this study seeks to correct.

Another general work that looks at the paramilitary organizations, but from a slightly different perspective is by Horst G.W. Nusser in *Konservative Wehrverbände in Bayern, Preussen, und Österreich 1918-1933*. Written in many ways as a response to Fenske's work, Nusser expanded his scope beyond Bavaria, necessitating using archival material from the *Bundesarchiv*, then in Koblenz, and from archives then in East Germany. This allowed him to write a more expansive book that gave greater coverage

²⁴ Ibid, 313-21.

²⁵ Ibid, 78-89.

²⁶ Ibid, 188-223.

to events in East Prussia and Austria, which Fenske had touched on but not explored in great depth.²⁷

The main thrust of Nusser's work was that the paramilitary movement needed to be seen more properly as a movement of monarchists. Their greatest period of influence came under the *Einwohnerwehr*, but the dissolution of the organization led to a loss of influence epitomized by strife amongst paramilitary units and the dwindling fortunes of *Bund Bayern und Reich* after 1923. It is only after 1929 that one saw a revival of paramilitary activity that was cut short by the ascension of the Nazi Party to power in 1933. In the years that followed, the Nazi Party went to great lengths to discredit many of the leaders of this movement.²⁸

American historian James M. Diehl looked at the paramilitary movement in a national context in his major work, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*. Based heavily on archival sources in Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Bremen, and the Federal Archives at Koblenz, Diehl's work was comprehensive, covering all paramilitary units in the Weimar Republic – those on the left as well as on the right. As a result Diehl was the first scholar to present the story of paramilitary organizations in its entirety to an English-language readership.

Diehl's thesis was that leaders of the Weimar Republic, because of compromises made at its beginning, could never adequately enforce its will on the populace. Fearing further revolution, and unable to maintain military discipline, they made use of voluntary military groups, the notorious *Freikorps*. The use of these, along with the *Wehrverbände*,

²⁷ Horst G.W. Nusser, *Konservative Wehrverbände in Bayern, Preussen, und Österreich, 1918-1933: mit einer Biographie von Forstrat Georg Escherich, 1870-1941*, (Munich: Nusser Verlag, 1973), 11-15.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 354-6.

by both sides of the political spectrum, quickly created a situation where it became normal to solve political disputes with violence outside the prescribed constitutional procedures. This development had a debilitating effect on political life in Germany, acculturating a whole generation of Germans to the militarization of civilian life. Such militarization, Diehl pointed out, was a crucial component of the eventual success of Hitler and the Nazi Party.²⁹

Another major work actually looked at a specific event of these years. Harold Gordon Jr's *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch* analyzes the year 1923 leading up to the events of November 8 and 9, 1923. Based on archival research conducted at the National Archives in Washington D.C., plus published material from many of the participants, Gordon's work still stands as the single best history of the Beer Hall Putsch. Coverage was given to all the participant organizations right down to the last detail. The only criticism that could be lodged against the book is that Gordon never ventured into the relevant German archives, working instead in the U.S. National Archives and with collections of documents that he himself had obtained over the years.³⁰

Gordon argues that the politics of the pre-putsch years put enormous pressure on the Bavarian government and forced it to adopt policies that were simply unwise. Unable to expand the police forces due to the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles, Bavarian leaders turned a blind eye towards the creation of local self-defense organizations. As the

²⁹ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 3-22. As a thesis, Diehl's work is very persuasive, particularly in discussing the dangers of having the general population be exposed to this type of violence day in and day out. As a general work Diehl's work has no equal. It is very readable, filled with factual information, and concise. There really is no criticism that one can level at it, unless it is to point out that it does not cover local events in the greatest depth, but that was not its intent.

³⁰ Harold Gordon Jr., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 633-5.

Treaty of Versailles prohibited them from expanding the police, Bavarian leaders were forced to create, or tolerate, groups dedicated to private defense.³¹

In Gordon's view Bavarian officials, unable to save the *Einwohnerwehr*, tried to keep as much of its structure intact as possible. This led to the creation of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, which was seen as a way to stem the tide of Marxism. Due to the secret nature of the group, and the fact that it was smaller and narrower than the old Civil Guards, the government also tolerated more radical groups, like the Nazi Party. According to Gordon, this opened the floodgates as the leaders of the more revolutionary radical groups were determined to overthrow the Weimar system – a goal shared by certain members of the Bavarian government – and began to arm themselves in preparation for it. By the time the Knilling Cabinet realized its mistake it was too late, it was forced to ride the tiger it had unleashed and found itself increasingly caught between the radical demands of Hitler on the one side, and the extortions of Pittinger on the other during the course of 1923. This situation prevailed until the Beer Hall Putsch in November, when the government gained the upper hand because of Hitler's uprising.³²

The *Einwohnerwehr*, like *Bund Bayern und Reich*, has been analyzed by historians in more general works. However, unlike the latter, the former has been the subject of a couple of full length studies. The first of these was written by the East German historian Erwin Könnemann. Like many historians from the eastern bloc his analysis relies heavily on Marxist theory for the force of its arguments. His research is

³¹ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 607-19.

³² *Ibid.*

based on archival material found in the former East Germany (though he did travel to Koblenz), published sources, and secondary source material.

His thesis was that the *Einwohnerwehr* represented the beginnings of a new imperialist system. His work, *Einwohnerwehren und Zeitfreiwilligenverbände*, stated that the Civil Guards were simply part of a complex that consisted of the *Reichswehr*, the police, and the *Freikorps*. These reactionary forces overturned the German revolution and were the means by which the elites of the republic consolidated their power. They then used their dominance to attempt to crush the power of the working class, beginning a struggle that would characterize the Weimar Republic. Crucial to helping create the guards was the SPD, which Könnemann predictably lambasts for betraying German workers. Only the communists and certain elements of the USPD are praised for standing up to the paramilitaries.³³

The other major work on the *Einwohnerwehr*, and the only one in English, is David Clay Large's *The Politics of Law and Order: A History of the Einwohnerwehr, 1918-1921*. Like Diehl, Large argued that the development of private military bands was disastrous for Germany. Based on archival material obtained in the Bavarian State Archives, the Federal Archive then in Koblenz, and the Foreign Ministry Archive then in Bonn, Large postulates that the Civil Guards in Bavaria initiated the citizens of that state "into the politics of violence and intimidation."³⁴ Membership had a deleterious effect on those who joined because it placed them outside of, and antagonistic to, the state. More

³³ Erwin Könnemann, *Einwohnerwehren und Zeitfreiwilligenverbände: Ihre Funktion beim Aufbau eines neuen imperialistischen Militärsystems (November 1918 bis 1920)*, (East Berlin: Deutscher Militärverlag, 1969), 7-17.

³⁴ David Clay Large, *The Politics of Law and Order: A History of the Einwohnerwehr, 1918-1921*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1980), 76-9.

importantly, by pursuing activities designed to preserve law and order (*Ruhe und Ordnung* in German), the *Einwohnerwehr* helped to undermine it in the state, and to change the term's definition. Law and Order, in this sense, came to mean preservation of the state as the leaders of the Civil Guards defined it.³⁵

The organization's definition of safety helps to explain, according to Large, the connection between the *Einwohnerwehr* and the more radical groups like Hitler's Nazi Party. Rejecting the notion that, had it survived, the Civil Guards would have served as a safety valve against the more revolutionary ideas of Hitler, Large argued that, during the course of its development, the *Einwohnerwehr* went through a process of internal radicalization. The growing extremism was due to a couple of factors, the taking in of whole organizations, like the *Freikorps Oberland*, into the guards, and the effects of the long struggle against its dissolution. The result was that, in Large's view, the Civil Guards helped to prepare the way for Hitler almost as much as the *Freikorps* had.³⁶

This study looks to build upon previous interpretations of both the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* and fill in gaps that exist in our knowledge about both organizations. The major argument of this work is that both paramilitaries were limited in their actions due to their relationship to the government. Each came into existence with the help of the Bavarian *Reichswehr* and lower-level civil servants, like Gustav von Kahr, who helped provide them with funds, weapons, and political cover. The result was that these units could only operate within parameters defined by their political patrons. When goals were in alignment both units had great latitude of action,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

even independence. However, when these were not aligned neither organization could do much to influence events, and indeed were often captive to them.

In the case of the *Einwohnerwehr* two examples illustrate this phenomenon. The first occurred during the Kapp Putsch where the *Einwohnerwehr*, working in conjunction with the army, the Munich police, and Gustav von Kahr, forced the resignation of the legally and democratically elected Social Democratic government. Their participation not only would bring to power a regime more aligned to their world view, but bring with it enhanced powers and responsibilities that were governed in a series of service agreements with the Interior Ministry, contracts that made them a power in the state.

On the other hand, the conflict over disarmament and dissolution showed the limits of government cooperation. The dispute was brought on by the *Einwohnerwehr's* involvement in the *Organisation Escherich* and the *Organisation Kanzler*, two associations created to allow the *Einwohnerwehr* to play a larger role in Germany and German-speaking Europe. This led inexorably to allied demands for the *Einwohnerwehr's* disarmament and dissolution. Despite strong support for the organization in the Bavarian cabinet, the dispute proved to a political disaster for the Kahr government, who found their room to maneuver increasingly restricted. Despite the willingness of many *Einwohnerwehr* members to fight the central government and allied powers, the Bavarian government was forced to accede to wishes of the Allied Control Commission. Once that happened, the political support for the *Einwohnerwehr* evaporated.

The same phenomenon can be seen in the history of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, though here the examples are even starker. For the Bavarian army *Bayern und Reich* was their preferred partner amongst the paramilitaries, a relationship that allowed the group access to weaponry and army training. It also made them integral to the army's plans for restoring public order. Moreover, whenever a dispute arose between *Bayern und Reich* and one of the other patriotic leagues the army and its allies sided with Otto Pittinger, the head of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, in almost every instance. No other Bavarian paramilitary group had this type of access or influence, something that made *Bayern und Reich* the preeminent paramilitary group by 1923.

However, as with the *Einwohnerwehr*, *Bund Bayern und Reich* found itself bound to its political patrons. The Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923 clearly demonstrated the limits of such close cooperation. *Bayern und Reich*, like all *vaterländisch* groups in Bavaria, were feverishly preparing for a march on Berlin to overthrow the government; a move that was supported by the leadership of the Bavarian army. When the designs for a coup fell through the army backed down, and so did *Bund Bayern und Reich*, despite the desire amongst many of the local units to actually join with Hitler and the putschists.

The limits of the paramilitaries' relationship to the governing authorities have been hinted at, but only David Clay Large has explored them in any depth in regards to the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*, which he rightly attributes to the organization's activities in the *Orgesch*.³⁷ Most scholars tend to ascribe the dispute to the desire of the allies to eventually force the paramilitaries to disband,³⁸ or on the reliance of Kahr on the

³⁷ Large, *The Politics of Law and Order*, 66-76.

³⁸ Fenkse, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 100-8.

Einwohnerwehr for his political survival.³⁹ In the case of *Bund Bayern und Reich* historians have tended to view their inaction as a manifestation of their increasingly strained relationship with the Nazis and their allies,⁴⁰ or as involving a power struggle between Kahr and Hitler without reference to *Bayern und Reich*.⁴¹

The other major argument of this work is that the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* were conservative organizations with radical overtones, and that this dichotomy was ever present in both organizations. As Robert Paxton has shown with fascist organizations, many of the *vaterländisch* groups, like the two surveyed here, were a mixture of views and sentiments.⁴² The men who belonged to the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* were conservative, even reactionary, in that they hoped to see a return to traditional forms of government or, at the least, preserve the federal structure of the German constitution. However, they also ascribed to the racial *völkisch* nationalism of the more radical right. They were not exclusively monarchists, nor did they subscribe to the centralizing tendencies of the Nazis.⁴³ Moreover, this split was evident in both organizations early on.⁴⁴

In the case of the *Einwohnerwehr*, for instance, *völkisch* sentiment manifested itself in outbreaks of antisemitism. There were numerous incidents recorded at the local level, the most significant being in the city of Rosenheim in 1920. Moreover, many of the terms used by *völkisch* thinkers before the war, like community of the people (*Volksgemeinschaft*), became commonplace in the propaganda and publications of the

³⁹ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 100-1.

⁴⁰ Nusser, *Konservative Wehrverbände*, 239-44.

⁴¹ Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 207-23.

⁴² Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, (New York: Random House, 2004), 1-15.

⁴³ Nusser, *Konservative Wehrverbände*, 221-2 & 234-47.

⁴⁴ Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 313-21.

Einwohnerwehr. Many of the group's activities were focused on eliminating the specter of socialism, which was one of the ideologies that *völkisch* thinkers found so abhorrent. Even much of the philosophy about the German past, the despair for a culture lost, can be seen in propaganda that talked about a society of estates working towards the mutual benefit of the other.

The *völkisch* aspects of the *Einwohnerwehr* remained latent, however, due to the need to maintain the fiction that the organization stood above party and religious orientation. No such need was ever present for *Bund Bayern und Reich*. From the very first propaganda materials trumpeting its establishment, the leadership claimed that it was working towards a *völkisch*-oriented state. According to the group's program, all members had to be German nationals, i.e. Aryans. No Jews, nor members from any other foreign group, could apply. Furthermore, it propagated this world view in its propaganda and joined with other *vaterländisch* organizations in German Day celebrations that were celebrations of German racial solidarity. Like the *Einwohnerwehr* before them they worked for the elimination of socialist organizations and parties. Thus, the presence of *völkisch* ideology in both the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* from the beginning, and the way this ideology was put into practice by the leadership and membership, suggests that these organizations were more than simply 'conservative-restorative,' and that the evolution from conservative to radical in the patriotic movement should be placed earlier than it has been by historians.⁴⁵

The radical nature of the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* and their willingness to work against the nascent Weimar Republic did not occur in a vacuum.

⁴⁵ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 103-4, Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 314-7.

Both groups drew upon several decades of *völkisch* nationalism. That ideology gained currency and adherents amongst a certain strata of the middle class in the years prior to World War I, becoming the basis for a critique of the Wilhelmine Reich. Moreover, its viewpoints formed an important part of the program of many patriotic pressure groups in the years before 1914. The advocacy of these organizations helped spread *völkisch* ideology and formed a crucial link between it and the paramilitary groups of the patriotic movement in post-1918 Bavaria.

Chapter 2

The Origins of the Patriotic Movement – *Völkisch* Nationalism and Patriotic Leagues in

Bavaria to 1914

The patriotic (*vaterländisch*) organizations that sprang up in Bavaria after 1918 were the manifestations of a long gestation period in which certain individuals and groups voiced their discontent with the state of affairs in Imperial Germany. These critics were not to be found on the political left, as one might expect, but on the political right. They were not concerned with the expansion of democracy, civil liberties, or greater economic and social justice for Germany's workers but with the preservation of a certain way of life and social organization within the *Reich*. Their writings helped to create an impression of an impending crisis within both German society and government. The organizations they inspired, both large and small, helped to diffuse their views into the wider society and provide a template with which to organize after the armistice.

Völkisch Nationalism in the late Nineteenth Century

The key intellectual movement that animated the post-World War I patriotic movement was the Germanic ideology of *völkisch* nationalism. *Völkisch* ideas had their origins in the years following Germany's unification under Bismarck, and were put forward by writers who considered themselves the prophets of a new era. Many of these thinkers felt alienated from German society, a disaffection that stemmed from frustration at not having achieved their desired station in life. One of the best examples of this was the Biblical scholar Paul de Lagarde who had a life-long antipathy towards the academic establishment of Wilhelmine Germany, owing in no small part to the fact that it took him

much longer to achieve an academic appointment than many of his contemporaries.¹ They rejected the rational discourses of the Enlightenment preferring, instead, to rely on intuition and sentiment. As a result they preferred the artist over the scientist and the man of action over the thinker in their political and philosophical works. Finally, most *völkisch* intellectuals believed that by creating a new ethic or civil religion, they would usher in a new era in German history – both in its politics and society.²

The new spirit that *völkisch* nationalists wanted to build relied upon a particular view of the German past, a past that never really existed in any practical way. As George Mosse noted in the *Crisis of German Ideology*, the people who held this worldview believed that the only worthwhile society was one that was rural, “hierarchical in nature and patterned after medieval estates.”³ They saw in Germany’s Middle Ages a harmonious social order where everyone knew their proper place and economic function. Their ideal of medieval society was rural and based on the German peasant, who was tied to the land and thus had a vital connection to his home region. This concept of rootedness, as Mosse noted, was very important to *völkisch* intellectuals. It is what gave society its meaning and made Germany a true nation and *Volk*.⁴

Because their view of Germany’s medieval past put such importance on the social order and the rural landscape, *völkisch* intellectuals naturally held a more dim view of Germany’s present. They believed that the Germany in which they lived was a society in decline. The empire forged by Bismarck did not conform to the rural idyll they believed

¹ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: a study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 12-18.

² Ibid.

³ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, (New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1964), 19.

⁴ Ibid., 13-30.

to be natural, but instead was a rapidly urbanizing, modern state where the clear lines of social class evaporated in the relentless advance of the Industrial Revolution. The peasant, the hero in their worldview, did not form the backbone of the nation, but instead migrated to the cities to join the urban proletariat. The existence of this class itself was problematic for the industrial workers did not conform easily to the organic castes they believed existed during the Middle Ages. Most importantly, Germany's modernization was accompanied by increasing calls for greater democracy and civil liberties, ideas that had been born of the French Revolution. As a result *völkisch* intellectuals held these ideas to be un-German and despaired that so many of their countrymen adhered to them.⁵

The views that *völkisch* intellectuals had of contemporary society were not new, but instead ran as a critique throughout the nineteenth century and had their origins in the philosophy of Idealism that emerged during the Romantic era; indeed *völkisch* nationalists often used the language of Idealism to buttress their arguments. Idealism held that the pursuit of a material existence, as epitomized by the just-emerging Industrial Revolution, or the struggle for greater political freedoms, as seen in the French Revolution, retarded the spiritual dimension of humanity which these thinkers saw as essence of human existence. Roderick Stackelberg noted that one of the main features of *völkisch* thought was how closely it conformed to Idealist thought as outlined above. The great difference between earlier Idealist philosophers and the advocates of a Germanic Ideology was that the idealism of the latter was more conservative in nature and sought to prevent political and social change. The result was that *völkisch* writers decried the

⁵ Ibid.

pursuit of wealth and greater freedoms all in order to protect the material prosperity and political privileges of those at the top of German society.⁶

For *völkisch* thinkers their primary task was to recreate, or restore, this ideal society. A mythologized past was a large part of it. Equally important was having a foil, and the Jews provided this. For *völkisch* nationalists the Jew was a symbol of all that they hated. They were rootless, whereas the peasant was rooted to the land. They were cosmopolitan, lived in cities, and traveled widely. Because of their traditional role as money-lenders and peddlers, Jews came to be seen as synonymous with modern capitalism by many of these writers. It was the Jew who they believed came into the countryside and turned the peasant's world upside down, depriving him of land and cattle and forcing him, through circumstance, to migrate to urban areas. Also, Jews were more likely to be liberals and socialists than conservatives. Many German Jews gravitated towards the more progressive and democratic political parties – everything that *völkisch* intellectuals abhorred. They were the *de facto* bogeyman.⁷

Jews were not the only enemies identified by *völkisch* thinkers. Marxian socialism increasingly came to be seen as the *bête noire* of national consciousness and was vociferously attacked. This ideology, trans-national, revolutionary, and dedicated to leveling the distinctions *völkisch* writers so loved, gained ground with an urban

⁶ Roderick Stackelberg, *Idealism Debased: From Völkisch Ideology to National Socialism*, (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1981), 1-15. It is important to note that *Idealist* philosophy, though perverted by *völkisch* writers, was crucial in providing a philosophical grounding for liberal's calls for greater freedom and democracy throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

⁷ Mosse, *Crisis in German Ideology*, 13-30.

proletariat that manned the factories of a rapidly industrializing country.⁸ Fear of Marxism and the Social Democratic Party (the party inspired by revolutionary rhetoric), became one of the constants of politics in the imperial period, most famously illustrated in Bismarck's anti-Socialist Laws. *Völkisch* writers, like the political elite, also shared this anxiety. Paul de Lagarde, for instance, was obsessed with the unity of the nation in his writings partially because he feared that socialism would alienate the worker from society.⁹

Equally important was the role of religion in the *völkisch* worldview. For these intellectuals traditional Christianity was insufficient to the problems of the modern age, a view they justified because many Germans seemed to abandon the church as the century progressed. Moreover, for many leading individuals in *völkisch* circles the religion had never seemed wholly German to begin with. Many of them argued for a new approach. Paul de Lagarde was critical in this move towards a German Christianity. In his view, the problem with the religion was the influence that Judaism had on its development and theology, particularly the writings of Paul. To save religion for the German people – as Germany was still a nominally religious nation – it would be necessary to purge the Christian faith of its Jewish elements. In its place would be a religion that relied on the national characteristics of the German people.¹⁰ In this new faith Jesus would be

⁸ Mosse argues that many of the thinkers who served as inspiration for later *völkisch* theorists made a distinction between the industrial working class, whom they hoped to cast as a different type of peasant, and the true proletariat, who they saw as society's dispossessed. These people needed to be defeated., *ibid.*

⁹ Stern, *Cultural Despair*, 55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40-50.

portrayed as if he were German himself, and his teachings and actions would be more in line with the German national, as opposed to the universal, spirit.¹¹

One of the ways in which this new Germanic faith came to express itself was in the belief that Germany needed to be redeemed. Such redemption would come only in political form, in a person who emerged to save the German people and restore the mythologized social order *völkisch* thinkers talked about. The example *par excellence* of such thinking came from the author Moeller van den Bruck who, in his book *Das Dritte Reich*, spoke of just such a political figure. This leader would stand above all parties and factions, unite all of the German people together, and do away with un-German tendencies like capitalism and socialism. Written in the early 1920s, just immediately after the First World War, *Das Dritte Reich* prefigures in many ways the mythologizing of the leader that the Nazi Party took advantage of after they came to power.¹²

Patriotic Societies and the Political Pressure Groups

While the ideological musing of *völkisch* intellectuals helped to provide one cornerstone of the patriotic movement, it was nothing without the structure provided by social organizations and political pressure groups. Working both inside and outside government groups such as the *Wandervögel* and the Pan-German League not only helped to spread and popularize the radical ideals of *völkisch* nationalism, but they also helped to provide a place where like-minded people could meet and organize. In this way they proved a crucial link between the musings of disparate, and often obscure, intellectuals and post-World War I paramilitary organizations.

¹¹ Mosse, *Crisis in German Ideology*, 31-40.

¹² Stern, *Cultural Despair*, 260-61.

The role of education was critical in helping to propagate *völkisch* ideas to a wide audience. Many educators came to see in the ideas of a Paul de Lagarde or Julius Langbehn the key to greater cultural unity, which in their minds was the greatest challenge of the day. As Mosse points out, a great many of the teachers of the late Wilhelmine period, as well as the early Weimar Republic, came of age in the 1870s and 1880s when *völkisch* ideology first came to be articulated. They imbibed it at the university through the fraternities and student social clubs which were known for their staunch conservatism. As a result, when this generation became teachers they assigned the writings of *völkisch* authors in class and authored texts that subscribed to Germanic ideology. Many of the history books of this period contained passages and allusions to ideas that would have pleased Lagarde.¹³ Other educators, inspired by the call for spiritual renewal in the nation, set out to create their own schools that would serve as models. Nearly forty such schools were created over a period of twenty-five years from 1898 to the mid-1920s.¹⁴

Through their efforts, this generation of teachers helped to lay the groundwork for the youth movement of the early twentieth century. Started in 1901 by Karl Fischer, the *Wandervögel*, as they were known, consisted of bourgeois youth who rejected the staid society of Imperial Germany in preference for returning to the mountains and forests of the Fatherland. Hikes in forests and up mountains, camping trips to the German countryside, and communal existence typified their activities. It was a revolt by German youth against the world of their parents, but this revolt had an ideological ring to it.

¹³ Mosse, *German Ideology*, 149-57.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157-62. Interestingly enough school reform was an important movement amongst those people who subscribed to *völkisch* ideology. They believed that education needed to be more nature-based, while academic subjects should be taught with an emphasis on creating a love of the homeland, or *Heimat*, and an appreciation of the uniqueness of the *Volk*.

Many youth joined to reconnect to nature, to escape the drudgery of urban life, and to lay bare the hypocrisy of modern industrial society. In this way their emphasis dovetailed very closely to the ideological precepts of *völkisch* intellectuals. They saw politics as practiced in the *Wilhelmine Reich* as superficial and alien. Further, they desired a unified existence within their own group typified in a strong leader. Most *Wandervögel* groups were organized around a particular leader who greatly affected the structure and ideology of the local troupe despite the national organization that linked them together. Finally, all local bodies of the youth movement had to deal with the issue of Jewish membership, which – despite the variety of opinions – showed the impact of *völkisch* ideas.¹⁵ Many of the soldiers who fought in World War I, and who later joined the patriotic movement, had participated in the *Wandervögel* as youths.

Organizations based on *völkisch* ideology were not confined to the areas of education and the youth movement, other groups were founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that tried to put the ideological precepts of Germanic ideologues into practice. These organizations often were small and cut off from mainstream society. Utopian in nature, groups like the *Artamanen* of Willibald Hentschel sought to create the kind of peasant-centered culture that lay at the heart of *völkisch* theory. In this regard they were not that far removed from the utopian socialist communities that sprang up earlier in the nineteenth century. Many people who would

¹⁵ Ibid., 171-89. The issue over admittance of Jews into the *Wandervögel* divided along four distinct lines. One group desired admittance with no restrictions, while another wanted to bar any Jews from joining. Still another faction believed that only assimilated Jews should be admitted, while the final viewpoint argued that the Jews were “an autonomous and separate *Volk* that had merits similar to those of the German *Volk*.”

make a name for themselves in the post-war patriotic movement, and even the Nazi Party, like Julius Streicher and Walther Darre, participated in such organizations.¹⁶

While the *Artamanen* and related groups were small communities, the patriotic associations were much larger entities. The various patriotic associations formed beginning in the 1880s; the last of them was founded in the year just prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Their role in the public life of Imperial Germany has been quite controversial. Often these organizations were looked upon as appendages to the ruling caste, a way to direct the political life in Germany away from the need for greater freedom and democracy. More recent scholarship has emphasized the rather popular nature of these groups. They provided an outlet for political agitation outside the normal political process, which allowed them to be critical of the government while being supportive of the state. They also struggled against those elements of the *Reich* who seemed to oppose both their policies and the socio-political makeup of the state itself.¹⁷

The first of these patriotic associations, the German Colonial Society, was founded in 1887. Like the more famous Pan-German League, which became infamous the world over prior to 1914, the Colonial Society went through several incarnations before the final organization was founded. Its purpose was to push for the acquisition of overseas colonies for the German Reich, a popular cause in the 1880s. Despite its advocacy, German possession of overseas colonies did not depend upon the efforts of the Colonial Society, or its predecessors. However, as Roger Chickering has noted, the

¹⁶ Ibid., 108-25.

¹⁷ Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 1-15. For another excellent summary of the historical debate over the patriotic societies see, Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914*, (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 1-18.

propaganda efforts undertaken in support for the establishment of colonies had a dramatic effect on the future course of German politics. The full-throated support that the Colonial Society gave to Bismarck, and his government, when his policies ran parallel to their aspirations provided a crucial element for support in the Chancellor's struggles with the Reichstag. However, when Bismarck decided to halt colonial expansion the Colonial Society expressed its frustration towards the imperial government, something that would occur frequently within all the patriotic associations from 1890 to 1914.¹⁸

As mentioned previously the patriotic associations served in many ways as an outlet for mass politics in the Wilhelmine Reich. Partly this was due to the political structure of Imperial Germany which had many of the trappings of a parliamentary democracy, but none of the responsibilities. Because the Chancellor was appointed by the Emperor, and served at his pleasure, there was never any real chance for the political parties to positively affect political change. Laws and budgets originated with the government, depriving the parliament of the ability to introduce legislation or to hold the government accountable. This did not mean that the parties in the *Reichstag* were completely ineffectual. They voted on the budget, and this allowed the political parties to have some influence on the laws that were passed as well as the fiscal affairs of the *Reich*, but for the most part politics in Wilhelmine Germany represented little more than a sideshow, something that was only of interest to people who had some stake in the system.

It was in this bizarre relationship between the Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*) and the Imperial Government that the patriotic societies were able to have an influence on

¹⁸ Chickering, *We Men*, 33-40.

government policy. Many of these organizations were closely tied to one or more of the political parties represented in the parliament, and this allowed them to create dissension in the parliament in support of their agenda.¹⁹ Equally important, groups such as the Colonial Society and the German Navy League often had extensive ties to various commercial and industrial interests that benefitted from the fulfillment of the organization's program. German business had a tremendous stake in the government of the *Reich*, particularly after 1878 when Bismarck erected tariffs in an effort to please both industry and agriculture. Since both were politically represented by political parties in the parliament, the government paid particular attention to their needs. For instance the various Navy Bills passed in 1898 and 1907, and supported by the German Navy League, served the interests of heavy industry who stood to profit from the building of a large fleet.²⁰

The social makeup of the patriotic societies also contributed to their growing influence. While many of the leaders tended to come from elite circles, much of the membership represented a wide cross section of the German middle class, from university professors to businessmen. This social class tended to be far more nationalistic than either the *Junker* aristocracy or the growing proletariat. They feared the rise of the industrial working class and saw in their membership a way to fight the rising specter of socialism. Membership also gave them a chance to participate in what seemed important national matters beyond the mundane business of everyday politics. The support of this

¹⁹ Ibid. The Colonial Society seemed to play a small part in the downfall of Bismarck, where they were well-represented amongst the coalition of parties that supported the government, though other factors were more important.

²⁰ Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, 68-94.

class was something that German chancellors from Bismarck on sought to obtain, as they seemed key to preventing political change within the Reich.²¹

Ideologically, the patriotic societies promoted an aggressive German nationalism, one that was very compatible with the aggressive “world politics” of William II. They also adopted, to varying degrees, aspects of the *völkisch* worldview. The most important of these was the belief that Germany was rent with internal division and this would need to be overcome if a truly national body were to emerge. Each of the patriotic societies defined this differently, but every one of them placed special onus on the need to fight the socialist movement mentioned above. The spread of socialism amongst Germany’s industrial working class was one of the key political and social struggles of the late nineteenth century, providing the pretext for Bismarck’s repressive Anti-Socialist Laws and helping to cause panic for the ruling elites as the SPD’s block in the parliament grew ever larger in the years preceding the First World War. For the leaders and members of the patriotic societies the Social Democratic Party represented a dangerous development, one that competed with traditional centers of authority for the obedience and devotion of Germany’s workers, preventing them from being fully integrated into the nation as they conceived it.²²

To combat these divisions the patriotic societies argued for a more aggressive policy of German expansion; indeed, this was the one thing they all agreed on. They differed to a certain extent as to where this expansion would take place. Most of the societies wanted to see Germany pursue overseas colonies like other European powers.

²¹ Marilyn Coetzee, *The German Army League: Popular Nationalism in Wilhelmine Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 80-97. See also, Eley, *Reshaping*, 118-139, and Chickering, *We Men*, 102-18.

²² Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, 160-76.

In their view the acquisition of colonies was a sign of importance and prestige for the *Reich*. This was the *raison d'être* of the Colonial Society and was equally important for the German Naval League, for colonies helped to justify the building of a navy with worldwide reach.²³ Other groups desired expansion on the European continent. The Association of the Eastern Marches and the Pan-German League both expressed a desire to forgo colonies overseas for the conquest of large territories in Eastern Europe, though Chickering notes that, for the Pan-Germans, this was but prelude to conquest of overseas colonies later.²⁴

German expansion would inevitably involve conflict with other powers, and the patriotic societies were more than willing to see this happen. In fact their ideology was predicated upon it. Many within the societies believed war to be inevitable and that the only way the German *Reich* would survive such a cataclysm would be to aggressively build up its armed forces and pursue an imperial policy. The German Army League provided the penultimate expression of this vision. Founded in 1913, this organization was dedicated to helping to enlarge the German army and preserve the special place that it held in society. According to its leaders the German Army League helped to prepare the population for the sacrifices necessary in the coming conflict. To them war was a spiritually purifying experience, one that purged the decadence of society. As such, it was part and parcel of humanity's natural development. These Social Darwinist views led the leadership of the Army League to adopt maximalist terminology to describe the conflicts they envisioned. In their opinion war was not a struggle for resources or for

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Chickering, *We Men*, 79-80.

outdated notions such as the balance of power, but for the survival of a people and the destruction of the enemy.²⁵

It is in this context that we must look at the ideology of the Pan-German League. This organization, though smaller than other patriotic societies, combined almost all of the elements mentioned above. They also were the most *völkisch* of the patriotic societies, as their beliefs and attitudes betrayed a paranoia that was common amongst those who subscribed to Germanic Ideology. For members of the League the world was divided into friends and enemies, and the list of the *Reich's* friends was small indeed; so small that it excluded just about every major power in Europe minus the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This highlighted for them the need for expansion, for if Germany was to survive it would need to be a state that encompassed all Germans wherever they lived. Like many in the *völkisch* movement they dreamed of a new *Reich*, one that included Germans who lived in the Habsburg Monarchy, Russia, and northern and western Europe, and they strenuously advocated for policies that would make this German superstate a reality – often to the embarrassment and consternation of the Imperial Government.²⁶

However, for the Pan-Germans it was not enough to simply expand, they also had to purge Germany of all those elements that threatened its internal tranquility. Members of the league obsessed over order and saw German society as sliding ever closer to chaos, with workers, women, Poles, and other minorities demanding greater political and social equality, a rapacious capitalist system destroying the last vestiges of the old feudal order,

²⁵ Coetzee, *German Army League*, 50-58.

²⁶ Chickering, *We Men*, 74-80 and 122-25. It is important to note that this was the Pan-German ambition at its height. As Germany encountered diplomatic difficulties with countries like Denmark and Belgium, the ambitions tended to be scaled back, *ibid*.

and the slow growth of parliamentarianism and democracy. All of this upset what they believed was the proper order of both society and the world, a hierarchically organized society internally and an external order where the German people stood at the apex of humanity. Internally, they advocated the repression of national minorities, the purging of foreign words out of the German language, and the inculcation of a new appreciation of the uniqueness, and superiority, of German culture in education.²⁷

The Pan-German League also shared the *völkisch* obsession with the position of the Jews in the *Reich*. It was a question that would be taken up frequently in the organization's early years. In their first official program the Pan-Germans stated their opposition to further Jewish immigration to Germany. Because the league saw ethnicity as the crucial division of humanity they believed that the immigration of Jews, most of who came from the Russian Empire, would lead to a greater weakening of the German nation as they saw it. Thus Jews, in this context, were seen in much the same way that the Pan-Germans looked upon Poles or Hungarians. It must be noted that, though there were many antisemites in the Pan-German League from the beginning, there were chapters that had Jewish members, particularly in the larger cities like Berlin or Hamburg, and the question of German-born Jews was handled more delicately than those of the foreign-born.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., 74-97. Chickering notes that one of the most used metaphors by Pan-German writers was that of the flood and the outpost. To these people the German communities in Eastern Europe were outposts in a sea of enemies and were constantly in danger of being overrun, or flooded, by foreign elements. This same imagery was applied to the *Reich* as well, where the country was being overrun by Polish migrant workers coming to work in factories and on farms – a development they believed to be truly dangerous.

²⁸ Mosse, *German Ideology*, 218-22, and Chickering, *We Men*, 230-45. The Pan-German solution for the issue of German-born Jews worked towards a forced assimilation into German culture, an idea that mirrored, if in more extreme form, developments taking place within the German-Jewish community at this time.

All this changed after Heinrich Class became the leader of the Pan-German League in 1908. A believer in the new racial theories then popular, Class was an ardent antisemite who believed that German born Jews were just as dangerous as those who immigrated to Germany from the east. He saw the Jew as the epitome of everything that was un-German, a belief shared by *völkisch* intellectuals. He purged the Pan-Germans of Jewish members and urged that the lives and activities of Jews within Germany be monitored by the government. He pushed for laws that restricted Jewish participation in the German economy, took away or prohibited them from taking jobs in cultural and education fields, and denied them the right to own land. Finally, Class influenced the league to put forward a statement in 1919 saying that the renewal of Germany would only come about through “the removal of Jewish influence.”²⁹

Völkisch nationalism spread to Bavaria in the early years of the twentieth century, but unlike in northern Germany the ideas enunciated by its thinkers found a less than receptive audience. The organizations created in the state to spread *völkisch* ideas tended to be small and had difficulty in recruiting members. The Pan-German League for instance was only able to maintain chapters in Munich and Würzburg, cities that had significant Protestant minorities.³⁰ Other *völkisch* groups, such as Theodor Fritsch’s *Germanen Orden*, also had small memberships. The numbers were so small for this association that the leadership debated closing one of the two main lodges, located in Munich and Nuremberg, in order to save money. The lack of interest in these years prompted remarks that the state was simply not receptive to *völkisch* ideas. As a result

²⁹ Mosse, *German Ideology*, 218-22. In the 1920s Class argued for a Jewish Ordinance that in many ways prefigured the Nuremberg Laws instituted by Hitler in 1935.

³⁰ Chickering, *We Men*, 138-42.

the full flowering of *völkisch* nationalism in Bavaria would not occur until the First World War.³¹

The *völkisch* movement, and the organizations that it inspired or influenced, were critical in creating an atmosphere in which the patriotic movement in Bavaria would flourish after 1918. Their writings created a world view that animated the youth of a generation to reject the bourgeois world of Wilhelmine Germany as seen in the *Artamanen* and the *Wandervögel*. Their discontent over Bismarck's creation in 1871 led them to hope for a more thorough unification, one that brought all Germans together under one state. This desire led the patriotic associations, the Pan-German League above all others, to call for a more expansionist policy, one that was not dimmed either by the diplomatic isolation of Germany prior to war, or its defeat in that war. Finally the patriotic associations of the *Reich* provided a template for political participation that was both extra-parliamentary and oppositional in nature, all the while being nationalistic in its outlook – something that would help to characterize the post-war right in Bavaria.

³¹ Reginald H. Phelps, "Before Hitler Came': Thule Society and Germanen Orden," *The Journal of Modern History* 35, 3, (September 1963): 249-51. The *Germanen Orden* was significant as a predecessor to the *Thule Society*, a small conspiratorial organization that would play an important role in helping to found the Nazi Party, *ibid.*

Chapter 3

War, Revolution, & Repression in Bavaria – 1914-1919

The First World War transformed Bavarian, and by extension German, society. It greatly increased the power of the state in people's lives, brought large scale industrialization to the state, and changed the relationship of Bavarians to the old regime that had existed prior to 1914 on both the state and federal level. More important, radical nationalism on the model of both the *völkisch* movement and the patriotic associations became critical to the maintenance of popular support for the conflict, for as the military stalemate continued, and the country's material condition worsened, discontent began to surface amongst the population that eventually ended in revolution in 1918.

Bavaria and World War I:

Bavarians greeted the outbreak of war on August 1, 1914 in much the same way as their fellow countrymen in other parts of Germany, with an outpouring of patriotism that seemed to convey acceptance, if not jubilation, at the prospect of conflict with the allies. This mood, which manifested itself in parades, impromptu festivals, and public speeches by leading figures, was always more apparent than real. In late July 1914 Bavarian workers protested the growing danger of war in many parts of the kingdom, as they had during previous war scares. Many people, fearing financial ruin, began to withdraw their money from banks – insisting that their paper notes be converted into gold marks. The unease extended even into intellectual circles; the philosopher Oswald Spengler noted that even anarchists seemed to buy into the hyper-nationalistic fervor

being whipped up in this period.¹ Nevertheless these expressions of anxiety ran counter to the prevailing mood, which saw the coming conflict as a relief from the monotony of daily life in Bavaria and Germany.²

The governing elites in Germany and Bavaria did much to encourage this sentiment. Nationalist and conservative papers ran articles extolling the general outpouring of the people in favor of war, seeing in such demonstrations the coming together of all Germans, regardless of class or region, as one people united against its enemies. This mood was given official imprimatur on August 4, 1914 when Kaiser Wilhelm II declared that he recognized “no parties, only Germans.”³ The civil peace, or *Burgfrieden*, as declared by the Kaiser, became more concrete later when all the political parties in the Reichstag, including the Social Democratic Party, voted for the necessary war credits. Thus was created the myth of the “spirit of 1914,” a belief that out of the war a new national community had been created. This powerful sentiment, as Jeffrey Verhey has noted, helped to sustain Germany’s war effort throughout the four long years that followed.⁴

To maintain the German people’s morale, and maintain the ideal of a national community, the political leadership resorted to propaganda. Initially the German government’s attempt to control the flow of information was limited to censoring news about the conflict. More effective methods were hampered to certain degree by the

¹ Martin Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt: Revolution, Inflation, und Moderne: München 1914-1924*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 28-29.

² Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-4.

³ Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*, second ed., (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13.

⁴ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 136-42.

disagreement within the cabinet about how to maintain the civil peace.⁵ As the war progressed this ramshackle apparatus was replaced in favor of one increasingly under the sway of the German military, headed from 1916 by Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. Their efforts to maintain morale revolved around explaining the war to the populace, and the troops, through the use of patriotic instruction. These gatherings, which were first utilized at the front during 1917, featured a variety of speakers who explained the goals of the German government in the war, the causes of the conflict, and the potential consequences of failure. While the efforts at improving morale did not turn out successfully, the use of patriotic instruction – especially within the armed forces – did have an insidious effect; the material used in these lectures were derived in many cases from the ideological program of the Pan-German League, other patriotic societies, and the writings of *völkisch* intellectuals.⁶

The adoption of such rhetoric to drum up support for the war's continuation marked a break between the type of dynastic nationalism that had characterized Imperial Germany prior to 1914 and the kind that would animate post-war patriotic (*vaterländisch*) groups. The new propaganda emphasized Germany's war goals, which were defined by annexations to the east and the creation of a state freed from political strife. It subscribed to the idea, prevalent in some governmental circles, that the events of July/August 1914 marked the creation of a true national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) – one where all Germans regardless of class, religion, or political affiliation could join together in supporting the state. For the people who supported these ideas it was not necessary to

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda, and Total War, 1914-1918: The Sins of Omission*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 201-221.

promise reforms to the political system in order to rally support for the war effort, as those around Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg argued, but only to achieve the final victory in which Germany would gain the spoils of victory.⁷

Bavaria, in particular, became a home to the radical right groups, and those who supported the “national” cause. While generally supportive at the beginning of the conflict, organizations like the Pan-German League became increasingly critical of the actions of the German government. They disapproved of the military strategies employed and, more specifically, the domestic policies pursued by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. Many articles in the publications of these groups increasingly came to be censored. To escape these restrictions most groups moved their publications and offices to Munich for the remainder of the war, where they continued to criticize the government.⁸ Many of the people who helped to create the radical right in Bavaria after World War I, like the ultra-nationalist publisher Julius Lehmann, became active during the conflict.

Despite the efforts of the army, or the virulence of the patriotic associations – and publishers like Lehmann, most Bavarians turned decisively against the war by 1917. Several factors helped to explain deteriorating attitudes amongst the populace. The most important of these was the material deprivation caused by war. Munich, like other German cities saw the consumption of food drop precipitously from the beginning of 1915. To deal with this problem the authorities instituted rationing and tried to get people to use substitutes for products like sausages and sauerkraut; turnips becoming a

⁷ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 139-140.

⁸ Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 30-31.

universally-consumed, and universally-hated, product. People in Bavaria did their best to evade these restrictions. They bought food on the black market, bribed public officials for extra rations, and raided rural farms for their produce. In 1916 food riots broke out in Munich. Government authorities dealt harshly with those who violated wartime rationing.⁹

Deprivation, however, was not just confined to food but covered many facets of life in Bavaria. During the war Munich grew in size as armaments factories and other war-related industries were relocated there, leading to an increase of workers drawn from the Bavarian countryside and other parts of the country. Unfortunately there was not enough housing for these workers, as most building materials were expropriated for military use. Additionally, small businesses were hit hard by the war because they did not have the capital, or workforce, to fill the production quotas required by the government. The countryside was also hit hard, as farmers found that they were required to grow more food, but were not paid the price they believed they had earned. By 1918 discontent in Munich, and throughout Bavaria, was widespread.¹⁰

The Revolution of November 1918

Revolutionary fervor gripped Bavaria in the fall of 1918 as German forces were collapsing, but intimations of the coming uprising percolated throughout the year. At the beginning of 1918 there were massive demonstrations in both Munich and Nuremberg

⁹ David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 57-65. Münchener forays into the countryside were not only strongly frowned upon by the government, but by the farmers in the countryside as well who often formed armed bands to patrol their fields – beating up, and even killing, those who would steal their crops.

¹⁰ Much of the discontent in Bavaria had an anti-Prussian bias, and was reflective of Germany's unique constitutional arrangement, cultural bias (Bavaria was the second largest state after Prussia), and the propaganda of the ultra-nationalist right – something that was important in the post-war period, *ibid*.

involving thousands of workers, the first such disturbance during the war – in fact the first to have occurred in Bavaria since 1848.¹¹ The protesters demanded an immediate end to the war without annexations. Furthermore they demanded that the monarchy be abolished in favor of a people's state, or *Volksstaat*. The authorities reacted swiftly to these protests by arresting the ringleaders, the most famous of these being Kurt Eisner, a transplanted litterateur from Berlin who came to play an important role in Bavaria's revolution.¹²

Though suppression worked in these early months, by the fall everything had changed so much that the government began putting out peace feelers to the allies and promising reform at home. In Bavaria, like elsewhere, this involved bringing the Social Democrats into the government in the hopes of forestalling a Bolshevik-style revolution. The Social Democratic Party, despite its revolutionary rhetoric and Marxist heritage, had become thoroughly dedicated to reforming society slowly through the democratic process. While whispers of revolution were everywhere, the leaders of the Social Democrats – most especially Erhard Auer – were determined to chart a more moderate path. In October the SPD, along with Centre Party, entered into negotiations which produced a constitutional monarchy in Bavaria.¹³

The arrangement was superseded by events. Constitutional reform was passed in the Bavarian Diet (*Landtag*) on November 2; by November 5, 1918 revolution had already broken out within the High Seas Fleet at Kiel. News of the uprising had an electrifying effect throughout Germany. In Bavaria the voice of revolution came to be

¹¹ Allan Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria, 1918-1919: The Eisner Regime and the Soviet Republic*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 75-80.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 81-85.

symbolized in the person of Kurt Eisner, who had helped organize the general strikes in Munich and Nuremberg in January. A member of the Independent Social Democratic Party, Eisner moved to Munich from Berlin in 1906. A journalist by trade, he became a staff writer for the *Munich Post*, which was the major Social Democratic daily in southern Germany. During the war, like many German socialists, Eisner parted ways with the Majority Social Democrats and joined the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) which had split with the larger party over the issue of support for the war. Eisner was an unrelenting critic of the both the war and the German imperial system, something that would put him at odds with patriotic groups; almost as much as his Jewish heritage did.¹⁴

Upon his release from prison on October 14, 1918 Eisner rapidly became the voice for those Germans, socialist or otherwise, who were sick of the war and wanted to change the German state, and Bavaria, root and branch. Prior to his release Eisner had been entered by the Independent Socialists as a candidate to succeed Georg von Vollmar, the long-term Social Democratic parliamentary chief who retired due to illness. This election pitted Eisner against Auer, who was the candidate for the majority SPD. In the campaign Eisner made his most daring statements against the war and the Bavarian monarchy, which he believed was just as complicit in causing, and prolonging, the war as the Hohenzollern royal family in Prussia. In an October 23 speech in the Schwäbingerbräu Eisner claimed that a people's state that had a Wittelsbach sitting atop it as ruler was no real change at all. Two days later Eisner made another speech in which

¹⁴ Ibid, 53-74.

he said that, for Germany to move forward, the Kaiser and his sons must abdicate and the country become a republic.¹⁵

The campaign between Eisner and Auer was still ongoing when revolution broke out in early November, and it was in this context that revolution came to Bavaria. On November 7, 1918 both the SPD and USPD held a joint rally in Munich's Theresienwiese to call for an end to the war and forge a common vision for the future. While both parties agreed to a series of proposals – the abdication of the Kaiser, the placing of the army under the constitution, and the democratization of public life, it was Eisner's address to the crowd, lasting over an hour that sparked revolution in Munich.¹⁶ Afterwards the crowd, numbering near 50,000 marched to a temporary armory, seizing guns and ammunition. Over the remainder of the day revolutionaries seized other parts of the city – beer halls, military posts, and the Diet, from which Eisner proclaimed a Bavarian republic. By the end of the day King Ludwig III had left the city for the countryside, and later exile, bringing the old order in Bavaria to an end.¹⁷

Eisner's Death and the Radicalization of the Revolution

The success of the revolution in Munich led to the establishment of a republican form of government in Bavaria. This government was headed by Kurt Eisner, who had led the revolutionary bands on November 7. Eisner had been active during the day, not only speaking to the large crowd at the Theresienwiese, but also organizing new political forms to take the place of the old guard. Under his guidance the first Worker's, Soldier's,

¹⁵ Franz Schade, *Kurt Eisner und die bayerische Sozialdemokratie*, Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1961), 51-52.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 54-61.

¹⁷ Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 76-79.

and Farmer's Councils (*Räte*) were set up.¹⁸ These councils, patterned on the Soviets (councils) of the second Russian Revolution, began the task of bringing about reform within Bavaria. Their existence, tied closely to the political prestige of Eisner, and the resistance it engendered from the SPD and other elements in society decisively influenced the development of the patriotic movement in the years to come.

The first official act of the high council of the soldiers, workers, and farmers was to name Kurt Eisner as the new minister-president of Bavaria and, along with him, the entire cabinet. They did this despite the fact that the high council itself had been unelected and hastily put together.¹⁹ In fact almost all of the councils throughout Bavaria and Germany had been hastily put together. The councils swept into the power vacuum that had been created by the collapse of traditional government. It was hoped by those who composed and supported them that the councils would become in the words of one enthusiast, "the fulfillment of their (the Proletariat's) social hopes and longings, which, despite democracy, have been previously unfulfilled."²⁰ This was certainly the goal of Eisner, who argued that the councils be given a prominent place in the new republican government. In his view they would serve as a bulwark to the parliament – a kind of secondary parliament to ensure further reforms.²¹

For Eisner the role of the councils was vital to the success of the revolution. Bavaria had up to 1918 been ruled by monarchical government. Despite the existence of a provincial diet, Bavaria's politics tended to be conservative – owing to the power of the

¹⁸ Ibid. See also, Schade, *Kurt Eisner*, 54-61.

¹⁹ Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 111-113.

²⁰ Eberhard Kolb, "Rätewirklichkeit und Räte-Ideologie in der deutschen Revolution von 1918/19," in *Vom Kaiserreich zum Weimarer Republik*, herausgegeben von Eberhard Kolb, (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972), 165.

²¹ Schade, *Kurt Eisner*, 74-76.

countryside – and Catholic, reflecting the importance of the Catholic Church in Bavarian society and its position among the elites. Eisner understood that his goals for reform could be undermined by the conservative political parties, the Catholic Center party, and even by his coalition partners, the SPD, within the parliament. In this vein it would be necessary to use the councils to serve as a counterpoint to the Diet, which Eisner believed would tend towards more conservative policies.²²

Needless to say the position of the councils was controversial within the Bavarian cabinet. Though supported by Eisner and the Independent Socialists, the Social Democrats were conflicted about keeping the councils. Some members of the cabinet believed that they were too similar to the Soviets in Russia that the Bolsheviks had used to come to power in 1917. Furthermore, creating multiple lines of authority had the potential to create anarchy within the state as government agencies would not know whose edicts to follow. Auer, the most senior member of the cabinet for the SPD, believed that there was no legal basis for the councils, but favored keeping them so long as they could evolve into a more traditional parliamentary chamber. This viewpoint gradually became the consensus, and allowed Eisner to preserve the councils but only as an advisory body to the diet.²³

The dispute over the allocation of political power was not the only point of contention within the young revolutionary government. Eisner would spar with his coalition partners over a variety of topics. Foreign policy in particular was a flashpoint of controversy. Allan Mitchell noted that the revolution in Germany and Bavaria produced

²² Ibid. See also, Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 116-26 and 160-65.

²³ Schade, *Kurt Eisner*, 74-76.

nearly opposite results which corresponded to, in many ways, the antagonism that always existed between Berlin and Munich. The revolution in the capital produced a revolutionary government that was dominated by the Social Democrats, which hoped to maintain continuity and order, with the Independent Socialists in a minority position in the cabinet. In Bavaria, by contrast, the revolutionary government was led by the Independent Socialists with the Social Democrats in the background. Eisner and his cohorts, while concerned with maintaining order, were far more interested in a clean break with the policies, and even the elites, of the past.²⁴

The most dramatic example of this occurred in the area of foreign policy. Eisner hoped, like most Germans, that the very fact of the revolution and the creation of a republican government would persuade the allied powers, most especially U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, to negotiate an honorable peace with the new Germany. While the government in Berlin tried to gauge the attitude of the Entente powers through the Disarmament Commission and the terms of the armistice then being enforced, Eisner believed that only by exposing the corruption of the old imperial elites – thus taking responsibility for the conflict – could Germany hope to gain favorable terms. The Bavarian leader had a chance to put his ideas into action during the weeks following the November revolution. On November 10, 1918 he issued a proclamation aimed directly at the western powers in which he claimed that those who “bore and shared responsibility” for the conflict had been swept away in the revolution, and that this same revolution was now under threat from the harsh armistice conditions. Even more provocative was Eisner’s publishing of Bavarian state documents from July and August 1914 that showed

²⁴ Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 122-26.

the role that the imperial government played in encouraging the Austrians to go to war with Serbia. This controversy, which occurred against the backdrop of a conference of provincial leaders in Berlin on November 23, 1918, helped to deepen the differences not only between Berlin and Munich, but also within his own ruling coalition.²⁵

The issue of parliamentary elections also led to conflict amongst Eisner's cabinet. After the revolution the cabinet promised parliamentary elections at the earliest possible opportunity. However, much of November passed without movement on the subject. As noted above Eisner viewed the Bavarian parliament with suspicion because many of the parties within the body, particularly the conservative and middle class ones, would be resistant to the type of reforms he hoped to carry out within the state. Furthermore he believed that not enough time had passed in which the citizens of the province could be "liberated" to vote for the Independent Socialists, which he saw as the vehicle for reform. However Eisner's Social Democratic coalition partners saw this as a delaying tactic and forced him to call for parliamentary elections to be held on January 12, 1919.²⁶

Eisner's decision to hold elections in January had been taken at a cabinet meeting on December 5, 1918 – just slightly less than one month after the revolution had taken place. While his coalition partners saw elections as a way to regain the initiative in creating a new order in Bavaria, some of the more ardent revolutionaries saw in elections the beginnings of reaction.²⁷ Many of these people believed that Eisner himself was not a true revolutionary, but more of a traditional, bourgeois politician who looked to create a more humane version of the old order. Others were inspired by the success of Lenin and

²⁵ Ibid., 126-35.

²⁶ Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 86-87.

²⁷ Ibid.

the Bolsheviks in Russia. These radicals on the left coalesced around Erich Mühsam, an inveterate critic of Eisner, and on the following day stormed the offices of several bourgeois papers in the city, the most prominent being the *Bayerische Kurier*, and “socialized” them. Additionally, they kidnapped Erhard Auer, the most prominent of the Social Democratic members of the cabinet, and forced him to resign his post. These demonstrations were brought under control and dispersed only through Eisner’s personal intervention; and this was just the beginning. A few days later, on December 11, 1918 members of the Independent Socialists, and more radical members of the councils, formed a Spartacus group in Munich, one dedicated to pushing the revolution forward.²⁸

The threat from the left epitomized by Mühsam and the more radical members of the councils was mirrored by threats emanating from the radical right. During the course of the war numerous *völkisch* groups had been established in Munich. The most prominent of these was the Thule Society. Formed in 1918, the Thule was an outgrowth of Theodor Fritsch’s *Hammerbund* and *Germanen Orden*, both of which had been organized in the years just prior to 1914. The second of these organizations operated in total secrecy, much like the Thule Society would in 1918/19. Conspiratorial in nature, the group only admitted those who could prove pure *Aryan* ancestry as members. They were heavily antisemitic, dabbled in mystical religious ideas such as Theosophy, and saw themselves as an elite organization.²⁹

²⁸ Schade, *Kurt Eisner*, 76-79. Eisner himself was at this meeting, but spoke out against the creation of the Spartacus group, arguing that the German people were not the Russians, preferred to live in an ordered society, and that radical groups, and their activities, disturbed the actions of the provisional government in setting up a more permanent government.

²⁹ Hermann Gilbhard, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft: vom okkulten Mummenschanz zum Hakenkreuz*, (München: Kiessling, 1994), 44-48.

The Thule Society and other radical right groups in Munich coalesced around the publisher Julius Lehmann, who had been an active opponent of the political left during the war. In the aftermath of the revolution Lehmann began to work in a concerted fashion to overthrow the revolutionary government. He made contact with the Thule Society and urged them to create an armed militia for this purpose, the *Thule Kampfbund*. As David Clay Large notes, this organization would have an enormous impact on the future of right-wing politics in Bavaria during the Weimar Republic. Several people who would become important Nazis, like Hans Frank, Rudolph Hess, and Alfred Rosenberg, were members of the fighting society. The party itself was also an offshoot of this group, created by Thule member Anton Drexler after the Munich police infiltrated and broke up the militia. Most important, the Thule Society would be implicated, though not directly involved, in the assassination of Kurt Eisner.³⁰

The events leading up to Eisner's death were bound up in the maneuvers that accompanied the Diet elections of January 12, 1919. Though the number of voters nearly trebled from the most recent general election of 1912, the result followed what Allan Mitchell called predictable results. The Bavarian People's Party (BVP) won a plurality of seats in the diet, but the Social Democrats in conjunction with the German Democratic Party (DDP), were able to create a working majority in the chamber.³¹ The Independent Socialists of Kurt Eisner did not improve their share of the vote total at all, and the minister president's appeals for a united socialist front went unheeded. By early February the cabinet essentially made decisions without him, especially the opening of

³⁰ Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 88-91. The Thule Society, in preparation for its coup, procured weapons from local army units and stored these in Lehmann's publishing house. This fact, along with the information an informer provided to police, landed the leading members of the society, and Lehmann, in jail; thus explaining their lack of involvement in Eisner's murder.

³¹ Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 213-30.

the parliament where Eisner would be forced to resign. In the days that immediately preceded the first session of the parliament, Eisner tried to revive the councils as a counterpoint to the parliament in a vain effort to save his position, leading to charges that Eisner intended a second revolution. Though these were false, it sealed his fate within the cabinet, which essentially forced his resignation.³²

It was at the opening of the Diet on February 21, 1919 that Eisner's resignation, along with that of the rest of the cabinet, was to take place. He never got a chance to deliver it. Before entering the parliament building Kurt Eisner was assassinated by Count Anton Arco-Valley, an ex-soldier.³³ Like many demobilized soldiers, Arco-Valley had the misfortune to run into radicals in the streets of Munich, a fact that instilled within him a profound hatred of the revolution. He had tried to join the Thule Society but was rejected, partially from rumored Jewish heritage on his mother's side – the rumor of the Thule Society's involvement seemed to only inflame the councils and the Spartacists. The assassin himself was shot by Eisner's bodyguards, though he survived to stand trial. The murder shocked the residents of Munich, turning a controversial politician into a martyr overnight and, more importantly, turning the revolution more radical.³⁴

The Räterepublik

Hans Fenske noted that there were four major phases of the 1918 revolution in Bavaria. The second phase, in his view, began with the murder of Kurt Eisner by Arco-

³² Ibid., 242-72.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 90-103.

Valley and was marked by a radicalization of the councils.³⁵ This began almost immediately. The day after the assassination a central council (*Zentralrat*) was set up by representatives of the existing councils. Headed by Ernst Niekisch, a member of the Social Democrats who had supported Eisner, this body claimed that the parliament had abandoned its legal responsibilities, and as such they claimed the powers of the Diet themselves.³⁶ They promptly declared martial law for the capital and armed workers with weapons from munitions depots around the city. These armed workers would patrol the streets of Munich for weeks after the shooting, demanding revenge for Eisner's murder. In this period hostages were taken from prominent families and organizations in the city, with the promise that they would be shot if further counter-revolutionary activity was not halted.³⁷

The deliberations of the central council that would take place in late February and early March reflected the confusion that had marked much of the Bavarian revolution. It reopened the issue of the councils and reflected the three way struggle that was now taking place between the Social Democrats, Independent Socialists, and the Spartacist groups in the capital. In many ways the Social Democrats were in a defensive position. Many members of the councils believed that Eisner's assassin had been paid to do so by Erhard Auer, who headed the SPD faction in the Diet.³⁸ Now, in the last few weeks of February 1919 the Social Democrats moved to take control of the central council, doing

³⁵ Hans Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus in Bayern nach 1918*, (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1969), 42-46.

³⁶ Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 275-80.

³⁷ Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 103-5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

more so out of fear that they would lose the allegiance of the masses than out of conviction about its efficacy.³⁹

The goal of the Social Democratic members of the central council was the same as before Eisner's death, to make the transition to parliamentary rule as soon as possible. In this they were joined by the Independent Socialists, which had not done well in the January 12 elections. In the deliberations of the central council, both parties agreed that the parliament itself would be called back into session as soon as possible, and that the most recent election results would serve as the basis for the body. The question of the councils would be decided by this body.⁴⁰ These decisions were very controversial for many members of the Independent Socialists, which hoped to further the development of the councils. Like the Social Democrats, the USPD feared losing the masses to more radical elements – in this case to the Spartacist groups within the capital. These organizations were much more radical than the Independent Social Democrats and were composed of people who favored a Russian-style revolution in Bavaria. Many of the leaders of these factions were émigrés like Max Levien, who was an ardent admirer of Lenin. Though members of the Spartacist groups had participated in the central council and the Congress of Councils, they walked out on the deliberations once the final decision to call the parliament back into session had been taken.⁴¹

When the Diet finally was recalled on March 7, 1919 it installed a new cabinet headed by Johannes Hoffmann as Minister President. A member of the Social Democratic Party who had served in Eisner's cabinet, Hoffmann was determined to steer

³⁹ Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 80-81.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 279-80.

⁴¹ Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 103-5.

a middle course between the right and the left, a prudent course, but one that infuriated both the left and the right. As it turned out events would overwhelm Hoffmann's government. Economic dislocation engendered by the war, and the continuing food crisis prevented the Bavarian government from instituting policies designed to help its citizens.⁴² Furthermore many Bavarians, particularly supporters of the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), were incensed by the new Weimar constitution which had been sent to Bavaria for confirmation. The document stripped Bavaria of many of the rights and privileges that had characterized the state's relationship to the *Reich* under the Hohenzollerns: a separate army, a separate diplomatic corps, its own Post and Telegraph, control over its own railroads, and the right to collect its own taxes on beer. For many Bavarians this was a crippling blow. They erroneously believed that the federal relationship that had tied them to the imperial government would continue under the Weimar Republic. When this did not take place many urged for secession from Germany. Unfortunately for those who urged such a course the Hoffmann government was content to maintain Bavaria within Germany, provoking howls of outrage and unflattering comparisons to Eisner.⁴³

These problems only served to further convince the Spartacists and Communists that the time was ripe for a second revolution. They were confirmed in their aspirations by events in Hungary, where a revolution had brought a Soviet-style republic to power in Budapest under the leadership of Bela Kun. When they met in Augsburg on April 3, 1919 they voted to call for a Soviet republic in Bavaria. This resolution, when delivered

⁴² Ibid., 105-7. Munich in particular was hard hit by economic times, with unemployment – to the tune of 40,000 out of work, the Black Market, and financial insolvency the major concerns of Hoffmann and his cabinet.

⁴³ Werner Zimmermann, *Bayern und das Reich, 1918-1923: der bayerische Föderalismus zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, (München: Richard Pflaum Verlag, 1953), 48-65.

to Munich, was met with silence from the government, as Hoffmann had left the city to confer with officials in Berlin. In the absence of Hoffmann the situation quickly spiraled out of control. The Central Council ordered that the Diet, due to meet on April 8, 1919 not be called back into session. The next day, on April 5, 1919 representatives of the cabinet, the Central Council, and the Communists and Spartacists met at the ministry of Military Affairs to find a solution to the impasse, at which Hoffmann's representative called for a councils republic, or *Räterepublik* – which he did as a way to draw the Communists into a coalition with the SPD, something that a congress of the party, meeting in Nuremberg rejected outright. However, the die was cast. A rump session of the Central Council deposed the Hoffmann cabinet and declared Bavaria to be a Soviet republic. The *Räterepublik* was born.⁴⁴

The Suppression of the *Räterepublik*

In his history of the Bavarian revolution Allan Mitchell noted that it proceeded differently than elsewhere in Germany. The uprising there not only produced results far earlier than other parts of the country, but had also lasted longer. In fact, in northern Germany, especially in the capital of Berlin, the revolution's most radical phase came in January 1919. During that month Spartacist groups, led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, attempted to seize control of the city. During the uprising the Social Democratic government turned to para-military formations, the notorious *Freikorps*, to put down the uprising. They did so with great severity. However, because Eisner had successfully created a coalition government in Munich, Bavaria did not have a turn towards radicalism until after his murder in February 1919. So, by the time the

⁴⁴ Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 300-10.

Räterepublik was suppressed at the beginning of May 1919, the infrastructure, and the manner, for doing so existed and was ready to use.⁴⁵

Initially, though, the Hoffmann government was determined to deal with this problem on its own, hoping to preserve some autonomy from Berlin in the process. The problem for the cabinet, sitting in Bamberg, was that this necessitated a military solution – namely the conquest of Munich. This answer meant that they needed forces and the political will to use them. Both were in short supply in early April. For much of the week following April 8th the cabinet tried to fix the situation by quarantine and negotiation. When these proved fruitless, Hoffmann turned to a military solution, but the means in which the government sought to retake Munich – inserting forces into the city to create a reverse *coup d'état* – proved to be disastrous. Instead of deposing the *Räterepublik* and restoring the Hoffmann government to its position, the insurgents were defeated at the Munich Train Station, where they made a final stand. It even led to further radicalization as the Communists seized control from the Central Council and established their rule in Munich.⁴⁶

In the aftermath of the government's failed assault on the capital, the cabinet sent out a call on April 14, 1919 for the creation a civilian militia, or *Volkswehr*. Initially these formations were to carry out the fight against the *Räterepublik* on their own, without help from Berlin. However, these forces proved to be wholly inadequate. Organized two days after Hoffmann's proclamation, and three days after the Palm Sunday assault, Bavarian forces were routed by the Munich Soviet's Red Army in

⁴⁵ Ibid., 274-5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 310-20.

Dachau. In reports that came back to Bamberg it was said that some of the soldiers refused to engage with the enemy. Reluctantly, the Bavarian Minister-President asked Berlin for help.⁴⁷

Part of the reason for the poor state of militias formed under the auspices of the Bavarian government was the long wait before forming such groups. This resulted in recruits that were not soldiers in any real sense, but citizens with little to no military experience. Even groups that formed prior to the Bavarian government's involvement suffered from this deficiency. Rudolf Kanzler, who would be important in the formation and running of the *Einwohnerwehr*, began to form a circle around him in Rosenheim in December 1918. The men recruited to staff this militia tended to be men of distinction. Shopkeepers, butchers, tailors, and other established men answered the call to take up arms in Rosenheim. Few had any military experience at all. The result was that these initial paramilitary groups were small; the Rosenheim militia itself was roughly ninety men when the call for militias went out from Bamberg in mid-April.⁴⁸

Despite the low quality, several important *Freikorps* units were created during the period of the *Räterepulik*. The most important of these was *Schützenbrigade 21* (later *Freikorps Epp*), which was organized by Franz Ritter von Epp. A soldier and explorer in the Bavarian army, Epp began to create a paramilitary formation in early 1919. In this endeavor he received assistance from Gustav Noske, the Minister for Military Affairs, who was busy setting up *Freikorps* all over Germany in response to the Spartacist uprising in Berlin. Epp recruited soldiers for his unit from among the lower ranking

⁴⁷ Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 46-52.

⁴⁸ Rudolf Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus: Geschichte der bayerischen Einwohnerwehren*, (München: Verlag Parcus & Co., 1931), 9-12.

officers and non-commissioned officers who had been demobilized after the war. Epp's unit was given formal status after April 18, 1919 when Minister-President Hoffmann called on Berlin for assistance. This request was granted, but with the proviso that the soldiers used for the assault on Munich be led by a Prussian general, who would lead a contingent of 20,000 *Reich* troops, in addition to the paramilitary formations being set up by the national government.⁴⁹

With the help of the government in Berlin, other units were set up in the same manner. *Freikorps Oberland*, considered by Hans Fenske to be the prototypical Free Corps formation, was created in Bamberg under the command of Rudolf von Sebottendorf, a military adventurer who had been active in the Thule Society. They numbered nearly 700 men, 250 of whom would participate in the attack on the capital. Another unit, *Freikorps Chiemgau*, was organized using the farmers and rural laborers of the *Chiemgau* region of Upper Bavaria. Fenske notes that this particular paramilitary formation was different from the others in that there were few soldiers among their number. Together with roughly 15 other formations, small units based on local communities around Bavaria, and the small contingent of federal troops sent from Berlin, these para-military formations would be involved in retaking Munich.⁵⁰

The attack on Munich was supposed to take place on May 2, 1919. However, it ended up taking place a day early because of reports that the leaders of the *Räterepublik* had executed a number of hostages. These prisoners, who were held in the *Luitpoldgymnasium*, a local school, and had been picked up for a number of reasons – for

⁴⁹ Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 52-61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

coming from bourgeois families, belonging to the Thule Society, or having taken down a Soviet poster. The hostages were killed in response to the murder of eight unarmed Red Army soldiers, along with 20 medical orderlies, by *Freikorps* troops when they retook Dachau early that morning. This justification, however, carried little weight with government forces, which now used the hostage murder (*Geiselmord*) as a rallying cry and as cause for their actions when they moved into the city the next day.⁵¹

The attack on Munich did not take particularly long. Resistance was light when government and *Freikorps* troops moved into the city. Nevertheless government forces behaved brutally in putting down the *Räterepublik*. Nearly 350 people were murdered over the course of the next several days in Munich, many without trials – some after a very short trial. Many of the leaders of the Munich Soviet, like Eugen Levine, were subsequently tried and executed, while others, like Ernst Toller, received stiff prison sentences. The brutality was not just confined to killing however. In the days following the assault a female painter, who insulted some *Freikorps* soldiers, was stripped naked and beaten with a riding crop “until there was not a white spot left on her backside.”⁵² Citizens, who had been in hiding during the *Räterepublik*, now hunted down and attacked fellow citizens who were known to have leftist sympathies, while other denounced those who had helped the leaders of the Munich Soviet. The severity of the suppression of the Council Republic effectively ended the revolution in Bavaria. In the process, Munich and Bavaria generally, were to become home to the political far right, a movement that would find expression in the patriotic movement.⁵³

⁵¹ Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 118-22.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 118-22.

Chapter 4

Political Elites and the Creation of the *Einwohnerwehr*

In order to suppress the *Räterepublik* the government in Bavaria had turned to the army and paramilitary formations. These groups, particularly the local ones, formed the nucleus of the patriotic (*vaterländisch*) movement in the state. They played a small, though significant role in destroying the *Räterepublik* and insured that further revolution would not occur. However, as the Bolshevik threat dissipated many of these local paramilitaries did not simply disappear, but continued to grow. Their further development reflected the fears many people had of a resurgent Bolshevism, as well as a desire to return to the status quo ante bellum of the old imperial system. The *Einwohnerwehr* came about as a result of this expansion.

Particularly important in this process was the role of the Bavarian political elite. Lower level elites, usually located in the hinterlands, helped to found many of the original paramilitary groups used by the government. At the same time they were helped in their task by the actions of the Hofmann government that desperately tried to maintain control of the situation in Bavaria in the spring of 1919. Their decision to help foster the small paramilitaries in the weeks prior to the 'liberation' of Munich provided the first taste of real political power to the leaders of the future *Einwohnerwehr*. In the months that followed a working relationship developed between the men who led these small bands and the political leaders of the state, who hoped to use the new organization to consolidate their power and prevent future disturbances.

Throughout the remainder of 1919 the *Einwohnerwehr* was organized to become an auxiliary dedicated to the preservation of the state, its constitution, and those state supporting (*staatserhaltend*) elements. It grew to encompass much of Bavaria though there would be limits to its reach. These were tied to the association's ideology, which was itself a reflection of the world view of its leaders. Their unremitting hatred of socialism along with their romanticized view of Germany, and its place in the world, ruled out certain segments of the population that did not hold to the nationalist vision of the *Einwohnerwehr*.

Lower Level Elites and Bavarian Paramilitary Organizations

Many of the local Bavarian right-wing groups that had participated in the suppression of the *Räterepublik* began to form in the months following the November revolution in Bavaria. These organizations had several things in common; they were small, very local, and almost wholly ineffective in either preventing radical upheaval or overturning the new government in Munich. However, their existence testifies to a determination amongst a certain strata of the newly displaced political elites in Bavaria to revive their positions of prominence within the Bavarian state.

The men most active in forming right-wing paramilitary organizations came from the lower reaches of the Bavarian government and civil service. They were not people who, before 1918, had the commanding heights within the state, but held positions that gave them some influence and allowed others to look to them for leadership. As a group they were surprised by the speed with which the old order fell in Bavaria and expected to

see resistance to the new government form. When this did not materialize they began to organize on their own.

One of the best examples of this phenomenon can be seen in the person of Rudolf Kanzler. A middle level civil servant, Kanzler was, at the time of the revolution, a member of the Chamber of Deputies in the Bavarian Diet. His reaction was typical of many who held positions in the late Wittelsbach kingdom. “I waited upon men of name and influence to call for armed opposition to the revolutionary rulers. To my boundless disappointment, that never happened.”¹ Kanzler returned to Rosenheim shortly after the proclamation of the Free State and began to form a paramilitary formation on his own initiative.²

The process by which his group was organized provided a model for the future *Einwohnerwehr*, in which Kanzler played an important part, as well as other paramilitary formations. Much of the membership came from a distinctly middle class background. The people that joined Kanzler beginning in December 1918 included: shopkeepers, butchers, and tailors; men of distinction but not great wealth. These were people who had enjoyed a prosperous existence in the Kaiser’s Germany, and who felt increasingly threatened by the process of modernization. Few, if any, members of the working class joined this early citizen’s militia. Kanzler was content with this development because he believed that society and the state should be controlled by men of merit. He despised the Worker’s, Farmer’s, and Soldier’s Councils (*Arbeiter-, Bauern-, und Soldatenräte*) that were set up in the months after the revolution. In his memoirs, *Bavaria’s Struggle*

¹ Rudolf Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus: Geschichte der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr*, (München: Verlag Parcus & Co., 1931), 9.

² *Ibid.*, Kanzler’s efforts in creating his own *Bürgerwehr* also ensured that Rosenheim, and the region surrounding it, would play a leading role in the revanchist politics of the radical right in Bavaria.

against Bolshevism (Bayerns Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus), Kanzler excoriated this particular body as the root of problems in the Chiemgau.³

Organizing the Rosenheim citizen's militia proceeded slowly at first. Kanzler had hoped to build up a force of 1,000 men, arm them with weapons seized from a cache near Rosenheim, and to lead an assault on Munich in much the same way that Bavarian peasants had done in 1705. This proved to be a daunting task as the Eisner government and the councils had prohibited the possession of weapons without license of the government. Kanzler wrote that he had to "beg and steal" in order to get the weaponry needed. To disguise his activities, he used his office as a weapons depot, enlisting his co-workers in his cause. Making things more difficult was the decision of the council in Rosenheim to fire the mayor and local government councilor, people that Kanzler would have counted on for support.⁴

In spite of these difficulties the Rosenheim militia was strong enough by April 1919 to take on the local council government. Taking advantage of the political strife occurring in Munich on April 14/15, 1919 (Palm Sunday), Kanzler's group seized control of the local council's headquarters after an altercation involving the "republican guard," which had fired on people near a local beer hall. Portrayed as a spontaneous riot in his memoirs, Kanzler moved quickly to overturn local councils in the region surrounding Rosenheim. The councils were defeated, according to Kanzler, "with the help of droves of people, who raced to the support of only scantily armed farmers in the region, this (coup) was successfully overcome in a relatively short time and appreciably without

³ Ibid., 10-11.

⁴ Ibid.

further bloodshed.”⁵ Despite their success, Kanzler eventually ended his campaign when the *Räterepublik* in Munich sent reinforcements to the region, which forced him to flee to Bamberg, where he joined the Hoffmann government.⁶

It was during these weeks in the north that Kanzler began to organize, in a more systematic fashion, a true paramilitary force. In this respect he was aided by help from the Hoffmann cabinet and the middle class parties, particularly the Bavarian People’s Party, who were frantically organizing civil defense organizations and Free Corps in every corner of the state. They provided him with money, officers (though Kanzler also relied upon a cadre of officers who escaped from Rosenheim with him), and most of all encouragement.⁷ The result was the creation of the *Freikorps Chiemgau*, a group that was every bit the military outfit, from the officers that led the volunteers to the staff that managed the unit’s affairs.⁸

Despite the assistance Kanzler received he faced two major difficulties in organizing this group. The first revolved around the simple fact that the *Räterepublik’s* forces occupied the Chiemgau region – meaning that the men Kanzler needed to fill out the ranks were essentially unavailable at that time. Second, neither the Hoffmann government nor the army provided adequate arms for the *Freikorps Chiemgau*. Kanzler and his officers solved these problems through subterfuge and smuggling. Recruiters were sent into the Chiemgau region, in what he described as “life threatening” missions,

⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Abschrift des Ministerium für Militärische Angelegenheiten, 17. April 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

⁸ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 13-18. Many of the *Freikorps* units of the period were organized along military lines. This stemmed from multiple sources: the prevalence of demobilized officers and soldiers in such units, the role of the government – particularly Defense Minister Gustav Noske, in creating them, and the close working relationship these groups had with the regular army, which coordinated their activities – though with great difficulty, Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 29-30.

to recruit locals under the noses of republican authorities. Weapons, many of them in caches throughout the region, were smuggled out and brought to several depot centers in the north, where they were distributed to the volunteers.⁹

The efforts of Kanzler and his staff bore fruit at the end of April, as his forces retook the Chiemgau and Rosenheim over the course of several days from April 30 to May 2. This campaign took place at the same time, though independently, of the Hoffmann government's assault on Munich. In most respects the campaign in the region proceeded effortlessly. Most of the towns and villages in the region were taken with little to no resistance.¹⁰ Once the region had been retaken, Kanzler began to reorganize the *Freikorps Chiemgau*.

Kanzler's example was replicated throughout Bavaria. In Munich local citizens organized their own local auxiliaries, but these were not coordinated very well. Their efforts, before the advent of the *Räterepublik*, foundered on the weakness of the Hofmann government in the period immediately following Eisner's death, and were not rectified until the cabinet moved to Bamberg.¹¹ Wasserburg, on the other hand, only took to creating their paramilitary force around the time the more radicalized council government was set up. Franz Schneider, who came to control this unit, noted that many people in the town saw the November revolution as a comedy. Only after the local council began to

⁹ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 16-17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-23.

¹¹ Gründung einer Volkswehr zur Zeit der Räteregierung in München im März und April 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

take measures that were deemed injurious to middle class interests, did Schneider and others set out to create the *Freikorps Wasserburg*.¹²

The most significant figure amongst the lower echelon of the Bavarian elite that founded and participated in patriotic organizations, however, was Georg Escherich. A forestry official in the Wittelsbach state, Escherich traveled outside Germany in the years before the First World War, which made him unique amongst many of his right-wing contemporaries. His travels, however, only reinforced his authoritarian tendencies. David Clay Large describes Escherich as the “Great White Hunter,” a personality type frequently seen in Europe during these years.¹³ Like many Europeans he treated local natives with incredible disdain, unless they exhibited traits that Escherich himself prized. His travels also fed his incredible ego, as it allowed him to act as a high official, even an aristocrat – a role that went well beyond his meager station as a forestry official.¹⁴

When World War I broke out, Escherich joined the Bavarian army as a volunteer. He served as a captain in the artillery and distinguished himself in the battle of St. Marie bei Markkirch.¹⁵ Wounded in the leg in 1915,¹⁶ Escherich would spend the rest of the war in Poland. There he served with the local military administration, gaining invaluable experience as an organizer and manager. He also used the position as an opportunity to

¹² Aus Miesbach, *Vorgeschichte*, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 14.

¹³ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 18. Escherich often hunted big game while abroad, in addition to his official duties studying foliage.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Gefecht der 2. Ersatz-batterie 1.bayerischen Feld Artillerie Regiments auf dem Col de St. Marie bei Markkirch am 23. August 1914, BHSA, V, NL Escherich, B. 2.

¹⁶ 2. Ersatz – Abteilung 1. Feld Artillerie Regiments an das Königliche Sanitätsamt, 10. April 1915, *ibid.*

continue his work as a forestry official, through which he made many contacts in both the army and in the government.¹⁷

After the war Escherich returned to Bavaria. Initially he affiliated himself with a veteran's organization, whose purpose was to advocate for officers seeking pension and other forms of state support.¹⁸ However, over time, he found himself drawn to the paramilitary movement. Escherich disliked the revolutionary upheavals of November 1918. Like many low level officials, Escherich had nothing but disdain for the Social Democratic Party and the entire political left in Germany. As a result, the nascent patriotic movement seemed a natural fit for him.¹⁹ Just as Kanzler had done in Rosenheim, Escherich set up his own paramilitary in Isen in April following the creation of the *Räterepublik*. This group, inexplicably, was able to keep the council's soldiers out of Isen, a fate not shared by many communities in the Chiemgau.²⁰

In the weeks following the suppression of the *Räterepublik* Escherich delved into the evolving paramilitary scene in Bavaria. He sent numerous letters to his aristocratic friends, military officers, and government officials, in which he maintained the need for a more thorough defensive structure.²¹ His opinions became so well known, that leaders in Bavaria sought out his advice regarding their plans for the reinstatement of the Bavarian Army, *Reichswehrgruppe No. 4*.²² Government officials sent him recruitment materials in which they outlined this new Bavarian force, which differed in some substantial ways

¹⁷ Präsident des Reichstags an Herrn Forstrat, Hauptmann Escherich, 6. Juli 1916, *ibid*.

¹⁸ Arbeitsausschuss des WBO an Herrn Forstrat Escherich, 10. Februar 1919, *ibid*.

¹⁹ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 18.

²⁰ Horst G.W. Nusser, *Konservative Wehrverbände in Bayern, Preussen, und Österreich; 1918-1933; mit einer Biographie von Forstrat Georg Escherich, 1870-1941*, (Munich: Nusser Verlag, 1973), 92-3.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² Bezirksamt Wasserburg an Herrn Forstrat Dr. Escherich, May 24, 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, Bund 3.

from the old Wittelsbach army. These included its reliance upon volunteer recruits, the ability to move up in the ranks – including the traditionally closed officer corps, and closer cooperation between officers and soldiers through trusted officials, or *Vertrauensleute*.²³

In the course of this correspondence, Escherich began to outline his thoughts on the creation of self-defense organizations that would help support the state. He incorporated some of the ideas being circulated for the new Bavarian army. One, the new force needed to be composed entirely of volunteers. Two, units should serve as a reserve and be used only as a supporting force for both the army and the police. Three, the organization would only be composed of men with the highest moral character. Four, and perhaps most importantly, he insisted that the group needed to be centrally controlled by a state leader. In essence, Escherich called for the creation of a civilian auxiliary that was necessary in his view because, despite the destruction of the *Räterepublik*, the danger from the left had not yet dissipated.²⁴

As it turned out such an organization was being created around the same time – the *Einwohnerwehr*, or Civil Defense Guards. This group had been founded on a national level by Gustav Noske, the Social Democratic Defense Minister, who hoped to use it as a more reliable instrument of government control. While the various units of the *Freikorps* had been necessary to squelch the Spartacist Uprising of January 1919, to say nothing of the suppression of the Munich Soviet, they often proved difficult to control and tended to

²³ Die bayerische Reichswehr-Gruppe IV – Herausgegeben vom Stabe des Reichswehrgruppen-Kommandos Nr. 4 (General v. Möhl), Ibid.

²⁴ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 19.

use excessive violence when employed.²⁵ However, after May 1919 the government no longer needed units of ex-soldiers eager for a fight that would undercut the stability of the national government. Nevertheless they still believed a state of emergency existed. They assumed elements of the political left were still plotting revolution which, they argued, would overwhelm police and military authorities. In their view Germany still needed paramilitary protection and the men who joined the *Einwohnerwehr* were to provide it. As its regulations stated, “then all men should also be called to arms, in order to protect themselves and their possessions. Everyone, who loves law and order, belongs in the *Einwohnerwehr*.”²⁶

Unlike the *Freikorps*, which had demobilized veterans as the backbone of the individual units, the *Einwohnerwehr* had a more selective screening process for its volunteers. Members had to be upstanding members of civil society, without any hint of impropriety in their background. Anyone over the age of twenty could join. Veterans of the First World War were preferred, but unlike the *Freikorps* units, not vital for membership. Those who did sign up had to provide references testifying to their high character. The organization officially took no account of political preferences, or class, in regards to membership. The only stipulation was that all volunteers had to be willing to support the state and uphold law and order.²⁷ This requirement removed much of the political left, to say nothing of the working class, from consideration.

²⁵ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 29-30 and 39-42.

²⁶ Zentralstelle für Einwohnerwehren beim Reichswehrministerium, *Richtlinien für die Aufstellung einer Einwohnerwehr: Herausgegeben von der Zentralstelle für Einwohnerwehren beim Reichswehrminister unter Berücksichtigung der in Berlin gesammelten Erfahrungen*, (Berlin: Zentralstelle für Einwohnerwehren beim Reichswehrministerium, 1919), Vorwort, IfZ, SK 37

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

With the support of the national government and Defense Minister Noske, the Hofmann cabinet ordered the creation of an *Einwohnerwehr* in Bavaria. Officially promulgated on May 17, 1919, the decree from the Ministries of Interior and Military Affairs helped to define the parameters of the new organization. The *Einwohnerwehr* in Bavaria was organized as a partially civilian and a partially military group, in accordance with the regulations set out in Berlin. It was to support both the police and the army whenever necessary and its leaders were to come from local communities. Perhaps most important of all, the regulations called for the creation of military commissioners, or *Wehrkommissare*. These officers, temporarily appointed by the army and placed in each governing district in Bavaria, were given the task of forming and supervising the *Einwohnerwehr* in the state to insure reliability.²⁸

For the leaders of units that already existed, the new instructions meant a chance to continue as before. All over Bavaria, *Freikorps* organized themselves as Civil Guard formations. Here again Rosenheim and the Chiemgau led the way. After the suppression of the *Räterepublik* in the region Kanzler moved quickly to consolidate his forces. He broke up the *Freikorps Chiemgau* and created the *Einwohnerwehr Chiemgau*. The transition was easy enough, for many of the men who had fought for the previous unit signed up for the new one. Kanzler kept many of the military officers who had aided in the retaking of the region as leaders in this new formation. In fact, in many respects, the new organization maintained the militaristic bearing of the former *Freikorps Chiemgau*.²⁹

²⁸ Abschrift des Staatsministerium des Innern und für Militärische Angelegenheiten, 17. Mai 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

²⁹ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 24-33.

Kanzler's goal in creating the *Einwohnerwehr Chiemgau* was to eventually create a statewide organization. However, his ideas differed greatly from those who were creating the national organization in Berlin. He believed that the group needed to grow more slowly and thus more assuredly. He wrote in his history of the *Einwohnerwehr*, "against it I wanted to create, going more slowly and from known, already existing Civil Guards cells, built up organically (as I had practically shown how to do it already in Upper Bavaria-East) and totally without support from state authorities, a purely private and absolutely reliable defense organization."³⁰ The advantage, as Kanzler saw it, to an organic and independent approach came in its independence from political control. Without state meddling, a paramilitary formation could develop its own structures and create an *esprit d' corps*. The units could be molded to the personalities and predilections, political and otherwise, of the leadership. However, if politicians were allowed to supervise, he believed that the Civil Guards would easily find themselves an instrument of the state.³¹

Kanzler's ideas were not universally shared amongst the men who were creating auxiliary units. In Wasserburg, for instance, Civil Guard units were more loosely based than those in Rosenheim, creating what one local member called a "purely civilian institution," in contrast to the military bearing of the Kanzler organization.³² As a result local units were allowed greater flexibility in governance and normal activities. This included raising their own funds through a variety of means, like auctioning off

³⁰ Ibid., 40.

³¹ Ibid. Kanzler, writing from the perspective of 1931, justified his plan for the *Einwohnerwehr* by pointing to the example of the Austrian *Heimwehr*, an organization that had been set up with help from the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* and its off-shoot *Organisation Kanzler*, or *Orka*. In Kanzler's view the success of the *Heimwehr* proved that an independent paramilitary force could indeed become a major political player in politics by staying apart from state control. Ibid., 41

³² Organisation der Ortswehren in den Gemeinden im Bezirk Wasserburg am Inn, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 14.

Christmas trees during the holidays or giving public performances.³³ Additionally, Schneider and his men asserted their independence from Rosenheim, despite Kanzler's claim of control over all of southeast Bavaria; their defiance stemmed from anger at the high handed behavior of Kanzler's men during the liberation of Wasserburg.³⁴ The differences in style and tone only added to the personal enmity of both men.

Escherich also held ideas that varied from Kanzler's, though there were similarities in their approach. The differences revolved around the creation of a statewide organization, the centralization of all local units under its leadership, and how the group should relate to the government. Escherich believed that the *Einwohnerwehr* should closely cooperate with civil authorities. This approach was outlined in a June 4, 1919 letter to local communities in the regions around both Wasserburg and Isen. Escherich argued that instead of organizing on the local level as Kanzler had done, all units should be tied to the defense district, or *Wehrkreis*. All the communities within this region were compelled to set up guard units. The minimum number of men in each unit was to be twenty, and all were to be volunteers who conformed to national guidelines. Local authorities also had to financially maintain the group in terms of transportation, weaponry, and ammunition. The use of these would be controlled by the local leader working in conjunction with the defense commissioner, who had overall responsibility for their activities. Otherwise, in its inner workings, the *Einwohnerwehr* was to be independent of government control. The leadership was to be selected democratically by

³³ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 17.

³⁴ Organisation der Ortswehren in den Gemeinden im Bezirk Wasserburg am Inn, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 14. See also, Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 17.

the membership, while information on all members, its daily non-emergency activities, and other administrative matters were kept beyond the eyes of the state.³⁵

The Bavarian Political Elite and the Creation of the *Einwohnerwehr*

The initial organizations of the patriotic movement, the various *Freikorps* and nascent *Einwohnerwehr*, had been founded by men who held lower level posts in the Bavarian state and army. While their involvement was critical both to rally support to their cause and in terms of organization, these units would not have survived for long, let alone thrived, without the tacit and active participation of leading politicians and the Bavarian Army. The political figure most identified with the movement, both at the time and subsequently by historians, was Gustav von Kahr. During 1919 and early 1920 Kahr served the Hoffmann government as regional president of Upper Bavaria, which included Munich and the regions to the south and east where both Escherich and Kanzler had their power bases. Later on he became Minister-President of Bavaria and would remain an important player with respect to the patriotic movement throughout the period.

Gustav von Kahr came from a middle class family of civil servants who had served the rulers of Bavaria throughout the nineteenth century. Like many in his family before him, Kahr received a title of nobility for his service to the Bavarian state. Appointed regional president of Upper Bavaria in 1917, Kahr remained at this post through the revolutionary upheavals of 1918 and early 1919.³⁶ Described by David Clay Large as “a short, powerfully built man with rough facial features, close-cropped hair,

³⁵ Wehrkommando Isengau an die Gemeinde-Verwaltung, June 4, 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

³⁶ Harold Gordon Jr., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 218-19.

and a prim goatee,” Kahr was ‘colorless’ to many of his contemporaries.³⁷ Supremely devoted to the Wittelsbach rulers he had served, Kahr’s monarchical sympathies were well known as was his unremitting hatred for socialism. These tendencies naturally made him an inveterate opponent of the 1918 revolution.³⁸

Kahr’s interest in creating a paramilitary force that would turn back the gains of the revolution was evident from the very first. In the days that followed the November 1918 Revolution, Kahr suggested creating a civilian organization to protect businesses and private property. This proposal was turned aside by Interior Minister Erhard Auer as unnecessary at the time.³⁹ The subsequent radicalization of the revolution and the defeat of the *Räterepublik* gave Kahr a chance to try again. During the summer of 1919 he organized a series of meetings with Escherich and other leaders of the paramilitary movement. The first of these was held on June 21, 1919 in his office.⁴⁰ Interestingly Rudolf Kanzler had not been invited to the meeting, a fact that reflected the esteem in which Escherich’s ideas were held.⁴¹

At this first meeting it was decided to divide Upper Bavaria into a number of regional districts, or *Gaue*, which would correspond to local government offices. The initial localities were organized around major cities or towns like Munich, which was a

³⁷ David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich’s Road to the Third Reich*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 139.

³⁸ Martin Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt; Revolution, Inflation, und Moderne: München 1914-1924*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 114-15.

³⁹ Rundschreiben des Präsidium der Regierung von Oberbayern, June 12, 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3. Apparently Kahr’s proposal had been scuttled by Interior Minister Auer, though Kanzler claimed that the minister had understood the meaning of his proposal.

⁴⁰ Präsidium der Regierung von Oberbayern an die Herren Vorstände der Bezirksämter, June 13, 1919, Ibid.

⁴¹ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 33. In his history of the *Einwohnerwehr* Kahr passes over this snubbing with a perfunctory comment – despite the fact that Kanzler and Kahr both knew of each other. Kanzler was invited to the second organizational meeting held on July 2, 1919. Ibid.

regional office all on its own, Rosenheim, Garmisch, Freising, Wasserburg, Weilheim, and Landsberg to name a few.⁴² The creation of districts and regional offices were designed to correspond with local government offices and to allow for close coordination with state authorities. Escherich followed up the meeting with another in Berlin four days later on June 25, where it was decided that further development of the group would be handled by local officials.⁴³

Following this meeting establishment of the *Einwohnerwehr* was expedited by Escherich, working through Kahr's office and assisted by both the interior and defense ministries in Munich. In fact both offices started creating regulations for the organization before requested to do so by Berlin. The Ministry of Defense established a series of guidelines for the distribution and use of weaponry and ammunition that was circulated through the government, and given to Escherich, following the June 21 meeting.⁴⁴ These regulations were to be supervised by the local defense commissioners, who, as noted previously, were responsible for streamlining the units' activities and making sure the government's edicts were followed.⁴⁵

A second organizational meeting was held on July 2, 1919 in Kahr's office in Munich. Rudolf Kanzler, who had not been invited to the first conference, was in attendance, as were many of the regional governors in Bavaria. Kahr, however, was not

⁴² Karte von Gaue, June 21, 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3. See also, Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 37-8.

⁴³ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 38.

⁴⁴ Ministerium für militärische Angelegenheiten. Armeearbeitung an Dr. Escherich, June 21, 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁴⁵ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 38-9.

there. He was in Berlin at the time and left Escherich to chair the conference.⁴⁶ During the discussion Kanzler argued strongly for his ideas of a private military force, but was unable to move the government officials and military men who preferred an organization that could serve their interests. Seeing the writing on the wall, Kanzler put his support behind Escherich's plan writing later, "In the interest of unity in the fatherlandish movement and controlled by the thought that through my assistance, in view of my experience in the area of defense, one would be able to accomplish much good and prevent many misdeeds."⁴⁷

The final organizational meeting was held on July 17, 1919. At this meeting, which was chaired by Kahr, the leadership was put into place for the *Einwohnerwehr*. Escherich became the state leader, while Kanzler became his deputy. Furthermore, it was decided that regional offices of the group should correspond to military districts, and that the Finance Ministry should take the lead in supporting the group. Finally, the participants discussed numerous housekeeping items like identity papers for the leadership and the type of dress for the average member.⁴⁸

Despite the unity of purpose that prevailed amongst the nascent paramilitary leaders and the Bavarian political elite in the summer of 1919 there existed an undercurrent of tension, one that would have a profound impact on the development of the *Einwohnerwehr* and the history of Bavaria. The May 17, 1919 memo that created the organization in Bavaria stipulated that the group was to be used as an auxiliary, an arm of

⁴⁶ Der Präsident der Regierung von Oberbayern an Forstrat Dr. Escherich, June 23, 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3. Kahr had requested that Escherich lead the meeting, and this fact most likely led to his ideas being adopted over those of Kanzler.

⁴⁷ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 39.

⁴⁸ Sitzung im Landratsaal am 17. Juli, 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

the civil and military authorities. Strict controls were called for and the army was to provide guidance in this area. They appointed special military commissioners in each government district to closely supervise *Einwohnerwehr* units. In all cases the guards were to answer to local control – either civil or military. They were not to be classified as military, to avoid the expected restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles, but as local auxiliary to the police that in an emergency could be used by the local military commander.⁴⁹ The guidelines set forth by military officials in Munich corresponded closely to the regulations set forth by the main *Einwohnerwehr* office in Berlin.⁵⁰

The type of group described in the May 17 letter did not correspond however to the reality in Bavaria. Even as Escherich and Kanzler were setting up the organization they moved to make it practically independent from the state. The key to getting out from under government control was to eliminate the military commissioners as a check on them. Originally the military commissioners had been given a mandate for three months, enough time to set up a state-wide body. After that they could be renewed by the cabinet. As Kanzler pointed out, even before the July 2, 1919 meeting, he and Escherich began to urge the removal of these individuals as stewards of the *Einwohnerwehr*. They argued that keeping them in place would hinder the further development of the group.⁵¹

Needless to say this brought them into conflict with both the Bavarian army and the cabinet. The Hoffmann government had given its assent to the creation of the *Einwohnerwehr* under the assumption that this group would be controlled by the civil and

⁴⁹ Abschrift des Ministeriums für militärische Angelegenheiten, 17. Mai 1919, BHSA, IV (Kriegsarchiv), EWB, B. 1. The memo also states numerous housekeeping items for the *Einwohnerwehr*, the most significant of these was the use of weapons which were to be closely monitored by both civil and military authorities, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Richtlinien*, 1-10, IfZ, SK 37.

⁵¹ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 42-3.

military authorities. Members of the government, such as Interior Minister Endres, had given assurances to that fact.⁵² The army, along with the Ministry of Military Affairs, was particularly troubled by this move from the *Einwohnerwehr* leadership. In an internal memo of August 9, 1919 they argued that the maintenance of the military commissioners was absolutely vital to the smooth functioning of the paramilitary group. In their view, the *Einwohnerwehr* was nothing more than a local body, one that was to be controlled by the civil government, and in true emergencies, by the military. Thus the need for more centralized leadership was superfluous, and even dangerous, as it might cause further distrust amongst the allied powers and a rather large portion of the German population. They reminded the government that, “It must not be misjudged, that the antipathy many workers, and also many majority socialists, have against the civil defense forces is still quite great, and that only the avoidance of anything that remotely reminds them of so called ‘militarism’ must be avoided.”⁵³

The reason for the differing interpretations was the decision reached at that July 2 meeting to make the *Einwohnerwehr* a totally private organization. Naturally this conformed to the wishes of Escherich and Kanzler, who had wanted to be independent of state control. It also corresponded to the reality created by the Treaty of Versailles, which placed restrictions on the size of the German military; if the *Einwohnerwehr* were placed under the supervision of the army it might violate the military articles of the peace settlement. Thus the decision that was reached in July, and the underlying reasons for it, allowed Escherich and Kanzler to continue to extend the *Einwohnerwehr* organization to

⁵² Staatsministerium des Innern an die Regierungen, Kammern des Innern, des rechtsrheinischen Bayern, 26. Juli 1919, BHSA, IV (Kriegsarchiv), EWB, B. 3.

⁵³ Rundschreiben des Ministerium für militärische Angelegenheiten, 9. August 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

the north, using the functioning and centralized Upper Bavarian group as the nucleus. As new territories were brought in they adhered to the leadership circle around Isen and Rosenheim, instead of the official government in Munich. Thus the ideas of Escherich and Kanzler became official doctrine and allowed them to set up an independent entity, even with the military and government providing organizational help.⁵⁴

The confusion generated by these divergent views was finally cleared up in a decree from the Interior Ministry on September 10, 1919. The *Einwohnerwehr*, in its internal day to day affairs, would be independent of the civil authorities. "Domestic officials do not stand in the lead of the Civil Defense Forces, except in advisory and support role."⁵⁵ Additionally they were to be supported through funds from the state, provided by the military or through local communities depending on whether it was a military or police action. These were regular funds for the staff and leadership, and funds for *Einwohnerwehr* members when called out to action. Finally, the military commissioners who had helped to foster the development of the *Einwohnerwehr*, and expected to supervise it, were dissolved. In its place a system of service agreements (*Dienstverträge*) would govern the relationship of the group to the Bavarian government.⁵⁶

The Organizational Structure of the *Einwohnerwehr*

⁵⁴ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 43-7. Gustav von Kahr played a critical role in the meetings with other regional governments throughout the state, in setting them up and, of course, being very supportive of both Escherich and Kanzler, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Ministerialerlaß des Staatsministerium des Innern, 10. September 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Later, after the fall of the Hoffmann following the Kapp Putsch, Endres, who had been the Interior Minister who signed the decree, became an ardent critic of the *Einwohnerwehr*, a group he had helped to set up, Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 48-9.

With lines of authority now clearly delineated the leaders of the *Einwohnerwehr* could complete their organizational work. The state leadership (*Landesleitung*) of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* made its headquarters at the Ringhotel, Sendlingertorplatz 1 in Munich. From there the leadership and their staff ran an outfit that had units placed in every locality throughout the province. Escherich headed the organization as the state leader (*Landeshauptmann*), with Rudolf Kanzler as his second in command (*Stellvertreter des Landeshauptmann*). The headquarters staff was divided into nine departments and two offices. The group's chief of staff and the secretarial staff comprised the administrative staff, while the departments consisted of development (growth of local offices - I), weapons and munitions (II), procurement (III), information and education (IV), administration (financial – V), maintenance (weaponry and vehicles – VI), legal (VII), personnel (VIII), and press/propaganda (IX).⁵⁷ Of the personnel at *Einwohnerwehr* headquarters the most significant, beyond Escherich and Kanzler, was Hermann Kriebel, a man who had decisive *völkisch* leanings and later participated in the infamous Beer Hall Putsch.⁵⁸

From the leadership in Munich power flowed to the provincial offices. These would be set up throughout the remainder of 1919 and into 1920. Starting from the region of Upper Bavaria, which had been thoroughly organized by Escherich and Kanzler by September of that year, the group steadily moved northward. Using their connections with Kahr and the army, the leadership of the *Einwohnerwehr* was able to prevail upon local leaders to create units. The area of Bavaria where the leadership had the greatest difficulty in organizing was in northern Bavaria where there was a fair amount of heavy

⁵⁷ Ibid., 131-4.

⁵⁸ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 24-5.

industry, and thus a large working class. As a monthly report put it, “Only in industrial districts with predominantly left radical populations must action in the first instance be taken in the building of Civil Defense forces, because the workers, as in the example of the precinct of Wunsiedel, bluntly refuse to join in the building of forces.”⁵⁹

By the time it was finally organized in early 1920, the *Einwohnerwehr* would have 10 regional (*Kreisleitungen*), and 141 sub-regional (*Gauleitungen*) offices (including the 29 districts in Munich). Each regional office had a full staff to handle administrative duties and report directly to central headquarters, while the local offices contained a leader (*Gauleiter*), a deputy, and chief of staff. The most significant of the regional and local leaders of the *Einwohnerwehr* was Dr. Otto Pittinger, the regional leader of the upper Palatinate (*Oberpfalz*), who would later go on to head *Bund Bayern und Reich* after the dissolution of the Civil Guards.⁶⁰

One of the first issues facing the state leadership of the *Einwohnerwehr* was funding. Escherich was very desirous of financial support from the state. Needless to say this created the potential for conflict with the government authorities, and so it was initially decided that funding should be as private as possible. This had the added advantage of allowing the organization to continue if a sudden swing in government occurred. Gustav von Kahr characterized the thinking behind this most succinctly: “were a communist government to receive in its hands disposition over the state’s financial sources for a time they could draw from our resources.”⁶¹ Thus each regional governor

⁵⁹ Monatsbericht der Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, 5. Dezember 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁶⁰ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 135-60.

⁶¹ Präsidium der Regierung von Oberbayern an Herrn Regierungspräsidenten rechts des Rheins, 29. November 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

was to help set up a private office that would help find people to fund the group. The donors would come from local businesses that would benefit from the *Einwohnerwehr's* protection. The more donors who could be found, the less money would be needed per contributor.⁶²

Private donations were a tricky problem for some in the *Einwohnerwehr* because of the implied obligations it seemed to carry with it. At a December 1919 meeting several *Einwohnerwehr* leaders objected to some of the private sources used to fund the group, particularly the excessive reliance on the banks. They did not want, in their words, to be thought of as a “capitalist and Jewish guard.”⁶³ Instead of relying heavily on large financial institutions the *Einwohnerwehr* leadership decided to raise extra funds at the local and regional level.⁶⁴ In addition, funds were sought from individual members themselves.⁶⁵ However the need for membership dues evaporated beginning in 1920 as the Hoffmann government gave three and half million Reichsmarks to the organization. One million was to go for insurance, while the remainder went for the maintenance of local offices and regular duties. Funding from the cabinet never obviated the need for private funding, however, and private sources would continue to be used to fund the organization.⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Niederschrift über die erste Sitzung des Landesauschusses der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns am 16. u. 17. Dezember 1919, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Monatsbericht der Landesleitung, 5. Dezember 1919, *ibid.* It appears that Escherich's appeal for private funds from the membership came prior to the leadership meeting (*Landesausschuß*) where the government's funding was made known, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Niederschrift über die erste Sitzung des Landesauschusses der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns am 16. u. 17. Dezember 1919, *ibid.*

The financial support, from wherever it came, helped subsidize a growing organization. Officers, excluding the leadership, and enlisted men were paid regular wages for each and every time they were called out to duty. The members were paid one Mark per day of service, with a bonus of five Marks for special duty.⁶⁷ Particularly important was the issue of insurance. Detailed rules allowed for insurance to be paid out for injuries and death to Civil Guard volunteers and their spouses. Insurance payments for death in the line of duty ran five hundred Marks, and were paid out the same for both male and female members of the organization.⁶⁸ Weapons and other property of the *Einwohnerwehr* were also insured as well.⁶⁹

One benefit of state funding, indeed of the whole semi-official status the group enjoyed, was that it led to an increase in membership. In fact the number of Bavarians who became associated with the *Einwohnerwehr* grew exponentially throughout its short history. By the time of its dissolution in July 1921 the organization had 361,100 members. Of these the vast majority, in fact 1/5 of the total membership, resided in the region of Upper Bavaria, which never had less than 50,000 members (the first available statistics were from January 1920). Other regions never came close to having the number of members of this district.⁷⁰ The disparity in numbers across the state reflects the central role that Upper Bavaria played in the creation and extension of the *Einwohnerwehr*. Both Georg Escherich and Rudolf Kanzler were from the region as was Gustav von Kahr, the

⁶⁷ *Richtlinien*, 33, IfZ, SK 37.

⁶⁸ Versicherungskammer (Abteilung für Gemeindeversicherung) an die Kreisleitung der Einwohnerwehren der Oberpfalz, 10. März 1921, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

⁶⁹ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an alle Kreis- und Gauleitungen, 6. April 1921, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 161-2. The number of *Einwohnerwehr* members dropped off considerably once one left the core region of Upper Bavaria. If Munich, which had its own region – the only Bavarian city to have one, were counted in the Upper Bavaria region (it was a part of the governing region) the number of *Wehrmänner* would have been even greater, *ibid.*

organization's most fervent supporter in the Bavarian government. This district was also the best organized territory of any in the province, with an established history of paramilitary activity going back to before the *Räterepublik*. Thus it stood to reason that it would remain the stronghold of the *Einwohnerwehr* even after it had extended across the state.

The size of the membership suggests that a strong motivation existed amongst a wide swath of the Bavarian population, both young and old, to join the organization. Pay alone was not sufficient to bring men to Escherich in such numbers. However, a strong sense of patriotism, engendered by the war and enraged by the circumstances and consequences of defeat, helps to more adequately explain the popularity of the *Einwohnerwehr*, indeed all of the paramilitary units of the post-war period. Many Bavarians experienced the loss of World War I as both a liberating and a deeply humiliating experience at the same time. Hopeful for a fresh start, and a lenient peace, most Bavarians and Germans felt betrayed when the terms of the Treaty of Versailles became known. This helped lead to a belief that they had only lost the war through the underhanded tactics of the allies and the betrayal of disloyal elements at home. Thus, by joining groups like the *Einwohnerwehr* these men could continue the struggle against both the allies and the republican government, which was the greatest consequence of their defeat.⁷¹

The *Einwohnerwehr* placed a great premium on its membership. If it was to be a respected, non-political upholder of "law and order" it needed adherents of the highest

⁷¹ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 1-35.

caliber. The regulations that governed the organization set the tone. All members had to be of moral and upright character, literally perfect so that they could project an air of confidence and respect amongst citizens – a document filled out by the local leadership was to attest to this. They had to be dedicated to the preservation of the lawful government, regardless of party affiliation or feelings about the sitting government.⁷² Quality was to be valued much more than quantity. “It should only take up men, who are firmly resolved, to meet in every way its high requirements.”⁷³

The Bavarian leadership set out further guidelines for the members as they set up the units. One regulation involved a probationary period of two weeks for individual members, during which time the leadership evaluated the new recruit’s fitness for membership. Another series of regulations involved dismissal from the *Einwohnerwehr*. Associates could be dismissed for injuries that impaired their ability to do their job. Additionally they were dismissed for any arrests, or jail time, that reflected poorly upon the organization, or as the leadership put it the “the honor of the citizenry.”⁷⁴ Finally, members could leave the *Einwohnerwehr*, or be released, if they were unable to perform their responsibilities. This governed a wide range of activities, from general incompetence to failing to adhere to the “non-political” nature of the organization. In all cases individual members were governed by the local leadership, who dealt with membership issues relying upon the guidance of the state leadership.⁷⁵

⁷² *Richtlinien*, 1-2, IfZ, SK 37. The regulations did acknowledge that this might be difficult for some members who did not agree at that time with the constituted Social Democratic government then in charge in Germany, *ibid*.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

⁷⁴ Entwurf einer Anstellungsverfügung für Sachverständnis, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁷⁵ Satzungen des Landesverbandes der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, *ibid*.

The ideological fixations of a purportedly non-political organization played an important role where membership was concerned. Officially anyone could join the *Einwohnerwehr* regardless of political affiliation or social class. The only proviso was that they be state supporting (*staatsertreu*).⁷⁶ Naturally anyone who did not fall under this stipulation was not allowed to join. The definition of this was made clear in a January 1920 Interior Ministry memo to the leadership. “Personalities, who are fundamentally hostile and stand opposed to this government, are to be kept away from entrance into the *Einwohnerwehr* or to be removed from it.”⁷⁷

What this meant in practice was that members of the Independent Social Democratic and the Communist parties could not join the *Einwohnerwehr*. This became an increasingly contentious issue in the second half of 1919 as members of both groups, along with the working class more generally, began to apply for membership. The leadership of the *Einwohnerwehr*, backed up as it was by the state, refused admittance to anyone coming from either party. In their view, the Independent Social Democrats and Communists were organizations dedicated to the violent overthrow of the government. As long as both entities were dedicated to a Bolshevik uprising membership would remain unattainable.⁷⁸

Up until that time the vast majority of the people associated with the *Einwohnerwehr* came from a distinctly middle class background. This development had

⁷⁶ Richtlinien, 1-2, IfZ, SK 37.

⁷⁷ Staatsministerium des Innern an die Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, 13. Januar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

⁷⁸ Abschrift aus der Zeitschrift “Einwohnerwehr”, Amtliche Bekanntmachung der Zentralstelle für Einwohnerwehren in Berlin, 1. August 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1. Interestingly enough the answer to the question posed in the *Bekanntmachung* was signed by the Reichswehrminister and not the head of the national *Einwohnerwehr*, *ibid.*

been what paramilitary leaders like Rudolf Kanzler had wanted. They distrusted the working class, which had participated in the strikes leading up to the November 1918 Revolution and who had played a role, albeit a cursory one, in the Workers, Soldiers, and Farmers Councils. The hostile feelings were reciprocated by the Bavarian working class. Many workers remembered the role that paramilitary forces had played in the suppression of the *Räterepublik* and they believed the *Einwohnerwehr* to be an element of the counterrevolution. As a result few workers joined the *Einwohnerwehr*.

A particularly good example of the difficult relationship between the *Einwohnerwehr*, indeed most paramilitary groups, and the working class can be seen in Wasserburg in late 1919. During the month of November the working class in the region, led by members of the Social Democratic Party, argued that members of the working class be allowed to enter the organization. Once in the association these workers began to push for the election of a new local leader and a reorganization of the unit. The Wasserburg leadership attempted to negotiate with a representative of the working class, but these negotiations proved fruitless as workers who had joined not only refused to follow the established leadership (they insisted on following their own leaders), but they also refused to return weapons that had been issued to them. For the *Einwohnerwehr's* leadership this incident allowed them to portray the working class of Wasserburg as heavily politicized, and thus not acceptable to the group. As the report of the local

military commander put it, “Accession of the united working classes as a political party, occupational, or economic class is not possible.”⁷⁹

The example of Wasserburg is illustrative of the particular problems faced by the Bavarian leadership as it related to industrial workers and their political representatives. Ideologically committed to the creation of a defense force without reference to party persuasion, religious affiliation, or social class, the organization in practice discouraged such participation, and expelled those members of the working class that adhered to socialism like the workers in Wasserburg, whom they saw as under the influence of the Independent Social Democrats or the Communists. The Social Democratic Party (SPD), which also represented the workers, viewed this issue with alarm but did precious little to change the situation beyond moral suasion. The national party leadership issued a statement calling on all workers and party members to join the *Einwohnerwehr*, noting that, “Weapons in the hands of a reactionary middle class are a danger.”⁸⁰ Moreover the expulsion of socialists by various district offices brought them into conflict with the Hoffmann government in Munich, who warned the *Einwohnerwehr*’s leaders about the potential for “bad blood” between the group and Bavarian workers.⁸¹

Nevertheless, the *Einwohnerwehr*’s leaders continued to prevent members of the more radical wings of German socialism from joining the group on the basis that they were revolutionary and not “state supporting.” This policy became even more strictly

⁷⁹ Wehrkommando Inngau an das Ministerium des Innern, 29. November 1919, BHSA, IV (Kriegsarchiv), EWB, B. 3. The report did not mention whether the socialist party mentioned in it was the Majority Social Democrats (MSPD) or the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), *ibid.*

⁸⁰ “An die deutsche Arbeiterschaft,” Der Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 29. November 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

⁸¹ Staatsministerium des Innern an die Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehr Bayerns, 28. November 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

enforced after the establishment of the more conservative Kahr government in March 1920. Members of both parties, and the workers they represented, renewed their efforts at joining the organization.⁸² Despite their rejection of such left-leaning members, the leadership accepted associates who had similarly questionable tendencies on the right. In Fürth this became an issue when the local office accepted into the *Einwohnerwehr* a man of known monarchist sentiment, while rejecting the membership application of an independent socialist.⁸³ Both local and regional offices justified the move by saying that the member in question, a man named Neidhardt, “generally respects the majority elected government. He fights against it at the most with spiritual weapons and aims to reintroduce the monarchy through the parliament.”⁸⁴ The move was reaffirmed by the leadership in Munich.⁸⁵

Some local units of the *Einwohnerwehr* even tried to exclude Jews from membership in the organization. These attempts were made in violation of the association’s own rules, which had made provisions for excluding members on the basis of revolutionary (Bolshevik) tendencies. The regulations stated that anyone could join the organization regardless of social class. The German word for this, *Stand*, has a rather wide definition. In addition to its common meaning the word also can mean social standing, profession, and condition. In this context it almost necessarily had to refer not

⁸² Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an die Staatsministerium des Innern, 25. März 1920, *ibid.*

⁸³ Einwohnerwehr Fürth – Gauleitung an die Kreisleitung der Einwohnerwehr Nürnberg-Fürth, 9. August 1920, *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Kreisleitung der Einwohnerwehr Nürnberg-Fürth an die Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, 11. August 1920, *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Landesleitung der E.W. Bayerns an die Kreisleitung der E.W. Nürnberg-Fürth, 27. August 1920, *ibid.*

just to class, but also to religion as well, even though the rulebook did not specifically mention the latter.⁸⁶

Many Bavarian Jews joined the *Einwohnerwehr* during the group's brief existence. According to statistics compiled by the Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (*Zentralverein deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*) in 1929 over two hundred Jews had been members of the *Einwohnerwehr*. These men could be found all over the state, not just in cities like Nuremberg, but in more rural settings like in the countryside around Kempten or Rosenheim. Of those that served, many had military backgrounds, having served in the Bavarian Army during World War I. For instance, all of the Jewish members from Straubing had been frontline soldiers during the conflict. Several had leadership positions in the organization; one was even local leader of the Golzenhofen office. The numbers might have even been higher. Neither Munich nor none of its neighborhoods were included in the report. In addition, there were several cities where there had been Jewish members but the respondents were not able to say for certain how many there were.⁸⁷

Outbreaks of open antisemitism in the *Einwohnerwehr* occurred in two regional districts, Regensburg and Rosenheim, and both were severe enough to warrant comment from the Bavarian leadership and the Kahr government. In Regensburg Jewish members had been taken into the body "without difficulty" by the district leadership, which itself displayed no obvious antisemitic tendencies. Nevertheless discontent within the membership led to the resignation of one member and the expulsion of another. The

⁸⁶ Richtlinien, 1-2, IfZ, SK 37.

⁸⁷ Statistik über die Beteiligung der Juden in der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 20C (Nachlaß Kanzler).

situation in Rosenheim was far graver. There antisemitic feelings amongst the membership, and most likely the leadership, led to the promulgation of a petition asking that the Jewish members of the local branch be expelled from the organization.⁸⁸

Eventually both the state leadership and Bavarian government intervened. The leadership dealt with the issue at a meeting of state and local leaders in August 1920, stating that, “an expulsion of a member of the *Einwohnerwehr* only because he is a Jew, is according the regulations entirely illegal,” a sentiment that was backed up by the Interior Ministry.⁸⁹

The internal strife within the *Einwohnerwehr* over membership shows the extent to which a particular ideological stance had come to define the organization, even by the end of 1919. The problems with working class members, and with Jewish members in 1920, betrayed the group’s obvious conservative slant. This development was the result of the founding period of the *Einwohnerwehr*. The men who had founded the initial paramilitary units were deeply hostile to the socialist left, the German revolution of 1918, and even the government that resulted from it. After the suppression of the *Räterepublik*, when the Munich cabinet was setting up a paramilitary force, these men were tapped to play leading roles in the new organization and were aided by political figures, like Gustav von Kahr, who were as suspicious of the majority Social Democratic government as they were of the Independent Socialists and the Communists. Kahr and his allies managed to allow Escherich and his men to escape the confines of state control, with all that implied, and that would have consequences for Bavaria in the months to come.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Staatsministerium des Innern an die Regierung von Oberbayern u. an die Landesleitung der E.W.B., 9. September 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

Chapter 5

Enforcers of the Counter-Revolution – the *Einwohnerwehr*, its Ideology, and Activities in the Wake of the Kapp Putsch

The *Einwohnerwehr*'s extension throughout the state of Bavaria in the second half of 1919 came about due to the efforts of elites who desired to see, at the very minimum, a return to a more conservative order, if not a restoration of the pre-1918 government. Their worldview played a large role in limiting the social composition of the group. Workers, even if they adhered to the Social Democratic Party and not the more radical Independent Social Democratic Party, found themselves harassed, ignored, and stymied at every turn. In many instances they found themselves marginalized, or even kicked out of local units. The ideological imprint placed on the units by local leaders and state leaders even extended to Jews, despite regulations allowing for Bavarians of other faiths to join.

The narrow definition in regards to membership reflected the program of the *Einwohnerwehr*, which built upon the regulations of the national organization and added a specifically Bavarian flavor to these. The world view espoused by Escherich's units was a mixture of utopian nationalism, strident anti-socialism (or anti-communism), a belief in federalism, and with it a nostalgia for old Bavaria. Added to this was an apocalyptic sense of urgency that only radicalized the men of the *Einwohnerwehr* and insured that when they did act it was in the most strident fashion possible. In the process they helped overturn Bavaria's first democratically elected government, ushering in a

regime that reflected their views more generally and which allowed them even greater leeway in the state.

The Ideology of the *Einwohnerwehr*

The *Einwohnerwehr* believed, first and foremost, that they were the protectors of “law and order.” The concept itself was rather amorphous, but served as a rallying cry for those who felt that political change ushered in more destructive tendencies. In the national regulations that had been published in June 1919, it stated that the main purpose of the organization was to serve as a self-defense force against “plunderers and robbers” and those who had a “lust for murder.”¹ These they associated with the Spartacists and “Bolsheviks” who were responsible for the disturbances of January-May 1919. The use of such phrasing was very clever. By using terms commonly associated with dangerous criminals, it allowed those who read it to see the Independent Socialists, though not the Social Democrats, and workers as people willing to use horrific tactics to achieve their goals. Thus, any real political argument that such groups had was illegitimate in the eyes of many because of the tactics they were reputed to use.²

The belief that Bavaria and the Reich faced an existential crisis stemming from the revolutionary changes of 1918/19 remained a constant theme of the *Einwohnerwehr* throughout its existence, and helped to underscore the need to preserve ‘law and order.’ In their view Germany was on the very brink of collapse. Georg Escherich made reference to this fear in an All-Saints Day letter to all *Einwohnerwehr* units.

¹ Zentralstelle für Einwohnerwehren beim Reichswehrministerium, *Richtlinien für die Aufstellung einer Einwohnerwehr*, (Berlin: Zentralstelle für Einwohnerwehren beim Reichswehrministerium, 1919), Vorwort and 1-8, IfZ, SK 37.

² Ibid.

“Unspeakable misery, destruction, and death threaten hundreds of thousands of racial comrades, if the putting together of all state supporting forces in the homeland to care for law and order does not succeed.”³ Fear of Bolshevik upheaval, while the primary danger, was not the only one faced by the community. *Einwohnerwehr* leaders also pointed to the evils of the black market and the loss of honor and morality which they believed were just as dangerous to the life of the state. In Escherich’s view these were also within the purview of the group, as the recovery of morals and tradition would help in rebuilding the community.⁴

Recruitment materials sent out by the state leadership stoked fears of upheaval, often in the most apocalyptic language possible. Appeals to honor both for the community and the safety of an individual’s family were constantly evoked to encourage men to join and gain public approval. Much of this was designed to refute arguments that had been made against joining the group. Some of these assertions, like the ability to defend one’s family with or without weapons, were swept aside by pointing out the inability of the individual to defend against “masses of organized and fanatically incited subversives.”⁵ Other objections, like leaving law and order to the police and regular army, were refuted using the argument that the *Einwohnerwehr* had the advantage of being everywhere at the local level.⁶ They firmly believed membership in the *Einwohnerwehr* was the best way to prevent “outside agitators” from achieving their goal in Germany, which they convinced themselves was civil war.⁷

³ Aufruf an die Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, 1. November (Allerheiligen) 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Werbeschrift der Einwohnerwehr, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 14.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Werter Herr!, *ibid.*

Fear was also useful for shaking the local population out of its apathy in regards to the dangers of revolutionary forces in the state. Local officials often engaged in campaigns designed to engender enthusiasm in favor of the *Einwohnerwehr* through fear of the consequences of inaction. For example, the local defense commissioner in Deggendorf noted that the people in his region needed to be shaken out of their complacency that the army would always be there to protect their property.⁸ Such fear was useful to Escherich and his men. It prevented people from falling under the sway of propaganda from the left, which often attacked the Hofmann government and the *Einwohnerwehr* for the reaction against the revolution.⁹ It also served to rally the population through difficult periods like the winter of 1919, where harsh conditions followed a poor harvest. Without the *Einwohnerwehr* it was believed that many of these people would turn towards Bolshevism.¹⁰

In the ideology of the *Einwohnerwehr* and its leaders communism, and socialism more generally, was behind the disruption of “law and order.” Many of the individuals who were involved in the organization, such as Rudolf Kanzler, made their feelings perfectly clear about the revolutionary changes that had swept through the state.¹¹ As a result the struggle against communism became a core tenet of their beliefs. Escherich himself made this abundantly clear when he remarked that, “The *Einwohnerwehr* is the local wall against Bolshevism, and then the *Einwohnerwehr*, just as the *Organisation*

⁸ Hauptmann Bucher Wehrkommissar f. Niederbayern, Gauleitung – Bayernwald an das Gruppenkommando Nr. 4, dem Herrn Chef des Stabes Major Preger, 24. October 1919, BHSA, I, M Inn 66 138

⁹ Regierung von Mittelfranken, Kammer des Innern an das Staatsministerium des Innern, 23 November 1919, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Der Winter 1919 im Bezirk Rosenheim, BHSA, I (Staatsministerium des Äußern), MA 102 381 (Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr).

¹¹ Rudolf Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus*, (Munich: Paracelsus, 1931), 9-11.

Escherich, is the only and lone expression of local power in the struggle against the Bolshevist revolution.”¹²

One danger to such rhetoric naturally was the possibility that, in the mind of the average member, the distinction between Social Democrat, Independent Socialist, and Communist might be lost. The organization did try to make sure that conflation of these groups did not happen very often. In many of its memos and letters the leadership made clear to distinguish between the “Bolshevik and Spartacist” Independent Socialists/Communists, and the ‘state supporting’ Social Democrats, which they often referred to as the Majority Socialists. Members from the latter were perfectly welcome in the *Einwohnerwehr*, and the leadership made sure to point this out at every turn.¹³ As Kanzler stated in a July 1919 speech when it came to support, “The *Einwohnerwehr* has behind it all respectable German men, from majority Socialists to the most conservative German Nationalists.”¹⁴

Despite such assurances that Majority Socialists were welcome in the organization, or that their ideas were seen as respectable, problems existed between the *Einwohnerwehr* and any group on the socialist left. One issue, mentioned previously, had to do with membership by workers in the group. Often the *Einwohnerwehr* leadership found the majority Social Democrats, and the workers they represented, to be just as difficult as the Independent Socialist and Communists who tried to join the association. In one memo the state leadership claimed that majority Social Democratic workers were

¹² In Verfolg unserer Unterhaltung, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

¹³ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an das Staatsministerium des Innern, 17. Januar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 20a (Nachlaß Kanzler).

¹⁴ Adresse bei Ingolstadt, 3. Juli 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 20d (Nachlaß Kanzler).

just as enamored of radical ideas as others.¹⁵ This led to a campaign on behalf of the Social Democratic governments in both Berlin and Munich to open up the membership to members of the party beginning in November 1919.¹⁶ The state leadership saw such efforts as an unwelcome development. They increasingly excoriated the policy of the government in northern Germany, which was run by Social Democrats, seeing in their actions agreement with both the Bolsheviks and the Entente Powers.¹⁷

Due to the prominence that the struggle against communism and socialism held for the *Einwohnerwehr*, the organization fought its spread tooth and nail. Armed defense was one aspect of resistance, one that remained at the core of the organization's mission. Another way to defeat Bolshevism, however, was by inculcating national feeling amongst Bavarians. The *Einwohnerwehr* saw themselves as the vanguard for patriotic thinking in Bavaria and Germany. The revival of love of the fatherland would instill in the average citizen respect for constituted authority and traditional "German customs, manners, and uprightness,"¹⁸ that would inoculate the citizen against foreign ideas and tendencies. More important, from a military perspective, it would keep alive respect for the martial values of the old Bavarian army. Escherich's men firmly believed that their group was a "life community" of the nation, one that exemplified that values and customs of the military and the nation.¹⁹

The traditional values that the *Einwohnerwehr* hoped to restore rested in no small part on a highly stylized reading of the recent German past. For the organization's

¹⁵ Landesleitung an das Staatsministerium des Innern, 17. January 1920, BHSA, I, M Inn 66 138.

¹⁶ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren, Monatsbericht, 5. December 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

¹⁷ Entwurf, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 20d (Nachlaß Kanzler). See also, Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 52-4, where he places much of the blame for the Kapp Putsch on the Socialist government in Berlin.

¹⁸ *Heimatland*, "Gedanken am Königsplatz," 30. September 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

¹⁹ Die Einwohnerwehr als Lebensgemeinschaft, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 2.

leaders and members the events of August 1914 were crucial to their worldview. For them the August days of the *Burgfrieden* was the moment of greatest national unity when all Germans came together in support of the Fatherland in a time of war. That feeling of togetherness, and the need to return to it, was something that obsessed many in the leadership. “To have revived again in the widest circles this belief in us is a moral action of the *Einwohnerwehren*. It was a spirit like that in August 1914, which let the defensemen join together during the May days.”²⁰ According to this view of the national community, everyone understood the needs of the other. Workers did not think their bosses to be heartless captains of industry, while the educated strata of society appreciated the contribution of the industrial worker.²¹ That this spirit of unity was always more fiction than fact did not occur to, or bother, the members of the *Einwohnerwehr*.

Of course those intense feelings of nationalistic unity in August 1914 helped to serve a political purpose during the war, namely the preservation of the Imperial system, and this was something that the leading figures of the *Einwohnerwehr* desperately wanted to return to. They saw in the pre-November 1918 government the accumulation of several centuries of social and political development in Bavaria and the Reich. The socialist governments that had ruled Bavaria since that time were considered to be interlopers determined not only to rob the state of the means of self preservation, but to impose foreign ideas upon it.²² Rudolf Kanzler summed this position up nicely when he

²⁰ Adresse bei Ingolstadt, 3. Juli 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 20d (Nachlaß Kanzler).

²¹ Ibid.

²² *Heimatland*, “Ein Jahr Landesverband,” Nr. 39, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

wrote, “The revolution and its initiators had the attempt to build up a new state without respect for the life necessities, natural connections and traditions of the people.”²³

They could not say this outwardly of course, because to do so would put them in opposition to legally constructed authority, which ran against the organization’s stated purpose. Instead the leadership always claimed to be acting in a way that preserved the Weimar and Bavarian constitutions, allowing them to pose as the defenders of the new democracy against more radical forces. This subterfuge worked very well for the group. It became the basis for preventing members of the Independent Social Democratic and Communist Parties from joining the *Einwohnerwehr*, or throwing them out.²⁴ It also served as a basis for attacking both the Hoffmann and Reich governments. Rudolf Kanzler in *Bavaria’s Struggle against Bolshevism* argued that much of the discontent amongst *Einwohnerwehr* members and soldiers of the Bavarian Reichswehr in early 1920 was due to the Hoffmann government neglecting their duties as stipulated by the constitution.²⁵ It was a charge that continued to be made against the national government in Berlin right up to the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*, and allowed the leadership to portray that conflict as yet another example of Berlin’s dictatorial stance *vis-à-vis* Bavaria.²⁶

Propaganda was actively used by the *Einwohnerwehr* to help revive this spirit of national unity, to gain support for the group’s policies, and to recruit new members to the cause. Often these materials painted a bleak picture of the *Räterepublik* and emphasized

²³ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 123.

²⁴ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an sämtliche Kreisleitungen zur Verteilung an die Gaue, 18. Dezember 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

²⁵ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 52-5.

²⁶ Zur Frage der bayerischen Einwohnerwehren, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

the radical nature of those who sought to bring more thorough change to society. There were several ways this was done. The first involved the collection of the histories of local units in the *Einwohnerwehr*. These reports, which circulated up through the chain of command, told of how various paramilitary formations came into existence. Each local's story stressed the same themes: the institution of the council government in the territory, the resistance to such a government (whether sparked from outside, or not), and finally the suppression of the councils and the creation of the local unit.

One example of these local histories was that of the Garmisch-Partenkirchen *Einwohnerwehr*. In two reports, one for Garmisch and one for Partenkirchen, the unit's commander claimed that it was only after the Hoffmann government had made its proclamation against the council republic on April 10, 1919 that planning for the creation of a citizens brigade, which had been called for in December 1918, began in earnest.²⁷ In this the community was joined by other towns such as Mittenwald, Oberau, and Eschenlohe in planning to create a military force. This planning continued, even after the Mürbock Putsch of April 24, 1919 brought a council government into effect in Garmisch.²⁸ The local units of the various communities struck on April 27, 1919 against the local councils, deposing them quickly. In the days that followed, units from this region would be sent to Munich where they helped in the suppression of the *Räterepublik* there.²⁹

The histories sent in by local units were also supplemented by additional material providing evidence of the *Räterepublik's* actions against traditional authority. The report

²⁷ Entstehungsgeschichte der Einwohnerwehr Garmisch, 18. Januar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 14.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Entstehungsgeschichte der Einwohnerwehr Partenkirchen, *ibid.*

for Garmisch-Partenkirchen, originally handwritten but retyped in 1937 for the group's archive, highlighted the proclamations and policies of the local councils in the two communities. The guidelines stated that those who went against the councils would be brought before the revolutionary tribunal, and possibly put to death, that all local farms and businesses were to provide their products to the central committee, and that the region was under a state of general strike.³⁰ Naturally such policies created resistance amongst groups that would traditionally support such authority, like farmers, teachers, and civil servants, all of whom in their own councils proclaimed themselves in support of the Hoffmann government and the *Einwohnerwehr*.³¹

In their propaganda the leadership of the *Einwohnerwehr* always stressed the wide support their organization had amongst the population. For example they pointed out that much of their membership, from the earliest days in April 1919, derived from Bavarian youth with an "activist spirit."³² The group's newspaper, *Heimatland*, noted in its September 30, 1920 issue that interest in the first statewide shooting festival had been so great that the *Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten* was printing a special edition dedicated to it.³³ Where support for the association was not strong, this would be attributed to the radical forces of the left, and their supporters, who plotted general strikes against the state, and who used the socialist press to attack the organization.³⁴

³⁰ Abschrift zur Einwohnerwehr Geschichte Bezirk Garmisch, *ibid*.

³¹ *Ibid*. See also, Entstehungsgeschichte der Einwohnerwehr Partenkirchen, *ibid*.

³² Gründung einer Volkswehr zur Zeit der Räteregierung in München im März und April 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 20a (Nachlaß Kanzler).

³³ *Heimatland*, "Hinweis," 30. September 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

³⁴ Stellvertreter Riegenführer der 14. Stadtbezirk Munchens an die Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehr Bayerns, 12. April 1920, *ibid*. Complaints against the socialist press and its attacks, particularly those of the *Munich Post*, were commonplace in the *Einwohnerwehr's* paper *Heimatland*, see *Heimatland*, "Landeschießen," *ibid*.

Perhaps the most effective way to get its message of the state in danger across to average Bavarians was through its own media apparatus. In January 1920 the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* began publishing its own newspaper. Called *Heimatland*, its purpose was to publish the pronouncements of the leadership, defend and strengthen the local members, inform the public of *Einwohnerwehr* activities like the shooting festivals, and create interest in joining the group. Members were strongly encouraged to have subscriptions to the paper, which cost five Reichsmarks for one year, and the regional leadership was expected to circulate it to like-minded associations and to the “order supporting parties.”³⁵

The primary purpose of *Heimatland* was to spread the patriotic ideology of the *Einwohnerwehr*. In this it would be most successful. Rudolf Kanzler, in his observations about the organization, wrote of the paper, “In it(s) pages) to do actual politics, which could somehow take effect on the surface it was hardly noticed.”³⁶ To accomplish this objective the paper put a great stress upon articles that had a sentimental view of Bavarian history and culture.³⁷ Poetry was a regular feature in the paper, and stressed the importance of the member and soldier.³⁸ *Heimatland* also ran opinion pieces commenting on current events, political tendencies, and how the activities of the *Einwohnerwehr* helped to bring about a patriotic (*vaterländisch*) world view. As one commenter put it, speaking about the group’s ideology, “and whenever unity again arises

³⁵ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an die Kreisleitung der Einwohnerwehren, 27. November 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

³⁶ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 192.

³⁷ *Heimatland*, “Bayerisch Land und Volk,” Nr. 39, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

³⁸ *Heimatland*, “Unseren Toten,” *ibid.*

in these people, and when we are all united by *Einwohnerwehr* supported ideals, then no enemy in the world will be able to postpone us on the way to reascendance.”³⁹

Another function served by the newspaper was to attack the political enemies of the organization. These were identified as “the members of the red and other November parties. Even those people who for decades did everything in order to destroy the national and cultural basis of the German people and prepare for the November catastrophe.”⁴⁰ The paper made a specific point of attacking the socialist press, particularly the *Munich Post*, regularly in its articles and editorials. It accused the newspaper of inciting hatred against the *Einwohnerwehr* and carrying on a media campaign designed to lead to the dissolution of the group. *Heimatland* also attacked members of middle class parties, who were prepared to accede to allied demands for disarmament, as well as the allied powers who were determined to put an end to the *Einwohnerwehr*.⁴¹ Increasingly from late 1920 on the paper commented frequently on foreign affairs, particularly the aforementioned dissolution of the guards, as well as the question of Silesia. This was given particular play in the paper and was mentioned even where the subject had no relevance, like in articles about the statewide shooting festival.⁴²

In its ideology the *Einwohnerwehr* combined a romanticized nationalism with hatred of socialism, and the revolution and its works, infusing it with apocalyptic language designed to inflame its members. The effect of their program had a profound influence on issues of membership, particularly in the group’s attitudes towards workers

³⁹ *Heimatland*, “Gedanken am Königsplatz,” Nr. 40, 30. September 1920, *ibid*.

⁴⁰ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 195.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 195-8.

⁴² *Heimatland*, “Landesschießen,” Nr. 39, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

and Jews at the local level. This made the *Einwohnerwehr* a functionally *völkisch* group. Their antipathy towards the republic, disguised by necessity, became more overt when dealing with any political entity to the left of the SPD, and those who tried to join the guards from that camp. Increasingly it would lead them into conflict with the state's new republican leaders.

The *Einwohnerwehr* and the Kapp Putsch

Due to the *Einwohnerwehr's* ideological program Escherich and his men always had a difficult relationship to the Social Democratic governments that ran Bavaria and Germany. These had come to power through revolution and, as such, were viewed with suspicion by the organization's members, many of whom saw in it the beginnings of degradation and decline. In this they were encouraged by leaders, both within the group and amongst their allies in the political establishment, who saw the emerging democratic republic as a usurpation of the correct political order and who had always viewed German socialists as traitors. It was only a matter of time before this antagonism would come to a head. When it did in the Kapp Putsch of March 1920 the *Einwohnerwehr* moved with purpose to help put in place a government more in line with their ideological world view.

The period between November 1918 and March 1920 was marked by increasing antagonism between the Hofmann government in Munich and the *Einwohnerwehr* leadership. Much of the dispute had to do with the issue of membership within the association. The willingness of the *Einwohnerwehr* leadership to prevent workers from entering the organization, or throw out those who did not accept the group's ideology, concerned the Hofmann cabinet and forced them and the national party into action. At

the end November 1919 both the Social Democratic Party and the Independent Social Democrats began to urge their members to enter the *Einwohnerwehr* en masse.⁴³ This was part of a campaign called “Against the Reaction” that was designed to make the organization more democratic.⁴⁴

The attempt to change the composition of the *Einwohnerwehr* ran into resistance however. Escherich claimed that allowing party members or ‘party-political’ workers to enter units would undercut its mission and open up the *Einwohnerwehr* to political disputes, instead of the organization being an un-political haven for all ‘order-loving men.’⁴⁵ Moreover, he argued that it was illegal owing to the group’s regulations, rules agreed to by the Bavarian cabinet.⁴⁶ This would result in chaos for which, in Escherich’s view, the responsibility would fall entirely to the Social Democratic leadership.⁴⁷ Furthermore Kanzler wrote that the efforts of the majority Socialists in this area only convinced *Einwohnerwehr* members that they too were swayed by “radical ideas.”⁴⁸ Their actions against the organization in these months, which included organizing a boycott of businesses that dealt with the *Einwohnerwehr*, only served to further embitter the group’s membership.⁴⁹

Discontent was not just confined to carping about government interference about the membership. The organization increasingly found itself under attack over its militaristic bearing, and the potential uses these could be put to. For instance the

⁴³ An die deutsche Arbeiterschaft!, 2. December 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

⁴⁴ Der Landeshauptmann der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an das Staatministerium des Innern, 22. December 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, *Monatsbericht*, 5 December 1919, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an das Staatsministerium des Innern, 17. Januar, 1920, 17. January 1920, BHSA, I, M Inn 66 138.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Deggendorf newspaper, *Bayerisches Volksblatt*, noted that the reserve nature of the *Einwohnerwehr* allowed it to train a new generation of soldiers much the same way Prussia had done during the Napoleonic Wars, and would allow the country to be ready for a new war in a generation.⁵⁰ According to the *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung* the Independent Socialist press argued that Escherich's units were nothing more than the tools of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who were planning on using the group to evade the strictures of the Treaty of Versailles.⁵¹ The socialist paper *Der Kampf* called the *Einwohnerwehr* just the latest manifestation of a militarism that the country needed to emancipate itself from.⁵²

The fears that the *Einwohnerwehr* and other paramilitaries would lead to complications with the allied powers was well founded. When the organization was first set up provisions had been made to use the *Einwohnerwehr* as a dual purpose organization. This brought in many recruits to Escherich's units, along with other paramilitaries. As James Diehl has noted, many of these volunteers hoped to have a career in the German military.⁵³ This was recognized by the military establishment in Bavaria, as well as Escherich and Kanzler. One of the enticements given to younger members who joined the organization was to allow them to form special units that had a specific military bearing. These formations would carry out their assignments often in conjunction with the regular army, usually outside the community or region where they

⁵⁰ Auszug, aus der – Deggendorfer Zeitung “*Bayerisches Volksblatt*” vom 24. October 1919, *ibid.*

⁵¹ *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung* (Munich), “Die Radikalen rufen nach der Entente,” 19. November 1919, Nr. 467, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

⁵² *Der Kampf* (Berlin), “An die deutsche Nationalversammlung,” 24. December 1919, *ibid.*

⁵³ James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 2-3.

were based. Older members, meanwhile, had to serve in their home region exclusively.⁵⁴ In this way the *Einwohnerwehr* served as a functional reserve for the army, one that could help the nascent *Reichswehr* in a pinch.

As it turned out this military function had a short life. The Treaty of Versailles specifically prohibited Germany from having an army larger than 100,000 men. Not only did this close off a potential avenue for advancement for the average guard member, but precluded cooperation between the group and the army, for fear of the *Einwohnerwehr* being seen as a military force. The group's planned dual use was scrapped on July 30, 1919 even as the final makeup of the organization was set.⁵⁵ Police powers were not mentioned in the treaty and Escherich's association continued to justify its existence in this way. However, for many of the men in the *Einwohnerwehr* the loss of the military function was simply too much to bear.⁵⁶

The desire of the allied powers to strictly hold Germany to the one hundred thousand men limit became a major aspect of European diplomacy in these early post-war years. Once the German government had signed the treaty they were given a timetable by which they needed to demobilize their forces, which at the time still numbered over three hundred thousand men. The process took time and was hampered by the fact that the army leadership moved slowly in breaking up the paramilitary forces

⁵⁴ Wehrkommando Isengau an die Gemeindeverwaltung, 4. Juni 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁵⁵ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 46-7.

⁵⁶ The desire for a future, or further, career in the German military was widespread amongst all paramilitaries, and was the one of the few commonalities that united them all. The ministerial decree of July 30, 1919 crushed many of those dreams, and the resulting bitterness was a factor leading to the Kapp Putsch, see Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 47-51.

and weeding out undesirable elements from the new army.⁵⁷ As the leadership began the process of demobilization they were thwarted by army commanders, like General von Lüttwitz, who preferred to maintain the present military force, and who supported the *Freikorps*. His position was not shared by many of his fellow generals, who disliked the undisciplined nature of these units, their egalitarianism, and their political radicalism.⁵⁸ This manifested itself in an abortive coup against the government in August 1919 by elements of the Iron Guard division, who demanded from the *Reich* government positions in the army.⁵⁹

For the allied powers the process simply took too long. In September 1919 they created the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission to oversee and expedite the work of disarmament. This body negotiated directly with the German government, and its members could travel anywhere in the country. Relations between the officers of the army and the commission were consistently difficult. German officers were seen as obstructionist and evasive. The head of the commission complained that many were attacked wherever they went.⁶⁰ Moreover, the commission simply tired of the complaints and excuses of *Reichswehr* leaders, many of whom insisted that paramilitary units like the *Einwohnerwehr* were absolutely vital to the defense of the country.⁶¹ In January

⁵⁷ Harold J. Gordon Jr., *The Reichswehr and the German Republic, 1919-1926*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 79-81.

⁵⁸ F.L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics, 1918 to 1933*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 74-7.

⁵⁹ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 51-4. The Iron Guard division had been fighting on Germany's eastern border against Bolshevik forces. The fighting on Germany's eastern frontier would also involve Bavarian paramilitaries like the *Freikorps Oberland*, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ William Mulligan, *The Creation of the Modern German Army: General Walther Reinhardt and the Weimar Republic, 1914-1930*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 107-10.

⁶¹ *Ibid*.

1920 they began to force the German government to break up paramilitary units, including the *Einwohnerwehr*.⁶²

The Bavarian government advised Escherich and his men to give the control commission officers no information.⁶³ Despite this the leadership had already committed itself to some type of action against the socialist governments in Munich and Berlin. Rudolf Kanzler wrote in his memoirs that the government's signature of the Treaty of Versailles was tantamount to not protecting the German people or the constitution and justified removing the government.⁶⁴ Beginning in late 1919 the Bavarian and national leaderships began to coordinate with military leaders and other paramilitaries to overthrow the republic. Kanzler was overheard discussing plans to mass gasoline and other materials in the event of a putsch, and how the action could be blamed on republican leaders.⁶⁵ Escherich's second in command also wrote in a February 23, 1920 memo that it was necessary for "a swing" in the country's domestic politics.⁶⁶ He promised that action in the north would be paralleled by action in Bavaria, provided that they worked together.⁶⁷

The plotting in Bavaria was paralleled by that in Berlin. There conspirators coalesced around Dr. Wolfgang Kapp, Colonel Waldemar Pabst, and General Erich Ludendorff. These men formed the National Union to bring all paramilitary groups and nationalist organizations together in one association dedicated to confronting the

⁶² Staatsministerium des Innern an die Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren, 28. January 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 52-53.

⁶⁵ Staatsminister des Innern an die Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren, 10. December 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁶⁶ Weisung nach Norden, 23. Februar 1920, BHSA, V, NL Stempfle, B. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

country's democratic leaders. Kapp was the head of the organization and was aided by Pabst, whose task was to bring the paramilitaries together and coordinate the coup. In addition to the *Einwohnerwehr* Pabst recruited the Erhardt and Löwenfeld Naval Brigades, the voluntary associations (*Zeitfreiwillige Verbände*), the Guard-Cavalry Battallion, and the disbanded *Freikorps* from the Baltic.⁶⁸ These would strike at the government in Berlin, despite the differences that existed between some of the putschists.⁶⁹

The uprising began on March 12, 1920 in Berlin. *Freikorps* units in the north, principally the Erhardt and Löwenfeld Naval Brigades, supplemented by a few army units and the Berlin *Einwohnerwehr* seized control of the capital. Confusion marked the affair. While the putschists had hoped to have the support of the army, most units remained loyal to the government, though they refused to fire on the paramilitaries involved in the coup. The national government of President Ebert fled Berlin and headed to Stuttgart, where they coordinated resistance to the Putsch. This resistance manifested itself in a wave of general strikes that was organized by both socialist parties. Their actions had the effect of bringing the country to a standstill. This, along with the reticence of the military leadership to fully support the Putsch, helped end the coup.⁷⁰

Upon hearing of the uprising in Berlin, the government in Munich reacted by closing the border between Bavaria and the rest of the Reich. It was feared that

⁶⁸ Johannes Erger, *Der Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik 1919/20*, (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1966), 85-97.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 97-107. The political cleavage mainly concerned what type of government would follow the putsch. Lüttwitz favored overturning the constitution and republic in favor a 'ministry of strong men.' Kapp entered into negotiations with known monarchists for a restoration of the Hohenzollern monarchy to the throne. He encountered resistance to these plans from many of the groups involved and quietly dropped them in the weeks leading up to the Putsch, *ibid*.

⁷⁰ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 47-74. See also, Erger, *Kapp-Lüttitz*, 108-54, Mulligan, *Creation of Modern German Army*, 138-69, and Gordon, *Reichswehr and German Republic*, 113-25.

paramilitary units, working in conjunction with their counterparts in other parts of Germany, would move against the Hoffmann government. To prevent this they issued a proclamation to all government offices and military units instructing them to ignore all orders coming from Berlin, a proclamation that was co-signed by General Arnold von Möhl, the Bavarian army chief who had been made responsible for the safety of Munich.⁷¹ Möhl promptly called out the *Einwohnerwehr* on March 13 to help defend the state.⁷²

As the Kapp Putsch developed it became clear that there were differences of opinion about where the real danger lay. The Hoffmann government feared that the army, the *Einwohnerwehr*, and the other paramilitaries would side with the Kappists. Others did not share their trepidation. Gustav von Kahr, for instance, believed that the real threat to the state was the extension of general strikes into Bavaria. “Unfortunately,” according to Kahr, “this was not recognized by officialdom in due time.”⁷³ Their lack of concern about this, coupled with the fact that the army’s hands were tied in the matter (he claimed that General von Möhl could do nothing because President Friedrich Ebert was ruling by decree at the time), created a tremendous feeling of unease within both the Bavarian *Reichswehr* and the *Einwohnerwehr*. He would later claim that this fact led inexorably to the events that followed.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Bericht über die Erfahrungen anlässlich des Aufrufes der E.W. München vom 13. – 22. März 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

⁷³ “Politische Aussprache im Landtage über die politischen Vorgänge im März 1920. Rede im bayerischen Landtag am 29. März 1920,” *Reden zur bayerischen Politik: Ausgewählte Reden des Ministerpräsidenten Dr. von Kahr*, Politische Zeitfragen; halbmonatschrift über alle Gebiete des öffentlichen Lebens, 22/23/24 (Munich: Dr. Anton Pfeiffer und Karl Schwend, 1920), 349-58.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

The call up of the *Einwohnerwehr* caught the organization off guard. Only Chief of Staff Hermann Kriebel was in the capital at the time, and he promptly recalled Escherich and Kanzler. Kriebel reported to his superiors upon their return that great antipathy to the Hoffmann government existed amongst wide circles within the *Einwohnerwehr*. He also argued that not all army units could be counted upon to be loyal to the state, despite Möhl's guarantee. He reported that a group of *EW* members, soldiers, and other auxiliaries had met elsewhere in the capital and pledged their support to Kapp and his co-conspirators. The *Einwohnerwehr* leadership, after meeting with General von Möhl and Kahr, came to the conclusion that the only way to protect "law and order" was if the Bavarian general was given dictatorial powers over the government for the length of the emergency.⁷⁵

Escherich, Kahr, and the rest of the *Einwohnerwehr* leadership argued that this measure was necessary to preserve the chain of command and to prevent the Bavarian army from coming under the authority of the Kappists, who were issuing orders to army units in the state. As luck would have it, while the circle around Kahr formulated its justification for takeover of the government, the Independent Socialist Party was holding an emergency meeting to organize a general strike and mass demonstration in Munich. According to Kanzler, this was further justification for placing governmental power in the hands of the army. "Therefore the left began the struggle without being riled up through some government or military measure."⁷⁶ With justification now in hand, Escherich, Kahr, Chief of Police Ernst Pöhner, and General von Möhl convinced Minister-President Hoffmann, in a meeting held around 4 a.m., to place emergency

⁷⁵ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 54-5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 55-6.

powers in the hands of the *Reichswehr*. This move would be confirmed by the entire cabinet in an emergency meeting early the next morning with the resignation of the entire Hoffmann government.⁷⁷

The fall of the Hoffmann government was the only significant change to come from the Kapp Putsch. Two days later, middle class parties in the Diet elected Gustav von Kahr as minister-president, ushering in a more conservative government, one favored by the *Einwohnerwehr* and its allies.⁷⁸ News of the resignation and the installation of the new government did not lead to tranquility, but only provoked the workers and the parties that represented them. The day after the Social Democratic cabinet resigned the Independent Socialists called for a general strike in Munich.⁷⁹ This set the stage for several days of conflict between Escherich's men and the Bavarian working class.

Immediately after the removal of the Hofmann government an alarm went out to all *Einwohnerwehr* units in the state to crush any and all dissent. In southern Bavaria this was swiftly accomplished. In Munich units responded quickly to the call – two hours after the alarm went out nearly ninety percent of the *Einwohnerwehr*'s members had assembled in the city center. From there they moved quickly to secure the city, disrupting and disbursing the general strike in the capital by the afternoon of March 17. The speed and ruthlessness of the *Einwohnerwehr* established a sullen atmosphere in the capital. The leader of the local Munich unit noted that those workers, and their supporters, “voiced their displeasure in a dogged, quietly observant restraint, partly in a

⁷⁷ “Politische Aussprache,” *Reden*, 352-3, Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 56.

⁷⁸ “Politische Aussprache,” *Reden*, 354, Kahr, *Bayerns Kampf*, 57.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

barely concealed hostility.”⁸⁰ Similar uprisings were put down throughout the region to the south of Munich while other areas, like Rosenheim, had no disturbances to speak of.⁸¹

However northern Bavaria became the epicenter of unrest. The general strikes that took place here were not so easily broken up as in southern Bavaria, a result of the region having more industry and a larger working class. They were also much more violent. In Nuremberg 1,200 workers managed to arm themselves and attempted to seize the main train station. Clashes with police and local units of the *Einwohnerwehr* left twenty-three dead with fifty seriously wounded. There would be similar violence in Erlangen and Fürth, where workers attempted to seize the local Rathaus. In both cases altercations ensued with local authorities – both sides were armed – which led to casualties.⁸²

It would be the strike in Hof, though, that went beyond the ability of local authorities to handle. Workers there responded to the call to a general strike by arming themselves and seizing all the major buildings in the town, some of them violently. They closed all businesses except for grocery stores, erected barricades against the *Reichswehr*, and set up an executive committee to run the town.⁸³ Led by a man named Blumtritt, an Independent Socialist member of the Bavarian Diet, the workers in Hof disarmed the local *Einwohnerwehr* unit, “mobbing” the members who tried to resist according to

⁸⁰ Bericht über die Erfahrungen anlässlich des Aufrufes der E.W. München, vom 13. – 22. März 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

⁸¹ *Nachrichtenblatt der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns*, “Die Lage in Bayern am 18. März Abends,” 19. März 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

reports.⁸⁴ By March 21 unrest and uncertainty continued to reign in the city, even though an end to the strike had been successfully negotiated in Nuremberg and elsewhere.⁸⁵

For the new Kahr government and the *Einwohnerwehr* leadership this represented a clear threat to established authority as they saw it. On March 19 the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior called out the *Einwohnerwehr* to help in quelling the disturbances in northeastern Bavaria. Since local guard units had been immobilized and disarmed by the striking workers it was decided that units from the Chiemgau would be sent north. The decision in many ways reflected the balance of power within the *Einwohnerwehr* at the time. Northern Bavaria had been difficult to organize, tended to have fewer members, and were more likely to have large numbers of workers in them.⁸⁶ Units from southern Bavaria, particularly the Chiemgau, were much larger, reflecting the region's importance as the epicenter of the paramilitary movement in the state.⁸⁷ Rudolf Kanzler personally took command of the *Einwohnerwehr* units as these came from his home region.⁸⁸

The force they assembled for the operation itself ended up being an exercise in excess. The *Einwohnerwehr* would fight in conjunction with the local *Reichswehr* unit from Bayreuth, which had left the region and made its way to Rosenheim. The unit chosen to go north to Hof was the 1. *Landfahne Chiemgau*. It was comprised of seven hundred men, sixty horses, and eighteen vehicles. They were armed with machine guns, rifles, and pistols, and backed up by their own artillery regiment. In every way it was a

⁸⁴ Expedition nach Hof, Anlage II, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20d, and Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 62.

⁸⁵ *Nachrichtenblatt der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns*, "Die Lage in Bayern" and "Die Ereignisse in Nürnberg," 21. März 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

⁸⁶ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, *Monatsbericht*, 5. December 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* See also, Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 161-3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

fully realized military unit, complete with a staff to run its operations. The only thing missing were uniforms, though these were given to the men once they reached Bayreuth. The trip to the north was also excessive for the reactions they received from officials and the populace, reactions that were marked by jubilation, according to Kanzler. During their first stop in Munich they were feted by Escherich, members of the Kahr government, and a military choir, and when they arrived in Bayreuth were again greeted by local officials and a full military band. At Münchberg the men were greeted enthusiastically by a populace who had suffered under the hand of the “*Räterepublik*.”⁸⁹

The attack on Hof itself, as the most significant action during the *Einwohnerwehr*'s existence, proved to be somewhat anti-climactic. They arrived at Hof on the evening of March 21 and completely surrounded the city by the early hours of March 22. Their approach, though taken with security measures, was an open secret. To forestall an attack on the city, the workers sent representatives to negotiate with the head of the *Reichswehr* detachment, First Lieutenant Hausl, a move that proved to be unsuccessful. The failure of these talks was the signal to prepare for an assault on the town. The 1. *Landfahne* took up positions to the south of Hof, their artillery covering the train station while the rest of the company moved into the city. They encountered very little resistance from the workers or their leaders – the only resistance being offered to the east of town where the *Reichswehr* placed its forces. Once in possession of the city, both the army and the *Einwohnerwehr* fanned out with prepared arrest lists to seize prominent

⁸⁹ Ibid, 62-3.

members of the working class, their leaders such as Blumtritt, and confiscate their property.⁹⁰

The *Einwohnerwehr* sought to portray their actions in Hof in the best possible light. In order to prove they were not there just to suppress the workers the 1. *Landfahne* brought with them bakers and butchers to serve meals to the workers of Hof. Kanzler tried to draw a contrast between the state of these workers and their leaders. When *Einwohnerwehr* members went to arrest Blumtritt at his home they claimed to find the parliamentarian's pantry well stocked with sugar, coffee, and pork amongst other items, and trumpeted this as proof of the double standard of the socialists. In addition several large caches of weapons were found at the headquarters of the Independent Socialists in the city and the printing press of the local socialist paper, providing evidence that the workers of Hof were plotting a violent overthrow of the established order. The speed and quickness of the operation against Hof, along with the steadfastness of the organization during the Kapp Putsch, was trumpeted as clear proof that the *Einwohnerwehr* was necessary in helping to preserve the state.⁹¹

Preserving "Law and Order": the Expanding Scope of the *Einwohnerwehr's* Activities in the Aftermath of the Kapp Putsch

The *Einwohnerwehr's* role in the Kapp Putsch in Bavaria helped bring to power the government of Gustav von Kahr. Devoted to many of the ideas that animated Escherich's organization, the new Minister-President set about turning Bavaria into a

⁹⁰ Ibid, 64-5.

⁹¹ Ibid, 66-8.

bulwark of ‘law and order.’⁹² The *Einwohnerwehr* became a critical component of that program and, in the process, enhanced many of the activities that already carried out for the state.⁹³

The primary function of the *Einwohnerwehr* of course was to preserve law and order in Bavaria and to support the government against those who sought to overthrow it. In the regulations for all state and local branches it declared on the first page, “Every local community, that wants law and order and places itself behind the government, should band together for self defense, for defense of women and children, of homeland and future, and to the joint struggle against plunderers, Spartacists, and Bolshevists.”⁹⁴ Such a declaration gave the group a distinctly domestic task. It was to serve as both a national guard and as an auxiliary police force.

The removal of the group’s military function as set out in the Treaty of Versailles allowed the *Einwohnerwehr* to evolve into the role that it would become most known for – as enforcers of the conservative order in the state. This task had always been the one favored by many in the Bavarian leadership.⁹⁵ Starting in 1920 Escherich and his top leaders began a process of expanding upon the responsibilities given to the *Einwohnerwehr* in the national regulations. In most instances they went beyond their

⁹² “Das Program der neuen Regierung. Rede im bayerischen Landtag am 18. März 1920,” *Reden*, 348-49. Kahr’s program called for which the rebuilding of state authority as a bulwark against bolshevism, the cleansing of the body politic of all foreign, “*fremdländischen*,” elements that stood in the way of law and order – though he did not spell these out, and the replacement, or reinvigoration, of traditional bodies of economic and professional castes (*Stände*), *ibid*.

⁹³ “Übernahme der Ministerpräsidentenschaft nach der Wiederwahl am 16. Juli 1920. Rede im bayerischen Landtag unmittelbar nach der Wahl,” *Reden*, 361-65.

⁹⁴ *Richtlinien*, 1, IfZ, Sk 37.

⁹⁵ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 37-51.

original intent and gave the Bavarian organization a prominence that made it an important element in the state.⁹⁶

The basic duties of the *Einwohnerwehr* consisted primarily of guard and patrol duties in cities and towns during times of emergency. These included guarding streets and public places, protecting official buildings like train stations and government offices, searching homes and vehicles, observing the citizenry, and, as a last resort, serving with the military as an auxiliary unit to assist the army in house to house combat.⁹⁷ Furthermore detailed instructions were given for how the *Einwohnerwehr* were to respond to call ups, tiered by the size and danger of the disturbance, in the use of weapons, which was only allowed if individual units were under attack or if the military and police were focused elsewhere, and how to interact with the local population.⁹⁸

The Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* went beyond these in almost every way. For instance, the regulations stated that the Civil Guards could be called out only by local and state authorities.⁹⁹ This was retained in the agreements between the government in Bavaria and the organization, but with the proviso that all orders calling up various units, or the entire group, be issued by the relevant commander. Furthermore, in cases of extreme emergency, the unit commanders could call out the guard on their own authority, without waiting for local officials.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps most peculiar of all, individual members could undertake action on their own if their person or property were in imminent danger

⁹⁶ Polizeiliche Rechte und Pflichten der aufgerufenen Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, Beilage zu Staatsministerium des Innern, 16. Juli 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 2.

⁹⁷ *Richtlinien*, 2-3, IfZ, Sk 37.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 25-30.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁰ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an alle Kreis- und Gauleitungen, 4. Mai 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 2.

in a disturbance, though they could only do so if the extremity of the situation warranted it.¹⁰¹

The organization's zeal also showed itself in the arrest powers they claimed for themselves. While federal guidelines had allowed them to arrest disturbers of the peace, the power was quite limited. People could only be arrested by members if a court or civil servant so ordered it, or if the person was caught in the act of rebellion and attempting to flee.¹⁰² The government in Munich, however, allowed the individual guards more discretion in their power to arrest people, though this was always described as provisional arrest. People suspected of plotting domestic disturbances, or who had had a suspicious and inscrutable personality, often based on family history, could be taken into custody on the organization's authority. This was in addition to being caught in the act of disturbing the peace while the *Einwohnerwehr* was on duty, or simply being in flight from the scene.¹⁰³

Additional arrest powers were not the only enhancements given to the *Einwohnerwehr*. The use of weaponry also was greatly expanded. In Bavaria members could use their weapons if it became necessary to achieve the group's objectives, if their superiors ordered them to do so, or if they were threatened with violence in the line of duty, and even outside of the line of duty in self defense, or *Notwehr*. In this situation the individual member could use his weapon as necessary to defend himself and others. "Emergency defense is defense which is necessary to stave off an illegal attack on the

¹⁰¹ Landesleitung der E.W. Bayerns an sämtliche Kreisleitungen, 7. Juni 1920, *ibid*.

¹⁰² *Richtlinien*, 25-30, IfZ, Sk 37.

¹⁰³ Polizeiliche Rechte und Pflichten der aufgerufenen Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, 16. Juli 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 2.

body, life, honor, and property of one's self or another."¹⁰⁴ In other German states the use of weapons was strictly monitored by the military or civil authorities, who had responsibility for their use. The use of weapons on an individual or organizational level, even for self defense, was not permitted elsewhere in the Reich.¹⁰⁵

The Bavarian organization's obsession with guns and their use became a defining characteristic of Escherich's group, even more so than in the national *Einwohnerwehr*. The greatest expression of this mania was the shooting festivals that which were held throughout Bavaria in 1920. Held on the district, regional, and state level, (*Gau-, Kreis-, or Landeschießen*), these events allowed the members to show off their skill with a weapon in competitions designed to determine who was the best marksmen.¹⁰⁶ Cash rewards were given for the top shooters, and the celebrations were marked by a carnival-like atmosphere.¹⁰⁷ There were parades, speeches, and music; the local festival in Rosenheim, for example, held a formal dinner followed by a dance.¹⁰⁸ Local politicians and dignitaries were often invited and spoke approvingly of the organization and their place in Bavarian society, which only added to the *Einwohnerwehr's* sense of mission.¹⁰⁹

The largest of these shooting festivals was held from September 25-30, 1920 in Munich.¹¹⁰ During these five days guardsmen from all over Bavaria gathered in the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ *Richtlinien*, 25-6, IfZ, Sk 37.

¹⁰⁶ 2. Preis-Schiessen der Einwohnerwehren des Chiemgäues vom 2. Mit 5. September 1920 in Rosenheim, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Aufruf zum Ersten Landes=Schießen der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns in München im September 1920, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ 2. Preis-Schiessen, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Kreisleitung der E.W. des Allgäus an Herrn Ministerpräsidenten Exzellenz Dr. v. Kahr, 11. August 1920, BHSA, MA 102 381. Kahr received numerous invitations from local units all over Bavaria, most of which he turned down, though he was present for the statewide shooting festival in Munich, Kahr an Herrn Diplomingenieur Medicus, Gauhauptmann der Einwohnerwehren des Gau Dachau, 20. August 1920, *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Erstes Landesschießen der E.W. Bayerns, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

capital to compete against each other, but in reality to show off the organization's strength as a political player in the state. The festival kicked off with a preliminary shooting competition north of the city in Freimann, but the high point was the rally held on the Königsplatz on September 26. There the members were feted by Minister-President von Kahr, the Lord Mayor of Munich, and the group's leaders, Escherich, Kanzler, and Kriebel.¹¹¹ The *Einwohnerwehr* newspaper *Heimatland* ran a special issue touting the events of those days. The articles not only discussed the group's vision for Bavaria and Germany, but spoke approvingly of their activities – particularly the events surrounding the Kapp Putsch of March 1920.¹¹²

In addition to those powers granted to, or claimed by, the *Einwohnerwehr*, they also spent a great deal of time reporting on disturbances in the state. Once alerted to the outbreak of unrest local units of the *Einwohnerwehr* were expected to file detailed reports to the state leadership and relevant governmental officials. These dispatches were undertaken by the regional commander and were to be updated daily at 12 p.m. In them the local guard reported on the variety of conflict and where it came from. Local commanders made large cities and industrial areas a high priority in their surveillance of domestic turmoil. Additionally the political orientation of such unrest was another topic that needed to be included in the situation reports. The leadership was always worried about the potential ramifications of labor. They saw the general strike as a political tool of the left and different from a more traditional strike; it could truly have greater meaning

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *Heimatland*, "Landeschießen," "Besprechung des Landeshauptmanns mit den Kreis- und Gauhauptleuten," and "Gedanken am Königsplatz," Nr. 40, 30. September 1920, *ibid.*

for local authorities. This meant that the regional leadership also watched and reported on the stance of local papers, as well as the mood of the general population.¹¹³

Planning for and filing reports were not the only activities undertaken by the regional *Einwohnerwehr* in Bavaria. Detailed plans were drawn up for guarding and supervising transportation in the event of a general strike. The members were to erect barricades that choked off major nodes of transportation for both vehicles and bicycles. The strength of these checkpoints, and the guards that manned them, depended to a great degree upon the importance of the area to both the government and revolutionary forces. Additionally they were to watch and report on the direction of all traffic that passed through their checkpoints, inspecting the most suspicious vehicles.¹¹⁴ Equally important was the protection of businesses vital to the maintenance of the community, or *Lebensmittelgeschäfte*. Here coordination with the police and government officials was deemed vitally necessary. As an Interior Ministry memo explained, “general street protection and the security of smaller, more vital firms in the streets, as for example grocery stores cannot be guaranteed through street patrols and spread out small guards as the most recent experiences have shown.”¹¹⁵

The Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* spent much of its time as an auxiliary police force guarding private property. This was a particularly important issue for the state’s leaders and for the group’s leadership, because of the continued weakness of the post-war economy. As economic conditions deteriorated it became much easier for people to migrate to the underground economy that had developed during the war and in its

¹¹³ Organisation des Nachrichtendienstes bei Unruhen, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 2.

¹¹⁴ Überwachung des Kraftfahrzeug- und Fahrradverkehrs bei Unruhen, *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Staatsministerium des Innern an die Staatskommissare der Regierung Bezirk r.d. Rheines, April 1920, *ibid.*

aftermath. Escherich had made note of the existence of the Black Market in post-war Bavaria as early as Christmas of 1919, noting that the *Einwohnerwehr* needed to play a leading role in combating what he saw as dishonorable economic practice.¹¹⁶ The result was that the organization quickly developed into one of the primary, if not the primary, protectors of business.

As envisioned by the political leadership in Munich, particularly after March 1920, these activities required the *Einwohnerwehr* to take the leading role. “For these purposes are local *Einwohnerwehren* called up in the first wave and the police and *Reichswehr*, in their garrisons, in the second wave.”¹¹⁷ *Einwohnerwehr* units were to provide protection for utilities, groceries, their suppliers, and public transportation. This meant that local units needed to provide a force both large and strong enough to repel any attack. In the case that defenses failed the army would provide them with further support. The plan applied to both city and countryside alike and was geared more towards larger concerns. Smaller business would rely on protection from a normal street watch.¹¹⁸ The protection of farms also concerned state authorities. In the fall of 1920 several cases of arson had been reported in the vicinity of Pfaffenhofen, Dachau, and Freising. To protect rural areas local units were employed as a night watch to prevent further incidents.¹¹⁹

In the course of their activities the men of the *Einwohnerwehr* often showed great zeal, often too much, and this often led to abuses of authority, violence, and even death. Many of the people hurt in these instances came from the working class, or from regions

¹¹⁶ Aufruf!, an die Einwohnerwehren Bayerns, Allerheiligen 1919, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

¹¹⁷ Staatsministerium des Innern an die Staatskommissare der Regierung Bezirk r.d. Rheines, April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 2.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Staatsministerium des Innern an die Regierung von Oberbayern, Kammer des Innern, 27. Oktober 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

that the *Einwohnerwehr* had difficulties in. The town of Wunsiedel provides an excellent example of the difficult relationship between Escherich's group and a local population. Located in the northeastern corner of Bavaria, the town was located in a region of the state that had a large working class population. The *Einwohnerwehr* found organizing in the town to be difficult owing to the fact that the local government was controlled by both socialist parties.¹²⁰ Thus in the aftermath of the Chiemgau *Einwohnerwehr's* operations in Hof they were ordered to Wunsiedel. There on March 24, 1920, using prepared lists, they arrested fifty men, the majority being factory workers.¹²¹

Often individual members let the authority they received go to their heads. Sometimes this had tragic results. In September 1920 in the town of Wachendorf the local *Einwohnerwehr* leaders shot and killed a worker who was stealing potatoes. The report on the incident indicated that the victim, a father of six, was unemployed and stole the potatoes to feed his family. The incident caused a demonstration amongst the workers in the town.¹²² In other cases they misidentified their victims. In October 1920 four *Einwohnerwehr* members were arrested and tried for attacking two fifteen year old boys in Rosenheim. They arrested both in the apartment of one of the boys, and behaved in such a high handed fashion that they discharged their weapons in front of the family.

¹²⁰ Vom Schulhausmeister Ernst Walther in Arzberg an den Vorsitzenden der Rechtsschutzkommission, Herr Bergmann, 21. January 1920, BHSA, I, M Inn 66 138. Chief of Staff Kriebel responded to Walther saying that the *Einwohnerwehr* was well aware of the political views of the political leadership in Wunsiedel area, noting that the mayor of Arzberg, where Walther was from, was still loyal to the *Räterepublik*, Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an den Verband bayerischer Militärische Anwärter, z.H. Herr Regierungssekretär Bergmann, 13. February 1920, *ibid*.

¹²¹ Misshandlung Wunsiedler Einwohner durch Zeitfreiwillige, April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

¹²² Staatsministerium des Innern an die Landesleitung der E.W.B., 9. September 1920, BHSA, I, M Inn 66 139.

The four *Einwohnerwehr* men thought the boys were spies.¹²³ As was usual, both boys were the sons of workers and themselves apprentices.¹²⁴

The ideological program of the *Einwohnerwehr* required its members to see the world divided between those who subscribed to its patriotic worldview and those who supported radical Bolshevism. Those who subscribed to the former believed in a romanticized Germany that existed in its purest form during the First World War. They equally hated socialism and believed that the Revolution of 1918 had been a disaster for Germany. That event brought misery to the country and the hated Treaty of Versailles, which inflamed many of the organization's members. Those who did not needed to be opposed. Thus the *Einwohnerwehr* played a prominent role in overthrowing the democratically elected government in Munich, placing in its stead a government more to its liking. They expanded the scope of their activities, targeting those who did not subscribe to their ideology. Thus the *Einwohnerwehr* became a pillar of the Bavaria of Gustav von Kahr. In the year that followed the Kapp Putsch, Escherich and his men would attempt to create a power base for themselves beyond Bavaria, but in the process encountered resistance that proved too strong for the *Einwohnerwehr*, and its supporters, to defeat.

¹²³ Anklageschrift des Staatsanwaltes bei dem Landgerichte Traunstein, 27. Oktober 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 6

Expansion and Dissolution – the *Organisation Escherich* and the Struggle over the *Einwohnerwehr*

The activities undertaken by the members of the *Einwohnerwehr* were heavily influenced by the group's ideology. Motivated by the need to preserve law and order, members found themselves employed in a variety of actions, some more mundane than others. However, after the Kapp Putsch of March 1920 these took a more decidedly political tone, as the *Einwohnerwehr* became involved in the political affairs of both the German Reich and even Austria, something that brought even more scrutiny from the government in Berlin as well as the Entente powers and led to the group's eventual dissolution.

Organisation Escherich and *Organisation Kanzler*

The *Einwohnerwehr's* part in the Kapp Putsch in Munich, as well as the role it played in stamping out the general strike in places like Hof, removed the apolitical mask that Escherich and the other leaders had presented since the group was first formed, revealing the true face of the organization. From March 1920 onwards the group openly involved itself in the politics of Bavaria and the Reich as agents of the counterrevolution. This change would have an enormous impact on the group, as now their activities were increasingly aimed at the Social Democratic Party, an organization that until March 1920, had been supportive of the *Einwohnerwehr*, one of the 'state supporting' political parties. More important though was the fact that such political engagement allowed Escherich

and his lieutenants to develop more fully their ideas for national renewal, something that had been part and parcel of the *Einwohnerwehr's* ideological program.

The vehicle by which these political ideas would be disseminated and propagated was the *Organisation Escherich*, an association dedicated to coordinating all paramilitary activities in the country. It was the result of a series of letters exchanged between Escherich and Franz Seldte, who headed the largest veteran's organization in Germany, the *Stahlhelm*. Seldte had come to know of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* through Waldemar Pabst and Captain Schneider, both of whom had been involved with the Kapp Putsch. Seldte wanted to unite all paramilitary groups, including his own, into a nationwide organization.¹ Events the following March delayed these plans, but work began again in April 1920 in earnest.² Because the *Stahlhelm* leader felt the work was so important he asked Escherich to take the lead in coordinating both the meetings for the new group and to be its first leader.³

Escherich was more than happy to take the lead in creating such an organization. The leadership of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* had become increasingly disturbed by events on the national level in the wake of the Kapp Putsch. "The Reich government has let itself be tempted, in negotiations with the insurrectionists in the question of workers guards, the negotiations with the unions and others, into more decisions which mean the tacit surrender of civil rights to a dictatorial Bolshevistic minority."⁴ In their mind the government in Berlin favored policies that would undermine state authority, by favoring workers and their unions. More critically, they believed that Berlin had sided with the

¹ Franz Seldte an Herrn Forstrat Escherich, 21. Januar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

² Franz Seldte an Herrn Forstrat Dr. Escherich, 8. April 1920, *ibid.*

³ Franz Seldte an Herrn Forstrat Dr. Escherich, 21. April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

⁴ Adresse, 10. April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

allies against the *Einwohnerwehr*. These actions, they claimed, put the government in opposition to the constitution and the people of Germany, a situation that if continued could lead to civil war.⁵

Escherich organized a meeting of all the major groups in the *vaterländisch* movement to be held at Regensburg on May 8/9, 1920. In attendance would be the *Einwohnerwehr* of Bavaria, Seldte's own *Stahlhelm*, the *Jung-Deutschland Orden*, and various north German voluntary leagues (*Zeitfreiwilligen-Verbände*).⁶ Since so many groups were involved in the proposed venture, Escherich believed that there were several points on which they all needed to agree. The first of these was that the group was not to be involved in any coup activity. Secondly, each organization that joined was to be given a portion of the Reich to control, preferably where they were strongest, like the *Einwohnerwehr* in Bavaria. Third, unity of purpose was considered more important than unity of form. Thus there would be no attempt to enforce coordination amongst member bodies. Finally, this association was not to cooperate with civil authorities, unless a pre-existing arrangement already existed.⁷

As it turned out the outlines of the *Organisation Escherich* corresponded very closely to the points made by the Bavarian leader. Originally called *Der Deutsche Hort* (the German Shield), the assembled delegates agreed to appoint a committee to draft a program for the group.⁸ The document was completed on May 9, 1920 and changed the name of the association to *Organisation Escherich*, after its leader. The primary purpose of the group was to secure the constitution, protect people, work, and property, preserve

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Der Landeshauptmann der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an Herrn Major von Hepke, 28. April 1920, *ibid.*

⁷ Entwurf an Herr von Dewitz, 3. Mai 1920, BHSa, IV, EWB, B. 5.

⁸ Memo from Magdeburg Stahlhelm, 11. Mai 1920, *ibid.*

the German Reich, prevent separatist tendencies, and work for law and order by struggling against revolutionary tendencies from right and left. Its headquarters was based in Munich and any German could be a member provided that he had an impeccable reputation, or was from a group that stood on the side of law and order. Like the *Einwohnerwehr*, this new body claimed to stand above party and religious confession.⁹

The organization created at Regensburg united the various *vaterländisch* groups into one entity, but allowed each to preserve its individual identity. This was accomplished by dividing the country into zones that each of the major groups would control, corresponding closely to ideas Escherich put forward. As decided at Regensburg the country was divided east to west at the Elbe River and north to south at the Harz Mountains, with Escherich and the *Einwohnerwehr* controlling southern Germany, The *Jungdeutscher Orden* controlling western Germany, and the *Stahlhelm* controlling eastern Germany.¹⁰ Individual members who joined the association did so through the primary group in each region, not the national body. This regional paramilitary then decided if the person could join the *Orgesch*. Whether they were in the new group or not, members followed the rules and regulations of the paramilitary organization in control locally.¹¹

In the week following the Regensburg meeting a second committee, led by Kanzler, hammered out a working program for the *Organisation Escherich (Orgesch)*. The document put forward, known as the working program (*Arbeitsprogramm*), reflected quite clearly the ideological predilections of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* as these had evolved, and went much farther than any ideas the group had previously propagated.

⁹ Satzungen der Organisation Escherich, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Memo from Magdeburg Stahlhelm, 11. Mai 1920, *ibid.*

¹¹ Satzungen der Organisation Escherich, *ibid.*

First and foremost among these was the revival of national thinking not only among all elements of German society, but even for those who lived outside the Reich. Another major point was the preservation of an idealistic world view (*idealen Lebensauffassung*) from the encroachments of materialist philosophy. German mothers, and the need to win them over to patriotic (*vaterländisch*) thinking, were a major focus of the document, as was reaching the young. Finally, the group saw it as a major point of their work to try and reconcile workers to employers and to protect the middle class. These points comingled with more traditional aspects of the Civil Guard's program such as fighting Bolshevism, strengthening state authority, and combating economic immorality.¹²

With regulations and an ideological program in place, the *Orgesch* began to build up its infrastructure and extend it throughout the country. At the time of its founding the group was particularly strong in the south, the west, and the east. These regions lined up with individual military districts in the country.¹³ However, the group had no presence in the northern and northwestern parts of the country. These lands were particularly problematic because they represented the industrial heartland of Germany, and as such were strongholds of the Social Democratic Party, the Independent Socialists, and the fast growing Communists. This fact made northern Germany a top priority of the new association's leadership coming out of the Regensburg meeting.

The need to revive the patriotic movement in northern Germany led the Bavarian leadership to sponsor an organizational trip to that region. Begun on May 25, 1920, three members of the *Einwohnerwehr's* top leadership traveled to the Rhineland, Westphalia,

¹² Arbeitsprogramm der Organisation Escherich, *ibid.*

¹³ Memo from Magdeburg Stahlhelm, 11. Mai 1920, *ibid.*

Hamburg, and Mecklenburg. While there they met with the leadership of local social and civil groups, prominent bureaucrats and officials, and members from defunct paramilitary groups. The purpose was to revive the patriotic organizations in northern Germany under the umbrella of the *Orgesch*. This included financial support, as three Civil Guard leaders were instructed to discuss financial support for groups that adhered; funds were administered by the leadership in Munich.¹⁴

The trip itself was a success. Wherever the *Einwohnerwehr* representatives went they received a hearty welcome along with plenty of assistance from civic associations. Particularly noteworthy was the support received from the League of German Farmers (*Bund der Landwirte*), who organized the first meetings in Düsseldorf. They helped to identify many of the problems facing the revival of “self defense leagues” (*Selbstschützverbände*). The most pertinent of these was the division between rural countryside and urban areas, where the mass of Germany’s workers lived. Because of the size of the cities in the region many people who held to patriotic ideas believed themselves to be in danger. As the report about this trip put it, “By the fact that a complete prostration of the overnight risen Red Army was made impossible through the intervention of the Reich government, the pressure of uncertainty and fright before the resurgence of the red terror has not been definitively removed.”¹⁵

To facilitate the revival of paramilitary groups under the banner of the *Orgesch* it was decided to use those formations that survived the aftermath of the Kapp Putsch and to build upon them. These included a few *Einwohnerwehr* units, as well as several

¹⁴ Bericht über die Reise vom 25. 5. 20 bis 5. 6. 20, *ibid*.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

farmer defense units (*Bauerwehren*) that had been previously set up. These would be supplemented by members from the cities, particularly the young, who would be spirited out of the city to join units in the case of domestic disturbance. The other meetings throughout Northern Germany, the last at Mecklenburg on June 3, 1920, followed similar lines; local units were revived under the guidance of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr*, who provided the bulk of the financial support, joined the *Orgesch*, and continued to protect law and order as they had done previously.¹⁶

In several of these meetings one question often raised by northern participants concerned the political ramifications, both domestically and internationally, of the league's activities. The working program had talked about the revival of nationalist thinking amongst all classes of Germans. In the course of their trip through the north, members of the Bavarian leadership discussed the Greater German (or *Grossdeutsch*) ideas that animated the new organization.¹⁷ Considering that they often addressed people from nationalist circles, this is not surprising. However, by framing their ideological program in such a political way, and *Grossdeutsch* nationalism was very much a political idea, it completely demolished the fiction that they publicly presented, to themselves if to no one else, that they served only to protect the state and its prerogatives regardless of the political composition of the government.

The worries about political opposition in northern Germany forced the leaders of *Orgesch* to seek political allies amongst the conservative and nationalist parties, which would protect the associations if they came under fire from the government. Working

¹⁶ Ibid. During the trip the Bavarians met with numerous German industrialists, most significantly Emil Kirdorf, but were unable to get more than small donations for the organization from the people most likely to benefit from it, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Ibid.

through contacts in the German Navy, Escherich met with representatives of the German National People's Party (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*) and the head of the Reich Civilian Council (*Reichsbürgerrat*).¹⁸ With their support Escherich was able to gain more support for his activities, as well as additional funding for them. To coordinate efforts further an office was set up in Berlin that handled the group's interactions with both the political parties and the national government, collected and collated reports on national and international affairs, and put forth press release and propaganda materials.¹⁹

The necessity of establishing political contacts in the capital became apparent during the summer of 1920 when the existence of Escherich's organization became known publicly. The Bavarian leader helped this along by sending a telegram to the Reich government on June 28 requesting that it do everything in its power to prevent the dissolution of Germany's paramilitary formations, including the nascent *Orgesch*, which he saw as vital to the country's interest. "I consider, by knowledge of the situation, the continued existence of the organization as a precondition for the preservation of the Reich constitution and essential for the continuance and rebuilding of the German Reich."²⁰

In spite of his professed belief that that the *Orgesch* was vital to the preservation of Germany, Escherich's telegram set off red flags in Berlin and raised a thorny issue for the German government. Since the Treaty of Versailles had been signed in June 1919 representatives from the allied powers and Germany had been meeting at the resort town of Spa to oversee the disarmament provisions of the treaty. Their pressure had already

¹⁸ Fregattenkapitän a.D. Mann an Herrn Rudolf Kanzler, 7. Juni 1920, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Brief an Herrn Forstrat Dr. Escherich, 15. Juni 1920, *ibid.*

²⁰ Telegramabschrift, 28. Juni 1920, *ibid.* Escherich also sent a copy of the same telegram to the Bavarian Interior Minister, *ibid.*

forced the government to start dissolving the numerous paramilitary groups in February 1920, an event which helped lead to the Kapp Putsch.²¹ Aware of the distrust the allies had for the *Freikorps* and fearful of the role that such units had played in the events of March 1920, the government in Berlin was understandably concerned with the creation of a new group. Escherich's telegram prompted a reply from the Reich Ministry of the Interior, where the state secretary remarked that the government had "umpteen inquiries about the organization inspired by you."²² It was certainly not insignificant that this reply came days after the Allied Control Commission in Spa ordered the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*.²³

Political resistance to Escherich's outfit was swift in coming, animated by fear of the international and domestic implications of the *Orgesch*. A variety of steps were taken to limit the organization's reach. This included tighter control over those paramilitary units still being used by the government in spite of the ban. Paramilitary units in East Prussia and Silesia, whether former *Einwohnerwehr* or *Freikorps*, were to be brought under the control of the regional president in order to prevent these forces from joining the Munich group.²⁴ Furthermore, at the behest of the Prussian Interior Minister Hans Severing police in Prussia began monitoring the group and its activities, as well as enforcing the ban on paramilitary groups.²⁵ Finally, a campaign in the press aimed at the *Organisation Escherich* began in early August. Papers like *Vorwärts* and the *Munich*

²¹ James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 67-9.

²² Der Staatssekretär des Reichsministerium des Innern an Herrn Escherich, 12. Juli 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

²³ Protokoll der Konferenz von Spa vom 9. Juli 1920, *ibid*.

²⁴ Bericht an Staatsleiter OL Orgesch, 28. Juli 1920, *ibid*.

²⁵ David Clay Large, *The Politics of Law and Order: A History of the Bavarian Einwohnerwehr, 1918-1921*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1980), 50-52.

Post ran stories highlighting the danger posed by the creation of Escherich's new group stating that, "Orgesch, as a spearhead for certain economic and political interest groups, is becoming entirely an armed organization of the reaction and makes its own faustian politics."²⁶ The stories highlighted the fears of Social Democratic politicians like Gustav Noske, who was so instrumental in helping to create the *Einwohnerwehr*, and believed that the Escherich circle would "conjure up serious confusion and domestic conflict."²⁷

The leadership in Munich believed such efforts were persecution by the political left. This was certainly the view of Rudolf Kanzler, who claimed years later that fears of the "Diktat from Spa" were overblown by radical forces to persecute the organization.²⁸ To counter the efforts of the Social Democrats and their allies Escherich and his underlings waged a propaganda campaign intended to allay any concerns that people had about *Orgesch* and its goals. This proceeded on two levels, one aimed at government officials, the other at the general public. To ease fears amongst Germany's leaders the Bavarian leader argued in a memo that the group, as constituted, was an organization of the middle. "That my organization would be exposed to many attacks from left and right was clear to me from the first," wrote Escherich, who also noted that "majority socialists" occupied leadership positions in the association.²⁹ He assured the government that the only goal of the group was to fight Bolshevism, particularly "National Bolshevism," in

²⁶ *Vorwärts*, "Orgesch. Wiederkehr der Zeitfreiwilligen und Einwohnerwehren," Nr. 386, 4. August 1920, and *Münchener Post*, "Nochmals Organisation Escherich," 5. August 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 6. The *Vorwärts* article prompted the War Minister and the *Reichswehr* leadership to disavow any coordination between the military and the Escherich's group, *Die Post*, "Noske gegen die Selbstschutzorganisationen," Nr. 363, A 193, 5. August 1920, *ibid*.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁸ Rudolf Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus*, (Munich: Paracelsus, 1931), 79-80.

²⁹ Aufklärung über die Organisation Escherich. Verteilt an Mitglieder der Reichsregierung und des Reichstages, 5. August 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

all its forms, and that they would be prepared to resist a putsch from right or left.³⁰

Furthermore, Escherich also bitterly complained to the government about attacks coming from local politicians, especially those in Prussia who saw the group as unlawful and moved to dissolve it.³¹

To foster public support the *Orgesch* leadership turned to the press to make their case, though this had varying results. As with government officials, care was taken here to present the group as a moderate organization. The Bavarian leadership held press junkets for local papers to expound on this point.³² Furthermore, they argued that attacks against the *Organisation Escherich* stemmed from Social Democratic leaders who desired to regain the trust of radicals.³³ Finally, they accused the left wing press of siding with the radicals. The *Münchener Zeitung*, in its August 9 edition, attacked the press war against the *Orgesch* stating, “but it is however a dangerous game, that here institutions push to still call themselves civic, while they undermine with enthusiasm the last bulwark against Bolshevism.”³⁴ Much of the media campaign was conducted through conservative-leaning papers. Independent papers seemed to view the group much the same way as the socialist press. The *Neue Berliner Zeitung*, for instance, described the group as a herald of violence to come,³⁵ while the *Berliner Tageblatt* wrote that the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Telegram-Abschrift an den Herrn Reichskanzler und an Herrn Reichsminister des Innern, 14. August 1920, *ibid.*

³² *Augsburger Postzeitung*, “Die Organisation Escherich,” Nr. 363, 15. August 1920, BSHA, IV, EWB, B. 6.

³³ *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, “Die Hetze gegen die Orgesch,” Nr. 393, 16. August 1920, *ibid.*

³⁴ *Münchener Zeitung*, “Gegen Escherich und Einwohnerwehr,” Nr. 219, 9. August 1920, *ibid.*

³⁵ *Neue Berliner Zeitung*, “Ist Orgesch heilbar?,” 7. August 1920, *ibid.*

Orgesch “only wants to build a different government that would be equal in philosophy to the parties of the right and, as one says, to duly rule.”³⁶

Despite the efforts of some government officials, like Interior Minister Severing, or the socialist press, the *Organisation Escherich* continued to make inroads in provinces like Prussia. This development was partially the result of the Prussian government’s decision on May 27, 1920 to permit paramilitary groups to continue to operate under the strict control of regional presidents.³⁷ The decision to maintain local paramilitaries was the result of continuing disputes with Poland over the borders in East Prussia and Silesia, where it was feared that Polish forces would attempt to seize territory by force.³⁸ The belief of officials in Berlin that an emergency situation existed on the eastern border created the space whereby Escherich and his group were able to expand the *Orgesch*. Most local organizations joined the group during the summer of 1920.³⁹

The union of these local groups with the *Organisation Escherich* occurred without the knowledge of the regional government, which had authority over their activities. A couple of factors explain why this happened. One was the promise of financial support from the national organization. In the summer of 1920 the regional government in East Prussia and Silesia simply could not support the local paramilitaries. An *Orgesch* report from July 28, 1920 stated that financial support was an imperative for the national organization to provide leadership and improve morale. Failure to do so would allow the state government to eventually provide funds, and hence direction, to

³⁶ *Berliner Tageblatt*, “Verhandlungen im preußischen Ministerium des Innern, Bayern und Norddeutschland,” Nr. 378, 13. August 1920, *ibid*.

³⁷ “Der Erlaß des Ministers des Innern. Landesschutzbeamte und Selbstschutzorganisationen,” *ibid*.

³⁸ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 50-52.

³⁹ Bericht an Staatsleiter OL *Orgesch*, 28. Juli 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

local units. A second was the influence of local leaders. As was the case in northwestern and northern Germany, prominent local leaders formed the backbone of support, and became the group's local leaders. For example, the man elected to lead the *Orgesch* in East Prussia, Brandis, was the leader of the local agrarian league, and as a result helped tip the scale in favor of Escherich and away from Berlin.⁴⁰

The public fracas over the *Organisation Escherich* continued through the month of August. The Bavarian leader continued to lodge complaints with the national government in Berlin over what he believed to be unfair treatment of his group in states like Prussia and Saxony. He argued in a telegram on August 18 that the prohibition against the *Orgesch* violated the rights of local militiamen in those states.⁴¹ Escherich also began to appeal directly to the members of the *Reichstag* on behalf of his organization.⁴² Such efforts had been requested by the *Orgesch* office in Berlin, which believed that only a sustained campaign of persuasion by Escherich, Kanzler, and even the Bavarian government could turn the tide of public opinion in their favor.⁴³ In the end the *Orgesch* did not achieve its goal of recognition by the Prussian government. However, in East Prussia matters were different. There the *Organisation Escherich* was confirmed in its control of local paramilitary groups.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Telegramm Escherich an den Herrn Reichspräsidenten, 18. August 1920, *ibid.*

⁴² Escherich an Abgeordnete Frau Käthe Schirmacher, 23. August 1920, *ibid.*

⁴³ Brief an Herrn Forstrat Dr. Escherich, 19. August 1920, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Report, 1. September 1920, *ibid.* In October the leadership in Munich mused on the difficulties in Prussia, chalking them up to the resistance from reactionaries on the right, who feared the democratic nature of the organization, and from Social Democrats, and the workers, on the left, who mistrusted the group as reactionary itself. Interestingly, the leadership believed that part of the reason for this state of affairs had to do with Jewish influence in the capital, and that the key to overcoming it would be to cultivate contacts with "national thinking" Jewish associations, Rundschreiber der Oberleitung *Organisation Escherich*, 6. Oktober 1920, *ibid.*

The success that the *Orgesch* had in organizing paramilitary groups in East Prussia and Silesia was duplicated in Austria. Over the course of 1920 paramilitaries were set up on the model of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr*. Like with the *Organisation Escherich*, members of the Civil Guard's leadership played a key role here as well. Rudolf Kanzler became the point man for organizing these auxiliaries, with the result that the new association was named after him, *Organisation Kanzler (Orka)*, and placed within the larger framework of the *Orgesch*.⁴⁵

The initial stages of what would eventually become the Austrian *Heimwehr* actually predate the creation of the *Organisation Escherich*. On February 16, 1920 Rudolf Kanzler received a letter from Dr. Zahnbrecher, a member of the Bavarian *Landtag* who had excellent contacts in Austria. His report told of political unrest in many of the country's largest cities, particularly Linz, Innsbruck, and the capital of Vienna.⁴⁶ Demonstrations had taken place both in support of and against the Social Democratic government's creation of workers councils and were seen by many to be the prelude to a *Räterepublik*.⁴⁷ Zahnbrecher reported that many Austrians in the provinces preferred to declare the country's constitution null and void and join with Germany, a move that had been forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles. Knowing that the Entente powers would never permit such a solution, the request was made for Bavarian help in "the building of

⁴⁵ One of the significant aspects of the *Organisation Escherich* was that its most notable success lay outside the Reich, like Austria, or on frontier territories, like East Prussia. Within Germany, the organization had very little scope outside Bavaria, other than through groups affiliated with it (like the *Stahlhelm*), and quickly lost what little influence it had, though it played a role in a number of assassinations during the course of 1920 & 21, Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 50-54, and Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 78-93.

⁴⁶ Dr. Zahnbrecher an Herrn Kanzler, 16. Februar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

⁴⁷ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 86.

farmer guards in those rural communities (parishes) to make political preparation for defensive measures against Bolshevism.”⁴⁸

The Austrians hoped that close coordination between them and Bavaria would make the union of Austria with Germany inevitable and force the allies' hands. In particular Zahnbrecher had talked about close coordination between Bavaria and the Austrian provinces more directly as a precursor to union with Germany, or *Anschluß*.⁴⁹ However, a meeting held three days after the receipt of this letter, in the office of Gustav von Kahr, highlighted the difficulties both of creating paramilitary forces in Austria and of bringing about a union of the two countries. The major problems were the international implications of Bavarian support and funding. Kahr informed the meeting's participants that, given the international situation, he could not provide government funds for the creation of Austrian defense associations. This meant that any coordination between the Bavarians and the Austrians would be a strictly private matter. Kanzler himself was put in charge of creating the Home Guard, or *Heimwehr*, while local *Einwohnerwehr* offices in the border region with Austria would handle the particulars.⁵⁰

The creation of local *Heimwehr* in Austria proceeded along a regional pattern, though only certain regions were deemed ready for the creation of a paramilitary force. A memorandum, drawn up for the Munich meeting of February 21, highlighted the areas where local defense organizations should be built. These included Styria, Carinthia, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tyrol, and Vorarlberg, territories long considered having

⁴⁸ Dr. Zahnbrecher an Herrn Kanzler, 16. Februar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 86-7.

derived from Bavarian colonization.⁵¹ Kanzler and his representatives chose to organize Salzburg first. The choice made sense as Salzburg was the major Austrian city closest to Munich. In fact, as Kanzler wrote later, many of the major meetings between the Bavarian leadership and the Austrians were often held there out of convenience.⁵² The first one was held there on February 28, 1920. Organized by Schernthaner, the local leader of the Christian Socialist Party, it was attended by Kanzler, Schindlbeck of the Chiemgau *Einwohnerwehr*, and Professor Bernhard Stempfle. The proposal for creation of a local *Heimwehr* in Salzburg closely followed the example of the Civil Guards in Bavaria. The province was divided into districts, five with roughly twelve hundred men each. Kanzler promised to provide weapons to local units until the organization was self-sustaining. To ensure this, Stempfle urged the creation of a political block amongst the middle class parties against the socialists and communists.⁵³

The other paramilitary groups were set up along a similar pattern. The date calendar of Professor Stempfle, who became a crucial point man for Kanzler in setting up the *Heimwehren*, provides the time line. From March 20 to April 10 Stempfle was in Tyrol, helping to organize auxiliaries there. Meetings in Graz in May led to the creation of units in Styria, while a series of talks in June helped set up local groups in Carinthia.⁵⁴ Other local *Heimwehren* were constituted in the months that followed. Local units were set up in Lower Austria by August 1920, in Voralberg by November 1920, and in Upper Austria only by July 1921. Rudolf Kanzler ascribed the difficulties in creating the Upper Austrian *Heimwehr* to effective resistance by the local Social Democratic government

⁵¹ Memorandum, 20. Februar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

⁵² Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 87-9.

⁵³ Bericht, 28. Februar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

⁵⁴ Terminkalendar, BHSA, V, NL Stempfle, B. 3.

and its press, opposition that was only overcome by a successful press campaign by the political right in Austria.⁵⁵

The Austrians who joined the local guards in these provinces did so with a wary eye on the international situation, as well as events at home, and this helped smooth the process of setting up regional units. The chaos that accompanied the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian army was one such factor. During the demobilization, as soldiers marched back home to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia, they took the opportunity to create havoc in the Alpine provinces. This complaint was heard often from Austrians in their meetings with Stempfle and Kanzler. Moreover, the continued threat of a Bolshevist takeover was continually hyped during these meetings. In one instance, Italian objections to the creation of a local *Heimwehr* in the Tyrol were smoothed over by highlighting the communist threat to northern Italy. On other occasions, participants pointed to examples of communist uprisings as justification for their activities. Two in particular stood out. The first was an attempted putsch in Graz on June 7, 1920, a revolt which was successfully put down. The second was to remind Austrians of the now infamous Bela Kun revolution that occurred in Hungary during 1919, an uprising that had potential security ramifications for Austria.⁵⁶

Anschluss was never far from the minds of the Austrians, or their Bavarian interlocutors, as they created the *Heimwehr*. They still believed that cooperation with Munich, rather than Berlin, would strengthen the case for union because in their minds Bavaria was not equated with “Prussian militarism.”⁵⁷ A meeting held on May 6, 1920 in

⁵⁵ Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 89-103.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Dr. Zahnbrecher an Herrn Kanzler, 16. Februar 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20a.

Rosenheim attempted to give more concrete form to these hopes. While no one there believed that political unification was possible for the foreseeable future, the committee did discuss other measures that could be taken to facilitate an eventual *Anschluss*. They discussed the creation of a Danubian confederacy between Bavaria and Austria that would regulate trade, resource sharing, scientific exchanges, and cultural connections between the two states. The assembled delegates deemed such an entity to be a necessary first step to help Austria “come back to the Reich again.”⁵⁸

Another very important way to help bring about the *Anschluss* was to coordinate the activities of the Austrian *Heimwehren* with those of the *Einwohnerwehr*. The best way to do this was through the *Organisation Escherich*. This development itself was a natural outgrowth of the ideological program of the Bavarian leader’s new association. The *Orgesch*’s working program, for instance, was frank in its desire to revive nationalist thinking, even among Germans not living in Germany.⁵⁹ Moreover, Pan-German feelings were prevalent amongst many of the Austrians who joined the rapidly forming paramilitary units, something strongly encouraged in Munich. Finally, by combining the *Heimwehren* to the *Orgesch* it prevented groups in the north from questioning the *Einwohnerwehr*’s commitment to Germany. Escherich, in an address to Austrian self defense organizations, put it most bluntly, “I state solemnly, that I and all my colleagues hold unshakably to the unity of the German Reich and will combat all attempts, which want to disturb this unity.”⁶⁰ Thus, on July 25, 1920 the still embryonic Austrian

⁵⁸ Bericht über die Anschlußtagung in Rosenheim, 6. Mai 1920, *ibid*.

⁵⁹ Arbeitsprogram der Organisation Escherich, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

⁶⁰ Ansprache des Landeshauptmann der E.W. Bayerns Dr. Escherich an Vertreter der österreichischen Selbstschutzverbände am 25. Juli 1920, *ibid*, B. 3.

organization joined Escherich's group as an individual department under the command of Rudolf Kanzler.⁶¹

With its activities in Silesia, East Prussia, and Austria the *Organisation Escherich* clearly demonstrated its willingness to play a role in Germany's foreign policy. They had earlier weighed in on the issue of disarmament and dissolution, problems that affected them directly. Now they began to argue vociferously for a more "national" foreign policy from the Reich government. For many in the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Orgesch* the current international situation presented both a danger and an opportunity. If Germany was to navigate successfully in the new climate it needed bold ideas and leadership.

The leaders of the *Organisation Escherich* believed they could provide the leadership, or at least the answers, for the country's current diplomatic predicament. One of their proposals involved Germany reaching an accommodation with Russia so that both countries could once again divide Poland. It was believed that only by recovering the borders of 1914 could the Reich be made safe against Russian invasion, as well as fight effectively against Bolshevism and National Bolshevism in the east.⁶² Another called on the government to organize the neighboring states of Eastern Europe into an alliance against Russia that would be led by Germany and Great Britain. This alliance depended to a great degree upon a grand bargain between the two countries, one that would permit Berlin a free hand in Europe. "One must bring sacrifice, must make concessions to England. Perhaps concede to them the absolute supremacy at sea, but to

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Dr. v. Stegmann u. Stein an Herrn Forstrat Dr. Escherich, 10. August 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

take ourselves the prerogative of German hegemony on land as a natural complement to England's sea power."⁶³ These ideas naturally were more utopian than realistic as they called for a readjustment of the balance of power, something that neither the wartime allies nor the German government prepared to do, despite what the Escherich and his men thought.

The circulation of such ideas, along with the group's activities in Austria and elsewhere, did bring the *Orgesch* to the attention of the British and French. Both states watched Escherich's project very carefully, and were quite alarmed by the organization's program and its rapid growth. They both feared that the *Einwohnerwehr* and the *Organisation Escherich* were covert agents of German rearmament. Their angst was fueled in no small measure by media stories that hyped the revanchist nature of the group. The French newspaper *Excelsior*, for example, claimed that the majority of the members, if not all, were ex-soldiers who had fought in the German army. To prove their point they noted that the identity cards (*Personal Ausweis*) for members were modeled on the army's old military pass.⁶⁴ They also informed their readers about the association's growth in Austria, claiming that the ultimate goal of the *Orgesch* was to control Austria's politics in preparation of *Anschluß*, something they hoped Allied Control Commission would prevent. "We hope, that they will not let themselves make errors in their vigilance."⁶⁵

The Dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*

⁶³ Denkschrift zur Frage der Oestlichen Orientierung der Deutschen Aussenpolitik, 13. September 1920, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Excelsior*, Übersetzung aus dem französischen, 27. September 1920, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Excelsior*, "Die Orgesch in Deutsch-Österreich," 27. September 1920, *ibid.*

The work of the *Orgesch* and *Orka* brought a certain prestige to Escherich and the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr*. They successfully organized the Austrian paramilitaries into the *Heimwehr*, and the group's program was being instituted throughout much of the country. They helped organize German forces in East Prussia and Silesia against the advances of the new Polish state. Furthermore, the umbrella association allowed the Bavarian leader to attack the policies of the *Reich* government directly if its measures were lacking in "national feeling." These attacks, along with their activities in Austria, Silesia, and East Prussia forced the hands of the allies and Berlin cabinet, who increasingly put pressure on the Bavarian government to disarm and disband the *Einwohnerwehr*. This political struggle, which occurred at the same time as the *Orgesch* and *Orka* were being formed, occupied much of the last year of the group's history, and formed the backdrop of Kahr's regime in Munich.

The strife that consumed the *Einwohnerwehr* primarily came from outside Bavaria, but it also faced significant resistance during its last year of existence both internally and within the state. Much of the internal dissension within the organization concerned the activities of the *Organisation Escherich*. By September 1920 the national leadership of the *Orgesch* was staffed almost entirely by the headquarters staff of the *Einwohnerwehr*.⁶⁶ The dual roles of many of the leading figures (Escherich, Kanzler, Stempfle) seemed to suggest to many members of the group that the leadership had become more interested in national politics than local Bavarian affairs. They began to worry that the *Einwohnerwehr* was losing its identity to the new association.⁶⁷ Escherich responded by insisting that the two organizations were separate entities, and that

⁶⁶ Landesleitung der E.W. Bayerns an sämtliche Referate, 18. September 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

⁶⁷ Landesleitung der E.W. Bayerns an Stabsleiter der E.W. Würmgau, 4. February 1921, *ibid.*

conflation of the two was the result of a media campaign.⁶⁸ Nevertheless a divide began to develop as a result of the *Orgesch's* activities, a chasm that as David Clay Large has noted isolated Escherich from the rank and file.⁶⁹

The *Einwohnerwehr* also faced resistance from the Bavarian government. Members of Kahr's cabinet questioned the wisdom of the Minister-President's close connection to the group.⁷⁰ One member of the cabinet argued that the activities of the *Einwohnerwehr* (shooting festivals, the provocations of the *Orgesch*), only weakened Bavaria's position vis-à-vis the allies, and most especially the *Reich* government.⁷¹ Constitutional issues were a major focus of Kahr's government during 1920 as they sought to prevent further erosion of Bavaria's rights to the national government, and a dispute over the *Einwohnerwehr* only made this more difficult.⁷² Finally their role in Bavarian politics was seen as disrupting the rebuilding of national economic life.⁷³

The controversies surrounding the Civil Guard's activities, whether these were overturning the legitimate government in Bavaria during the Kapp Putsch, suppressing general strikes in places like Hof while claiming they were communist uprisings, or helping to organize the *Organisation Escherich* and *Organisation Kanzler*, helped to create an atmosphere where it became incumbent upon Germany's new leaders to break the group. Beginning in 1920 and extending until mid-1921 German and Bavarian

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Large, *The Politics of Law and Order*, 52-3.

⁷⁰ Handelsminister Hamm an den Ministerpräsident von Kahr, September 1920, BHSA, MA 102 380.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. The Bavarian People's Party tried throughout 1920 to rally Bavarian political parties behind the Bamberg Program, which put forward a "revision of the Weimar Constitution in a federalist direction." These efforts failed due to the effects of the Kapp Putsch in Bavaria and the stance taken by Kahr towards the socialist parties in the Diet; see Werner Zimmermann, *Bayern und das Reich, 1918-1923: der bayerische Föderalismus zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, (Munich: Richard Pflaum Verlag, 1953), 90-2.

⁷³ Brief an den preußischen Ministerpräsidenten Herrn Braun, 23. Dezember 1920, *ibid.*

politics were increasingly preoccupied with the questions of disarmament and dissolution. This conflict would not only lead to the breakup of Georg Escherich's paramilitary outfit, but also to the downfall of Gustav von Kahr, who had done so much to help create the *Einwohnerwehr*, and who benefited from its existence.

The primary impetus for disarmament and dissolution (*Entwaffnung* and *Auflösung*) came from outside of Germany, from the allied powers that were in process of implementing the peace treaty. In early 1920, as noted earlier, they had forced the German government to dissolve all paramilitary units, fearing that these would be the nucleus of a new German army. One consequence of this, of course, was the Kapp Putsch of these units in March 1920, an event which helped to solidify the *Einwohnerwehr's* position in Bavaria while it was fatally weakened throughout the rest of the country.⁷⁴ Despite the internal tensions created in Germany by the uprising, the allies continued to insist that paramilitary units be disbanded. Their insistence on these measures became part and parcel of the negotiations taking place at Spa, where Britain, France, and others supervised the implementation of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. Beginning in April 1920 the Entente Powers put increasing pressure on the Reich government to move against the Bavarian Civil Guards specifically.⁷⁵

The French in particular pushed hard for both disarmament and dissolution. The *Munich Post* reported that French newspapers, using documents provided by negotiators at Spa, wrote stories of the baleful influence that Escherich's group had on politics in

⁷⁴ See Chapter 5, 107-20 .

⁷⁵ "Die Einwohnerwehren. Das Reich weist die Länder zur Auflösung an; Preußen hat diese bereits verfügt," *Münchener Zeitung*, Nr. 98, 9. April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

Bavaria, and the danger these posed for European peace and German democracy.⁷⁶

Several themes were highlighted in these stories: the control that the German army had over the *Einwohnerwehr*, the retrograde social composition – consisting mostly of members from the middle classes and precious few from the working classes, and the centralized control that the leadership exercised over local units.⁷⁷ Considering the role the *Einwohnerwehr* played in the Kapp Putsch in Munich, as well as the danger such a narrowly based group posed for German democracy, the French fears were justified.

They were also shared to a certain extent by the government in Berlin.⁷⁸

However, beginning in the second half of 1919 the Reich government, and particularly that of Prussia, began to see the *Einwohnerwehr* as a threat to the stability of the state. The charge against the organization stemmed from the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Hans Severing, who had broken up the Prussian body by the end of 1920 and greatly distrusted the Bavarian organization, and the Kahr government's support of it.⁷⁹

Convinced of the sinister nature of the *Einwohnerwehr*, the Disarmament Conference at Spa decreed on July 9, 1920 that the German government take immediate steps to disarm it, along with the security police. The disarming of Escherich's group was only part of a much larger reduction in arms amongst both the military and the

⁷⁶ "Einwohnerwehr, Klassenregiment, und Völkerverständigung," *Munich Post*, Nr. 108, 10. Mai 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 6.

⁷⁷ The paper argued that, due to the Civil Guard's middle class composition, it was incumbent upon the Kahr government to disband the units because they posed a danger not only to peace, but for a revision of the dictated peace. This admonition was naturally ignored, *ibid*.

⁷⁸ One of the fears, trumpeted by socialist papers in Germany, was that the *Einwohnerwehr* was being trained to fight alongside the *Reichswehr* in a new war against the allied troops occupying the Ruhr and the left bank of the Rhine, having already been used, the paper noted, against the working class throughout the region, "Der Wortbruch der Regierung," *Der Kampf*, Nr. 79, 9. April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

⁷⁹ Bayerische Gesandtschaft an das Reichsminister des Auswärtigen, 4. Dezember 1920, BHSA, MA 102 380 (Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr).

civilian population that had been called for.⁸⁰ On August 7, 1919 the *Reichstag* passed the Law for the Disarmament of the Population. The decree stipulated that the government was to confiscate all military weapons held by people who did not have official sanction to possess them. Those who were allowed to have such weaponry consisted of the army and the civil authorities, who needed them in the performance of their duties. Their weapons were registered with a Reich Commissioner for Disarmament, who was responsible not only for their collection and numbering, but the destruction of all contraband weapons. This official was also given discretion in determining which weapons had military applications.⁸¹

As written the law spelled the end for Escherich's organization as an armed paramilitary force. The law clearly stated that only people in positions of authority could carry arms. While the *Einwohnerwehr* did act in a semi-official capacity, when called upon by local authorities, it remained a privately controlled group that was free from the prying eyes of the state. This had been the goal from the beginning for certain members of the leadership.⁸² As it turned out this fact only helped the *Einwohnerwehr*. The independent nature of the Bavarian association prevented it from being covered under section 10 of the law, which stated that the Reich Commissioner for Disarmament was to carry out his tasks with the help of local authorities, including police auxiliaries.⁸³

⁸⁰ Protokoll der Konferenz von Spa vom 9. Juli 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

⁸¹ "Gesetz über die Entwaffnung der Bevölkerung, vom 7. August 1920," *Reichs-Gesetzblatt*, Jahrgang 1920, Nr. 169, BHSA, II, MA 100 478.

⁸² Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf*, 37-51.

⁸³ "Gesetz über die Entwaffnung," BHSA, II, MA 100 478. The Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* was often used as an auxiliary police force, and it could have been argued that as a result, along with the financial support given them by the government, they were indeed an official organization of the state, though it must be pointed out that this would have undercut the image they created for themselves, *ibid*.

The law's passage naturally set off a political firestorm in Bavaria. The Kahr government, after some debate, rejected the law primarily on constitutional grounds. Specifically they claimed that the law did not take notice of the traditional constitutional arrangement in Germany, one in which the state had traditionally been given wide-ranging rights *vis-à-vis* other German states. As the notice of refusal sent to the Reichsrat stated, "the Bavarian state government will not of course shirk its patriotic duty to the Reich as opposed to the state. But it is of the view, that under the circumstances their attempts could only be accompanied by success if, with the final passage of the law, full understanding and appropriate consideration is given to Bavaria's interests and special relationship."⁸⁴

Kahr's refusal to disarm the *Einwohnerwehr* was supported by those elements of the state that benefitted most from the organization's existence and activities. Some of the biggest supporters naturally came from the political coalition then in power in Munich. The largest of these, Kahr's own Bavarian People's Party, saw the continued existence of the *Einwohnerwehr* as decisive for the preservation of law and order in the Bavarian state. In September 1920, they directed a resolution towards the Minister-President urging him to resist any efforts to disarm or dissolve the group because they believed the weapons would just go into the hands of communists.⁸⁵ The other coalition partners also passed resolutions in support of the *Einwohnerwehr*. The Bavarian Middle Party's resolution stated that, "the Bavarian protection organization may in neither case fall victim to the thirst for revenge of our enemies nor to the weakness of the Reich

⁸⁴ Ministerratssitzung vom 12. August 1920, BHSA, II, MA 100 478.

⁸⁵ Bayerische Volkspartei-Bezirk Sendling an Herrn Ministerpräsident Excellenz von Kahr, 14. September 1920, BHSA, II, MA 102 382.

government.”⁸⁶ They believed that much of the strife between Munich and Berlin was due to the provision in the Treaty of Versailles whereby Germany was guilty for starting the First World War, a clause that allowed them to maintain troops on German soil and persecute the government in this matter.⁸⁷

Business also tended to be supportive. For them the major benefit of the *Einwohnerwehr*, beyond the protection of private property, was their role in stamping out graft and corruption throughout Bavaria. This they saw as vital for the revival of economic life in the state.⁸⁸ The reaction from Bavarian economic elites to the disarmament and dissolution drama reflected the esteem in which some of them held Escherich’s group. Not only did they send letters supporting the Civil Guards to the Bavarian government, but to the central government in Berlin as well. One letter sent to Escherich from a local leader of a farmer’s union argued that, regardless of the Reichstag’s disarmament debate, under no circumstances would the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* be dissolved.⁸⁹

Of all the interests supporting the Kahr government in their defiance of the allies and Berlin it was the *Einwohnerwehr* themselves who were most crucial. Throughout 1920 and 1921 the group’s leadership, at all levels, weighed in on the political dispute between Bavaria and the Reich government. Their efforts consisted of writing letters in support of the Bavarian government’s position, explaining the goals and work of the

⁸⁶ Bayerische Mittelpartei (Deutschnationale Volkspartei in Bayern) Bezirksgruppe Coburg an die Bayerische Staatsregierung, 22. März 1921, BHSA, II, MA 102 383.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kommerzienrat Oscar Kösters Bergwerkdirektor Schwandorf an Sr. Excellenz Herrn Ministrpräsident Dr. Kahr, 16. Oktober 1920, BHSA, II, MA 102 382.

⁸⁹ Oberbayerischer christlicher Bauernverein an Herrn Forstrat Dr. Escherich, 25. April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

organization, and most importantly, highlighting the danger to Bavaria if disarmament or dissolution were allowed. Since it touched on their existences as a group, the topics of disarmament and dissolution infused nearly all of the thinking and many of the activities of the Civil Guards for over a year before their eventual disbandment.

The initial reaction amongst the membership was to dismiss the drive for disarmament and dissolution as nothing but an attempt on the part of France to drive a wedge between Bavaria and the Reich. *Einwohnerwehr* leaders argued that the French knew perfectly well why the organization was needed, but were using its existence as a way to extend its political and economic influence into central Europe, something that had been a traditional aspect of French foreign policy. A divided Germany made this much easier. As one internal memo put it, “our enemies will never abide scruples to use this opposition for their goals. With France this goal is called: disintegration of the domestic consensus and unity of Germany.”⁹⁰

Additionally many members of the *Einwohnerwehr* believed that France’s policy was not only designed to foment division within Germany, but to promote revolution. By disarming the population, it placed them in a position where they would be at the mercy of their enemies. Many *Einwohnerwehr* members considered it axiomatic that their weapons, rather than be destroyed, would find a way into the hands of their enemies. This made the political dispute between Munich and Berlin vitally important for the continuance of the *Einwohnerwehr*’s mission of maintaining law and order.⁹¹ They could

⁹⁰ Zur Frage der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

⁹¹ 14. Stadtbezirk Münchens an die Landesleitung der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr zu Handes des Herrn Landeshauptman Dr. Escherich, 12. April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3. Interestingly enough, the dispute proved to be a useful justification for keeping the working class, and even members of the SPD, out of the

not conceive of disbanding the group and would not entertain it. However, compromise was not necessarily ruled out. A local leader in Munich wrote Escherich encouraging him to promise that the Civil Guards would admit no more members in exchange for allowing the association to continue.⁹²

At first the Bavarian leadership had some reason for hope in the province's dealings with Berlin. The Chancellor at the time, Constantin Fehrenbach, was from southern Germany, and many in the *Einwohnerwehr* believed that fact would give them a fair hearing from the Reich government.⁹³ They allowed themselves to believe this because Fehrenbach's coalition government did not include either of the socialist parties which in Prussia, under the leadership of Interior Minister Hans Severing, were making things very difficult for the organization and its leader.⁹⁴ Escherich and his staff directed letters to the Reich government, in addition to the Kahr government, making the case for resisting allied pressure.⁹⁵ In their appeal to Berlin, the leadership argued that the group merely served as private security for those people who had little to no help from the army or the police, both of which they claimed was still too weak to face the onslaught of red terror. Moreover, since the Bavarian group had remained loyal to the Reich government during the Kapp Putsch, it only proved that neither Berlin, nor the allies, had anything to fear from the *Einwohnerwehr*.⁹⁶

Einwohnerwehr because this would lead to too many political clashes. In April 1920, the government in Berlin was a socialist coalition government of SPD and USPD, *ibid*.

⁹² *Ibid*.

⁹³ Zur Frage der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

⁹⁴ Fehrenbach's government came to power in the election of June 1920, replacing the SPD coalition government of Hermann Müller,

⁹⁵ Abschrift der Landesleitung der E.W. Bayerns, 1. Juli 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

⁹⁶ Der Landeshauptmann der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an den Herrn Reichspräsidenten, 7. April 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

Their most potent argument, of course, concerned the consequences that would fall to Bavaria, and by extension Germany, should disarmament and dissolution carry the day. Many of the letters sent from *Einwohnerwehr* offices, and the propaganda sent out by the leadership, painted a stark picture of a countryside ravaged by the breakdown of order. As was the case with most of their propaganda efforts, apocalyptic language was the rule of the day. Letters, essays, and articles all pointed to the deleterious effects of destruction. In these, naturally, the *Räterepublik* of April and May 1920 loomed large, and were often used as the example to prove the point.⁹⁷ For many Civil Guard members the memories of April and May 1919 were still quite fresh, and they feared a revival of those days.⁹⁸ Moreover, they believed that northern Germany was ripe for a communist takeover in the aftermath of Kapp Putsch,⁹⁹ and that absent the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr*, “murder and plundering, and chaos and fire like two years ago,” would rule the day.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, during the controversy surrounding the issue of disarming and disbanding the *Einwohnerwehr* in 1920 and 1921, many of the arguments used by the Kahr Government,¹⁰¹ the state leadership,¹⁰² and even ordinary citizens¹⁰³ in support of the organization relied upon the belief that only the Civil Guards stood between the Free

⁹⁷ Zur Frage der bayerischen Einwohnerwehren, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

⁹⁸ Abschrift Fürstenberg, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁹⁹ Herwarth to Churchill, January 26, 1921, BHSA, II, MA 100 383.

¹⁰⁰ An die Einwohnerwehren, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 13.

¹⁰¹ Staatsministerium des Inneren an das Reichsministerium des Innern, 2. Dezember 1920, BHSA, I, MA 100 478.

¹⁰² Gedanken über Erhaltung oder Auflösung der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr, Mai 1921, BHSA, IV (Kriegsarchiv), EWB, B. 3.

¹⁰³ Herwarth to Winston Churchill, BHSA, I (Staatsministerium des Äußern), MA 102 383 (Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr).

State and a showdown with the left. In the words of one member, “the final struggle of Bolshevism is imminent, to which under no terms will they foreswear.”¹⁰⁴

Political chaos was just one of the themes stressed by the organization in their communications. The economic well being of the state was another. Many members feared that, after the destruction of the *Einwohnerwehr*, the Bavarian economy would slip into the grip of the black market; that on top of the economic costs of robbery and arson that were sure to follow dissolution. For the leadership in Munich the case was easy to make, as they could point to the situation in northern Germany where the *Einwohnerwehr* had already been disarmed and where, in their minds, the negative effects of such a move were easily observable. One report pointed out that robberies were common amongst the banks, factories, and merchants of the Westphalian Rhineland, and that when the local citizenry tried to defend itself, the government seemed more interested in the possession of weapons than recovery of stolen property and money.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, they argued that the *Einwohnerwehr* was needed to protect business because these tended to be the target of political protests by leftist groups.¹⁰⁶

In spite of their efforts, the political situation for the *Einwohnerwehr* worsened throughout 1920 and into 1921. The efforts of the Kahr government to protect Escherich’s group had a wholly negative effect on Bavaria’s relationship to the central government. The Minister-President directed his government to stymie the implementation of the disarmament law over several months in the hopes that he could

¹⁰⁴ Brief an den Ministerpräsident von Kahr, 13. Juni 1921, BHSA, I, MA 102 384.

¹⁰⁵ Lagebericht: Folgen der Entwaffnung, 22. September 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Landesleitung der E.W. Bayerns an sämtliche Kreisleitungen bis zu den Gauen und Leitungen der E.W. München und Nürnberg, 1. Juli 1920, *ibid.*

persuade the Reich government and the allies to leave the group untouched.¹⁰⁷ They believed this was necessary because where disarmament had occurred in Bavaria it fell disproportionately on the *Einwohnerwehr* and middle class organizations, while communist and other radical groups continued to keep their weapons.¹⁰⁸ Kahr's reasoning, however, put the Reich government in a bind. According to the stipulations of the Spa agreement, if Germany did not comply with the deadline for disarmament, which according to the treaty was January 1, 1921, then French forces would occupy the Ruhr.¹⁰⁹

The dispute between Munich and Berlin over the fate of the *Einwohnerwehr* and its weapons raised questions about the Bavarian leader's motives. It was believed by some in the Reich government that Kahr was using the controversy for his own purposes. They feared, most of all, that Escherich and Kahr maintained their defiant position because they sought to separate Bavaria from the Reich and rectify the "mistake of history" that created a German state under Prussian hegemony.¹¹⁰ They noted that, despite the official hard line from Paris, French officials traveled all over Bavaria ingratiating themselves to the Bavarian elite, and hinting that the state would be spared the worst of any allied sanctions.¹¹¹ They believed that French actions only encouraged Kahr's obstinate position *vis-à-vis* the *Einwohnerwehr* and put Berlin in a most difficult

¹⁰⁷ Bayerische Gesandtschaft an das Staatsministerium des Aeußern, 5. November 1920, BHSA, II, MA 100 478. The Bavarians hoped to use divisions within the Reichstag between the middle class parties and the Social Democrats on this issue to prevent dissolution, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Staatsministerium des Innern an das Reichsministerium des Innern, 2. Dezember 1920, *ibid.* The voluntary collection and destruction of weapons had been scheduled in October 1920, and it appears that some of the guard units might have participated in this event, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Protokoll der Konferenz von Spa vom 9. Juli 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

¹¹⁰ Brief von Josef Sonntag, 28. Oktober 1920, BHSA, II, MA 102 382.

¹¹¹ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 67-9. French officials not only interacted closely with officials in the Bavarian government, but prominent figures on the German right like General Ludendorff, whom French officials sought out for his opinion on military and political matters, including the dispute over the *Einwohnerwehr*, Arnold Rechberg an Kahr, 25. Dezember 1920, BHSA, II, MA 102 383.

position. If they pushed too hard, the Bavarians might conceivably make a deal with the French, who would let them keep the group in exchange for independence under promises of protection from Paris, especially in the area of economics.¹¹²

These fears, along with the stated consequences of non compliance, forced the national government to take an increasingly hard line against Munich.¹¹³ At a ministerial meeting on February 5, 1921, one that was attended by Gustav von Kahr, Chancellor Fehrenbach and his cabinet made clear Berlin's intention to force the Bavarian state government to disarm the *Einwohnerwehr* in order to fulfill the requirements of both the Treaty of Versailles and the Spa Agreement. Members of the cabinet argued forcefully that they could not allow Kahr and his government to act in contravention of the Reich constitution and the Treaty of Versailles. Such actions, they asserted, spelled an end to the Reich as it was then conceived, something that only served the interests of "nationalists in France, England, and America."¹¹⁴ Despite Kahr's pleadings, the cabinet rejected Munich's argument that the *Einwohnerwehr* only served to protect the inner peace of the state. "Bavaria did wrong to cover themselves in the bad experiences from March 1919."¹¹⁵ In the eyes of Fehrenbach and his ministers Bavaria was the culprit in any difficulties they had with the allies. From that moment the fate of the Bavarian organization was sealed.

¹¹² Brief von Josef Sonntag, 30. Oktober 1920, BHSA, II, MA 102 382.

¹¹³ The Reich government, until early 1921, had tried to straddle the demands of the allied powers with the intransigence of the Bavarian government by allowing Munich to supervise both disarmament and dissolution (neither of which was done), or by disarming leftist groups, which the Kahr government could then claim were not disarmed, thus giving them an excuse to maintain the paramilitary organization, Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 67.

¹¹⁴ Besprechung der Reichs- und Bayerischen Regierung, 5. Februar 1921, BHSA, II, MA 100 478.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

In addition to the *Einwohnerwehr* the *Organisation Escherich* was also slated for dissolution. The central government and the allies undertook these measures due to the strife that already accompanied the *Orgesch* in its efforts to set itself up in northern Germany, and the prominent role it played in creating the *Heimwehr* in Austria.¹¹⁶ Thus to the Reich government the two organizations were linked. The Bavarian leadership itself attempted to persuade the government of benign nature of the group. Escherich submitted pleas to Berlin arguing that misunderstandings, both intentional and unintentional, drove the effort to dissolve the *Orgesch* and that he could not be held responsible for these views. Alternating between pleading and defiance, the *Einwohnerwehr* leader argued that no people in history were asked to give up the right to self defense, a principle that undergirded European politics for centuries. In his view the *Orgesch* was no paramilitary, but “a purely internal German concern,” one that happened to engage in foreign activity due to the oppression of the Treaty of Versailles.¹¹⁷

The intent of the national government to force the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr* only increased the determination of the membership and their leaders to prevent it. Many local units flooded the offices of the Bavarian government urging continued resistance, or defiantly promising a fight should any attempt be made on the part of the government to disarm and disband them. The Civil Guard of Hiepolsstein, for instance promised to defend their territory “down to the last cartridge.”¹¹⁸ The Berchtesgaden office expressed dismay at the Reich government for believing that they could trust the allies, who they claimed sought to destroy Germany. Dissolution was, in

¹¹⁶ See pp. 130-48.

¹¹⁷ Forstrat Dr. Escherich an den Reichsminister des Auswärtigen Herrn Dr. Simons, 18. Januar 1921, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

¹¹⁸ Gauhauptmann der E.W. Gaus Hiepolsstein an den Herrn Ministerpräsident Dr. von Kahr, 16. Mai 1921, BHSA, II, MA 102 384.

their words, “a violation and surrender of the interests of the Bavarian state.”¹¹⁹ The vehement response was not just limited to local units, but even came from the leadership in Munich as well. In May 1921 state leaders organized a boycott of all products from France, England, and Belgium to protest those countries’ political stance vis-à-vis the *Einwohnerwehr*. In their proclamation to local units the leadership pointed out that not only was the embargo a decisive political statement, but that it benefitted German industry and would help make the country independent of foreign trade.¹²⁰

As the dispute continued into May 1921 most observers wondered whether it would be possible to dissolve the *Einwohnerwehr* without bloodshed. On May 5, 1921 the Allies issued an ultimatum, directed specifically at the Bavarian government, demanding the dissolution of the organization and the surrender of all its weapons. Failure to comply would not only bring about an allied occupation of the Ruhr, but of Bavaria as well.¹²¹ The ultimatum also extended to the *Organisation Escherich* and any paramilitaries still operating in Silesia under their umbrella.¹²² The stark demands of the Allied Control Commission caused consternation in the Bavarian Diet, which debated the consequences of doing nothing,¹²³ and in the press. The *Süddeutsche Presse* wrote, “Mr von Kahr has so often explained it is not true that the state leadership of the

¹¹⁹ E.W. Bezirk Berchtesgaden an den Herrn Ministerpräsident Ritter von Kahr, 16. March 1921, BHSA, II, MA 102 383.

¹²⁰ Landesleitung der Einwohnerwehren Bayerns an alle Kreis- und Gauleitungen!, 3. May 1921, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 14.

¹²¹ Large, *Politics of Law and Order*, 73.

¹²² *Münchener Zeitung*, “Bayern und Oberschlesien,” 29. May 1921, Nr. 121, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 4.

¹²³ *Münchener Zeitung*, “E.W.-Debate im Landtag,” 28. May 1921, *ibid.*

Einwohnerwehr approaches the character of a shadow government. Today he can prove the truth of this statement; he must do it, if he does not want incur the gravest rebuke.”¹²⁴

With its back against the wall, the Kahr government ordered the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*, disappointing many of its supporters in the organization. The group’s leadership, which had done so much to prevent the disarmament and dissolution, faced political reality and crafted a resolution of local and regional leaders that acknowledged the inevitable. “With heavy hearts we have given our consent, to the limits of the possible, the exhaustive proposal, which the Bavarian Minister President Excellence von Kahr has made as a sign of the good will of Bavaria to the Reich government and the league of enemies in the question of the dissolution and disarmament of the *Einwohnerwehr*. We cannot surpass the limits of the possible. In this belief we stand behind our Minister President Excellence von Kahr and explain in full awareness of the scope of this decision that we will keep with him.”¹²⁵ This resolution was backed up by memoranda from the leading figures of the organization. Rudolf Kanzler, for instance, argued, “I know I am one with all upright leaders and men of the *Einwohnerwehr*, that we must not betray our fatherland in this critical juncture and ourselves by threats of any kind from Berlin.”¹²⁶ Similarly Georg Escherich, in an announcement sent to the *Orgesch*, wrote, “We see the dangers of civil war in the interior and with it the foreign policy related complications, and we submit ourselves to the violence of the fact. The *Organisation Escherich* is disbanded.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ *Süddeutsche Presse*, “Kahr und die Einwohnerwehr,” 31. May 1921, Nr. 95, *ibid*.

¹²⁵ Resolution, 30. Mai 1921, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

¹²⁶ Entwurf, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 20d.

¹²⁷ Adresse im Berlin Nationalclub, 29. June 1921, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 5.

The decision to accept disarmament and disbandment had come after a period of intense discussion within the organization's leadership. Through much of Spring 1920 they debated avenues open to them should the political cover given to them by the Kahr government evaporate. Several possible courses of action were discussed. The first of these involved risking another European war. The leadership believed that, if they did not voluntarily disarm, the French would attempt an invasion of Bavaria and Germany in order to carry out the Spa Agreement, an option that many in Munich believed could not be carried out. To undertake an invasion would require the mobilization of the entire French army, something Civil Guard leaders thought impossible. However, in spite of these factors, the leadership ruled out war because they believed that it could not be prosecuted without a united front with the Social Democratic parties. Nor could they fight in the face of united Social Democratic and Independent Socialists resistance, which would split the country and negate the advantages they believed the Germans to have.¹²⁸

Another option had the *Einwohnerwehr* give up part of their weapons, while reorganizing the group as a reserve of the state police (*Landespolizei*). According to this view, the organization would give up roughly one third of their weaponry, those which clearly had a military purpose and offended the Allied Control Commission. However, this required the leadership to seek the views and opinions of both political allies and the government before proceeding. Given the climate at the time this was a tricky proposition at best, and was quickly discarded.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Gedanken über die Erhaltung oder Auflösung der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr, May 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

The third option, and the one eventually adopted, was to disband under protest and to reorganize. Riedel, who was the group's deputy chief of staff, argued that instead of forming a reserve police force, the *Einwohnerwehr* be reconstituted as a secret organization – a paramilitary force that operated independent of state control. Such a proposal naturally matched up nicely with the original ideas that Rudolf Kanzler had laid out in 1919. In order to have success as an underground group, the new organization had to be selective in the number of men it admitted. Riedel envisioned a tight knit community of men, “the truest of the true,” to carry out the fight against communism and social democracy. They would be supplemented by a much larger organization composed of the vast majority of former members, who would prepare the way for a revival of national thinking along the lines set out by Escherich.¹³⁰ Thus, the ideas as set out by Riedel, paved the way for the survival of the ultra-nationalist ideology of the *Einwohnerwehr* in a new organization, one that was more committed to pursuing the worldview espoused by the group – even if it put them in opposition to the state they professed to love.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 7

Filling the Void – the Creation, Organization, and Ideology of *Bund Bayern und Reich*

The dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr* in June 1921 dealt the patriotic (*vaterländisch*) movement in Bavaria a severe blow. Escherich's organization had been the largest and most powerful right wing group, not just in terms of numbers but in weaponry. With a worldview that was functionally *völkisch* and ultranationalist, the *Einwohnerwehr* helped to overturn the gains of the 1918 Revolution in the state. They helped topple the Social Democratic government and replaced it with one more to their membership's liking. They also served as the shock troops for business and government interests; crushing any political activity they deemed extremist, especially if it came from the working class and their political allies. Their disbandment at the hands of the allies and the Berlin government seemed to signal that the Bavarian right, which had essentially stopped the reforming impulse of the new democratic government in Munich, was heading for a decline in its influence.

However, rather than marking the end or the weakening of the patriotic movement, the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr* led to a spike in right wing violence at both the state and national levels against the republic. This manifested itself in a wave of assassinations that took place during the second half of 1921. Conspiratorial groups, often filled with people who belonged to paramilitary units, waged a secret war against leading figures in the republic.¹ One of their earliest victims was Matthais Erzberger,

¹ The organization most active in these activities was the *Organisation Consul (O.C.)*, which had been formed out of the old Erhardt Naval Brigade that participated in the Kapp Putsch, and would later reform itself as *Bund Wiking*, James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 107-15.

who had signed the Treaty of Versailles for Germany.² In Bavaria assassins took the life of Karl Gareis, an Independent Socialist and member of the Bavarian Diet, in June 1921. Gareis had been one of most outspoken opponents of the paramilitaries and of the *Einwohnerwehr* in particular. His murder sparked an intense debate within the parliament that only further weakened Gustav von Kahr's position as Minister-President.³

The increase in violence was also accompanied in Bavaria by a multiplication of organizations on the political right in the aftermath of the *Einwohnerwehr's* dissolution. The favored status given to Escherich's units had swelled its membership, often at the expense of other groups. Part of this was due to the fact that the *Einwohnerwehr* absorbed many paramilitary units that had operated on their own during the period of the *Räterepublik*. The *Freikorps Oberland* was one such example. They were taken into the *Einwohnerwehr* as a whole unit, which allowed them to keep their structure. Once Escherich's group was disbanded, they reconstituted themselves as an independent entity.⁴ Thus the political right in Bavaria tended to be composed of one very large organization and many significantly smaller ones. The Nazi Party was one of these, an association so insignificant in the years from 1919 to 1921 that Kahr scarcely paid it any attention, even when addressed directly by Rudolf Hess about Hitler and his program.⁵

² The wave of violence that began with Erzberger reached its peak in 1922 with the assassination of Walther Rathenau, who was the German foreign minister at the time. His murder proved to be a wakeup call to the republic's defenders who passed a law, the Law for the Defense of the Republic, targeting right-wing paramilitaries in the months that followed, *ibid*.

³ Bayerischer Landtag – 66. Sitzung vom 21. Juni 1921, BHSA, I, M Inn 71 708.

⁴ Rudolf Kanzler, *Bayerns Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus*, (Munich: Paracelsus, 1931), 164-73. In addition to the *Freikorps Oberland* the Voluntary Associations (*Zeitfreiwilligen Verbände*) were also taken into the *Einwohnerwehr*. Both were absorbed during the course of 1920, and both saw extensive action in Silesia and East Prussia under the *Orgesch*, *ibid*.

⁵ Rudolf Hess an Herrn Exzellenz Ministerpräsident von Kahr, 17. May 1921, BHSA, II, MA 102 384. Kahr's response to Hess was written by a state councilor in the Foreign Ministry that simply thanked him for his statement on Hitler, giving no indication whether the Bavarian leader regarded him in a positive or negative light, Oberregierungsrat im Staatsministerium des Äußern, 24. May 1921, *ibid*.

The end of the *Einwohnerwehr* not only brought about a revival of previous organizations, but marked the migration of many former members into these smaller entities, increasing their size and importance after 1921.⁶

The expansion of smaller paramilitary organizations in the aftermath of the *Einwohnerwehr* helped propel the creation of a successor organization to carry on the work of Georg Escherich and Rudolf Kanzler. This eventually came to be known as *Bund Bayern und Reich*. This formation, like the old *Einwohnerwehr* was a paramilitary unit dedicated to the eradication of socialism in Germany, the overturning of the Treaty of Versailles, and the propagation of a nationalist world view. However, unlike Escherich's association, it was overtly political in a way that the *Einwohnerwehr* only implied. It was also, despite its nominal independence, more reliant upon the army for both direction and its place as the preeminent paramilitary organization in the years 1922-24.

The Organisation Pittinger and the Founding of *Bund Bayern und Reich*

The idea for the *Bund Bayern und Reich* came about as the result of a debate between leading *Einwohnerwehr* leaders in the weeks following the allied ultimatum of May 1921. Several proposals were put forward within the organization's leadership for how to deal with the demands of the Control Commission. The most influential of these, and the one eventually adopted, came from deputy chief of staff Riedel. In a memorandum he argued, "The immediate formation of a secret organization from the truest of the true ought to be simultaneously constituted and is now already being

⁶ David Clay Large, *The Politics of Law and Order: A History of the Bavarian Einwohnerwehr, 1918-1921*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1980), 76-7.

prepared.”⁷ For Riedel a clandestine paramilitary group remained the only option. Bavaria could not resist the allied demands, in his view, because open conflict would be opposed by Social Democrats and their allies on the left, whom he believed would act as a fifth column in the country, and because there was simply no public support for another war even among conservative and middle class Germans. It would be easy to set up such an organization, he claimed, by following the cell structure of communist groups. They could even keep most of their weapons, giving up a certain number to authorities to placate the allies but keeping the bulk secretly hidden. What was required, according to Riedel, was a force of thirty to fifty thousand armed men, supported by a larger entity – made up of the bulk of the *Einwohnerwehr*’s former members – who prepared the way for national renewal and would serve as a reserve to the more elite force.⁸

Riedel’s ideas were adopted by the Bavarian leadership and resulted in the *Einwohnerwehr* being reorganized as the *Organisation Pittinger* on June 12, 1921. The new organization was secret and significantly smaller than the former *Einwohnerwehr*, only being referred to as *OrgPi* in official documents to avoid suspicion.⁹ Dr. Otto Pittinger, a health inspector (*Sanitätsrat*) from Regensburg, became the head of the new group that bore his name. A master organizer, Pittinger, like many of the leaders in the patriotic movement, had served in the German army during World War I, seeing action in the medical corps. After the war Pittinger returned to Regensburg, where he fell in with the extremely antisemitic Bavarian Order Block (*Ordnungsblock*). From there he joined

⁷ Gedanken über Erhaltung oder Auflösung der bayerischen Einwohnerwehr, May 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Hans Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus in Bayern nach 1918*, (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1969), 143-47.

the *Einwohnerwehr*, working his way up to regional leader (*Kreisleiter*).¹⁰ It was in this capacity that he served as one of the major organizers of the *Organisation Escherich*. Later he was elevated to the state leadership, where he participated in the debates over disbandment that raged amongst the Civil Guards in early 1921. Well connected to the political elite of Bavaria and to the major figures of the patriotic movement, Pittinger would use these contacts to help build up the *Organisation Pittinger* and later *Bund Bayern und Reich*.¹¹

Pittinger became the head of the new organization with the blessing of former *Einwohnerwehr* leader Escherich who, according to Otto Nusser, believed that the new group would be run along the same lines as the old *Einwohnerwehr*.¹² However Pittinger had his own ideas for the new group and these differed greatly from those of Escherich. The most significant of these involved politics. Whereas Escherich had been able to keep the Civil Guards from appearing overly political, Pittinger instituted a detailed political program for new the organization, one that was more in line with the views of many former *Einwohnerwehr* members.¹³

Politics was not the only area where Pittinger's style differed from Escherich's. The former leader had created in the *Einwohnerwehr* a group that had both a military and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Horst G.W. Nußer, *Konservative Wehrverbände in Bayern, Preußen und Österreich 1918-1922, mit einer Biographie von Forstrat Georg Escherich 1870-1941*, (Munich: Nusser Verlag, 1973), 215-17, and Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 143-47.

¹² Nußer, *Konservative Wehrverbände*, 215. Pittinger had been a *Kreisleiter* in the *Einwohnerwehr* and eventually worked his way into the *Landesleitung* by 1921. He was well known to Escherich, Kriebel, and the rest of the staff, and had a prominent role in the Regensburg meeting that helped set up the *Organisation Escherich*, *ibid.*

¹³ Ibid. Pittinger's political program reflected the preoccupations of many of the local units in the *Einwohnerwehr*, which trended towards *völkisch* thought, as illustrated in the Rosenheim *Einwohnerwehr's* attitude towards Jews, see Chapter 4, 92-4.

a police function, though the allies would eventually force them to abandon the former.¹⁴ For his organization, however, Pittinger adopted a purely military posture in accordance to Riedel's ideas. The *Organisation Pittinger* was devoted first and foremost to developing a dependable reserve for the German army in Bavaria. The group was heavily supported by leading military figures like General von Möhl, who was still the commander of the *Reichswehr* in Munich. This connection was crucial for building the *OrgPi* in the first months of its existence, and for *Bayern und Reich* later. It also proved decisive in the initial relations between Pittinger and the other paramilitaries of the patriotic movement. To create an effective reserve force more men would be needed, as the *OrgPi* was still a rather small organization. Coordination amongst the numerous successor groups (remnants of the *Einwohnerwehr*, the other voluntary associations, and *Bund Oberland*) would be crucial to creating that reserve, and Pittinger's favored position gave him the incentive to try and bring these groups under his leadership.¹⁵

The differences in approach created tensions between Pittinger and Escherich. These spilled out into open conflict over the situation with the *Orgesch*, the group that bore the former *Einwohnerwehr* leader's name and that now, after the ban of June 1921, was operating in secret. Escherich's leadership of both groups had created a personal union between them and, as the *Organisation Pittinger* was the successor to the old *Einwohnerwehr*, it was still considered a member of the *Organisation Escherich*. This meant that Escherich could still control the new group in his role as national leader of the *Orgesch*; this might have been the intent all along. As Escherich remained very popular among many in the patriotic movement in Bavaria, Pittinger spent much of 1921 trying to

¹⁴ See Chapter 5, 121.

¹⁵ Nußer, *Konservative Wehrverbände*, 216-17.

remove the *OrgPi* from the national organization. The feud between the two men became so acrimonious that a meeting was held on November 4, 1921 between Pittinger, Escherich, and Henning von der Osten (leader of the *Orgesch* in East Prussia) to resolve the dispute. A compromise was reached at the meeting where Escherich remained as head of the national group while giving Pittinger complete control over the Bavarian organization. Despite his popularity though, Escherich's position in the patriotic movement was fatally compromised. Many leaders within the *Orgesch* began to reject his leadership. The deteriorating situation allowed Pittinger to gain independence for his organization.¹⁶

If the struggle between Escherich and the *Organisation Pittinger* was not enough, the Regensburg health inspector had to deal with the other patriotic associations, few of whom found Pittinger's pretensions to leadership inspiring. They resented having to coordinate their activities with the *OrgPi*, which had the backing of the army and thus access to funds and weapons. The result was that these organizations attacked the group, and its leader, frequently. The paramilitary outfit most responsible for causing trouble in late 1921 was the *Bund Oberland*, which was a successor organization to the *Freikorps Oberland*.¹⁷ Beginning in January 1922 Captain Josef Römer, the group's leader started spreading rumors about Pittinger, his association, and its political goals. The main story

¹⁶ Ibid, 216-20. Escherich's problems with Pittinger in regards to both the *Orgesch* and *Organisation Pittinger* resulted in him becoming very disillusioned with the *vaterländisch* circles around both Kahr and Ludendorff, a sentiment he made well known in his correspondence, Brief, July 18, 1922, BHSA, V, NL Escherich.

¹⁷ Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 159-64. The *Bund Oberland* formed as the conflict in Silesia, where the *Freikorps Oberland* fought as part of the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr* (into which it had been absorbed) and the *Organisation Escherich*, came to an end and the group returned to Bavaria. Ideologically heterodox (it flirted with trying to win the workers to the national cause), the group was initially run by Captain Josef Römer who was suspicious of figures who appeared to have separatist aspirations, like Rudolf Kanzler, *ibid*.

circulated about the *OrgPi* leader was his desire to see Bavaria secede from the Reich and become its own country or unite with Austria. Both would be done under the auspices of a French protectorate.¹⁸

Römer's accusations against Pittinger revolved around a discussion they had in December 1921, in which he claimed that the *OrgPi* leader had announced that his stated political goal was to foster Bavarian independence under the protection of France. This accusation made its way into the press on January 30, 1922 when the Hamburg newspaper, *Welt am Montag*, published an article accusing Pittinger of treasonous activities against the German Reich.¹⁹ These included his involvement in planning a royalist putsch to help restore the Wittelsbach monarchy and seeking to unite with nationalist circles in Budapest to create a Danubian confederation composed of Bavaria, Austria, and Hungary.²⁰

The charges leveled against Pittinger and his group were significant enough to warrant a response. This took the form of a pamphlet distributed by the *Organisation Pittinger* in February 1922 titled, *Oberland's Leaders in the Light of Truth*, which attacked Römer and his association directly. In the document a number of countercharges were made. First, they accused the *Oberland* leadership of dishonesty, pointing out that Römer continued to interact with Pittinger and his group up to three days before the article attacking the health inspector was published. They also pointed out that *Oberland's* leader, in the article in *Welt am Montag*, claimed the discussion between him and Pittinger took place in December 1921, when in fact it had taken place

¹⁸ Untersuchungsausschuß des E.S.V an den Nationalverband deutscher Offiziere, Ortsgruppe München, Abschrift: Oberland-Pittinger, 24. July 1922, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 15.

¹⁹ "Wie Gerüchte entstehen," Blatt I. Untersuchungsausschuß, *ibid.*

²⁰ "Die Anklage," Blatt II. Untersuchungsausschuß, *ibid.*

in September; this fact would have made Römer as aware of many of the developments, like the planned royalist putsch and the trip to Hungary as anyone in the patriotic movement. Finally, the authors of the pamphlet accused the *Oberland* leadership of willfully “misunderstanding” the nature of Pittinger’s address, which they claimed was not an endorsement of secession, but a discussion of the impossibility of Bavarian separation.²¹

The feud between Pittinger and *Bund Oberland*, along with his struggle with Escherich over the *Organisation Pittinger’s* place in *Orgesch*, created major rifts in the patriotic movement. If left unchecked such a conflict might have fractured the right wing in Bavaria, and this was a possibility that the army could not seriously entertain. Beginning in May 1922 the Bavarian *Reichswehr*, in conjunction with three independent veterans and officer associations, began an investigation of the rumors swirling around the *OrgPi* leader. Chaired by General Franz Ritter von Epp, the findings were designed to explain “about the quality of the leaders of Oberland and their business.”²²

The findings of the commission exonerated Pittinger and his group. They found that charges brought by the leadership of *Bund Oberland* against the health inspector to be completely false, concluding that Römer had indeed lied about the timing of the meeting between himself and Pittinger. Moreover, the September meeting was not the only one between the two men as they met in December 1921, during a period when Römer and his associates were preparing their lies for public consumption.²³ They also

²¹ *Oberlandführer im Lichte der Wahrheit*, February 1922, *ibid.*

²² Untersuchungsausschuß des E.S.V. an den Nationalverband deutscher Offiziere, Ortsgruppe München, 24. July 1922, *ibid.*

²³ “Schlußfolgerung” und “Tatsachen, die ehrengerichtliche Behandlung fordern,” Blatt IV und V. Untersuchungsausschuß, *ibid.*

judged harshly the organization's decision to make these charges in a "leftist newspaper like the *Welt am Montag*."²⁴ They also discovered that Römer and his associates were motivated primarily by money. According to Prince zur Lippe, who was present at the September meeting, the main motivation of the group's leaders there was to obtain money from Pittinger for their own activities.²⁵ As a result the commission judged *Oberland's* leaders harshly. "It is profound to lament, that for such recognizably excellent membership material an order organization is located in the hands of an equally recognized, incapable leadership."²⁶

Even before the army's commission had handed down its verdict in July 1922, the *Organisation Pittinger* had been reorganized as the *Bund Bayern und Reich*. The new group came into existence in April, just as the dispute between Pittinger and the *Bund Oberland* hit its peak. No official reason was given for the transformation of *OrgPi* from a small conspiratorial organization into a paramilitary force; however a couple of plausible explanations have been proffered by scholars. Hans Fenske argues that the *Organisation Pittinger* was simply too small to be effective within a patriotic movement now dominated by small, self-sustaining units that guarded their autonomy jealously and would not surrender it to Pittinger.²⁷ Meanwhile, Horst Nußer claims that *Bayern und Reich* came into existence as a creation of the health inspector himself, in order to underline the differences between the new group and the old *Einwohnerwehr*. Such a

²⁴ "Oberlands Führer," Blatt III. Untersuchungsausschuß, *ibid*.

²⁵ Verband bayerische Offiziere Regiments Vereinigungen, *Denkschrift: Bund Bayern und Reich und Bund Oberland*, *ibid*.

²⁶ "Schlußfolgerung," Blatt IV. Untersuchungsausschuß, *ibid*.

²⁷ Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 146-47 and 172.

distinction allowed Pittinger to gain unfettered independence from both the *Orgesch* and Georg Esherich.²⁸

It is quite possible though that the decision to reorganize the *Organisation Pittinger* as a paramilitary unit was something encouraged by *Reichswehr* leaders in Bavaria. As noted they hoped to use the *OrgPi* as an umbrella association to coordinate the various paramilitaries to create a dependable reserve militia for the army. After the *Einwohnerwehr* the most recognizable and prominent of these was the *Bund Oberland*, whose leadership was now disgraced as a result of the feud with Pittinger. With its future now in doubt, the army might have encouraged the health inspector to create a paramilitary of his own to ensure that a dependable right-wing force existed for the government and military.²⁹

The Organizational Structure of *Bund Bayern und Reich*

In terms of structure *Bund Bayern und Reich* adhered closely to the model of paramilitary organization used by the *Einwohnerwehr*. The basic organizational unit for the group was the region, or *Gau*. This local body was, according to the regulations set out in *Bayern und Reich – Deutscher Freiheitsbund*, “the space, in which the civic educational work is to be accomplished.”³⁰ Below the local districts were the individual community units, or *Ortsgruppen*, and above were the district leaders, *Kreisleiter*, who answered directly to the leadership (*Bundesleitung*), which sat in Munich. In most

²⁸ Nußer, *Konservative Wehrverbände*, 217-20.

²⁹ The *Bund Oberland*'s leadership descended into a bitter feud following the judgment of the *Untersuchungsausschuß*. This eventually led to the arrest of its leader Josef Römer in October 1922 on charges brought by some of the group's other leading member, Captain Knaus. In the aftermath Knaus liquidated *Bund Oberland* and reformed it as *Bund Treu Oberland*. Its new leader was Dr. Friedrich Weber, Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 163-64.

³⁰ Hauptmann a.D Hofberger, K., *Bayern und Reich – Deutscher Freiheitsbund. Vom Bund und seiner Arbeit*, 4, IfZ, Hk 337.

administrative matters the local leader (*Gauleiter*) was free to run his unit as he pleased, so long as he adhered to regulations.³¹

Unlike the *Einwohnerwehr*, which had portrayed itself as running according to democratic norms, *Bayern und Reich* was much more authoritarian in its selection of leaders. The leadership, which was self selected, named the regional leaders, who then chose the district leaders, who then chose the local community leaders. All district and regional leaders served as local auxiliary leaders in conjunction with the organization's role as a reserve military force. Party politics was forbidden to all members in the local, whether they were leaders or not. The justification for such a prohibition was that the intermeshing of politics with the activities of the group created conflicts of interest that were not easy to overcome.³²

At the top of the paramilitary stood the state leadership, which set policy and interacted with political and military leaders. They also maintained relations with other patriotic groups. Authoritarian though it was the leadership was aided in its work by a couple of committees which helped mediate controversies and assisted in crafting policy. One committee (*Ausschuß*) helped advise Pittinger and his subordinates on issues on a case by case basis. The other committee, the state representative (*Landesvertretung*), consisted of the leadership, a council composed of regional leaders and other special members, the district leadership, and other patriotic groups who coordinated themselves with *Bayern und Reich*. The body was designed to allow individual members the ability to question the state leadership on matters of goals and actions undertaken by the

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

organization, and to serve as a sounding board for their opinions. Called into session by either the leadership or via written request from local offices, the state representative's decisions were binding with a two-thirds vote.³³

Four departments originally handled the league's work. These were a military and organizational department (*Wehr- und Organisationsabteilung – W. u. O.*), a political department (*Politische Abteilung*), a propaganda and press department (*Propaganda- und Presse-Abteilung mit Nachrichtendienst*), which had its own news service, and a business and legal department (*Wirtschafts- und Rechtsabteilung – W. u. R.*). The military and organizational department worked closely with the army and concerned itself with building up local units and training. The political department naturally handled ideology and worked closely with the propaganda and press department to spread the work of the association. They also ran the communication office, by which orders were passed down to local units. Finally the economic and legal department ran the organization's affairs. *Bayern und Reich*, unlike the *Einwohnerwehr*, was entirely independent of the state in terms of its finances. Funds were raised independently on the district level (each regional office had an economics official), and these depended greatly on the local relationship of group to business interests.³⁴

Significantly for the future of the organization the leadership at the state level was reorganized before the end of the first year in such a way that it deprived the group of the type of independence that the *Einwohnerwehr* had enjoyed. As the founder and head of *Bayern und Reich*, Pittinger controlled both the political program and the paramilitary

³³ Ibid, 4-6.

³⁴ Ibid.

functions, a combination that prevailed at all levels of leadership. However, in the fall of 1922, the health inspector was superseded by an army general, von Stetten, who took responsibility for the association's military wing. The army's purpose in this move was to ensure supremacy. "We must endeavor to have the decisive influence in all military questions. We have to firmly fight the idea, which here and there appears, that if necessary the secret paramilitary organizations 'will do things' and the army may at best help."³⁵ Of course effective control by the *Reichswehr* naturally had some benefits. *Bayern und Reich* now became the premier paramilitary force in the state. All other patriotic groups, if they wished to have military support and the weapons this provided needed to ally themselves with Pittinger's organization.³⁶

In terms of its membership *Bund Bayern und Reich* was composed of many men who had previously been part of the old *Einwohnerwehr*, and a few of the regulations that prevailed there were continued in Pittinger's association. Members had to have an unimpeachable reputation. They were not allowed to be members of leftist organizations, especially those that belonged to what the leadership called "the red international." This included the Social Democratic Party (SPD), whose members had been allowed to join the *Einwohnerwehr*, but were prohibited from signing on to *Bayern und Reich*. Furthermore members must not be "defeatists, naggers, and habitual troublemakers," for these people were considered more dangerous than communists.³⁷

³⁵ Denkschrift of Bavarian Reichswehr over the Military Leadership of Bund Bayern und Reich, IfZ, NSDAP Hauptarchiv, MA 144/6.

³⁶ Ibid. This arrangement allowed the army the ability to remove *Bund Bayern und Reich*, its paramilitary wing, from Pittinger's control in case of emergency. The *Sanitätsrat* clearly understood the arrangement with the army as evidenced by an April 1923 explanation of the organization's relationship to the Bavarian government, Verpflichtungserklärung, April 16, 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, Bund 13.

³⁷ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 7-11, IfZ, Sk 337.

The difference between the two organizations, in terms of the membership, was that *Bund Bayern und Reich* required a far more explicitly political and nationalist orientation from their members. For the *Einwohnerwehr*, while nationalists were certainly welcome in the organization, their influence was balanced by the need to preserve the state and all ‘state supporting’ elements within it. This meant that Social Democrats, workers, and Jews could join, though not Independent Socialists or Communists. While this led to strife in individual *Einwohnerwehr* units it also provided a check against excessive radicalism. Pittinger’s units defined their nationalism far more clearly than the *Einwohnerwehr* had ever done. Members had to have a “Christian and racial attitude,” which meant that only those Germans who had a Christian and a racial worldview were admitted as members. Moreover they had to be Aryans; no Jews, nor anyone else from a non-German race, were allowed admittance into the *Bund Bayern und Reich*.³⁸

The exclusion of Jews from *Bund Bayern und Reich* stood in sharp contrast to the practice of the *Einwohnerwehr*, which took in members regardless of their religious affiliation. It is tempting to read into this the influence of the Nazi Party and its growing success, and certainly a case can be made for that. 1922 was a significant year for both Hitler and his party. However, a more important contributing factor to this development was the latent antisemitism of the *Einwohnerwehr*. Many Jews who had joined Escherich’s group were often the target of whisper campaigns. The most significant of these of course occurred in Rosenheim, where a list was circulated of Jews in the

³⁸ Ibid.

organization and a petition started to throw them out.³⁹ Even more critical was the world view of members of the leadership. Escherich and Kanzler seemed to take an agnostic stance on this issue, but their Chief of Staff Hermann Kriebel was a man firmly in the *völkisch* camp as was Pittinger,⁴⁰ who was a member of the antisemitic Bavarian Order Block before joining the *Einwohnerwehr*.⁴¹ *Bund Bayern und Reich* simply adopted the world view of its leader.

Due to the importance that the group gave to *völkisch* ideas in its ideology, the propagation of such sentiments was critical to the organization's success. All members were expected to convey these ideas in every aspect of their lives. To ensure that their men did this compliance a rigorous screening process was set up. Individuals could not simply join, they were vetted by the local unit to which they applied, something mandated in the regulations. "It is the duty of the leadership of each local group moreover to watch, that no bad elements worm themselves into our league."⁴² For the state leadership it was more important to gain quality recruits for the group, as opposed to massive numbers. Local offices were required to make the applicant agree to every point of the organization's ideological program. This was done before the local leadership (*Vorstandschaft*), so they could judge the applicant. Initiates had to swear their fealty to the ideas of the league in the home and in their official lives. Once completed the applicant was voted in or out by local leaders.⁴³

³⁹ Gauleitung Rosenheim, *Protest!*, 6. May 1920, BHSA, I, M Inn 66 138.

⁴⁰ Large, *The Politics of Law and Order*, 24-5.

⁴¹ Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 143-7.

⁴² Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 7-11, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Members, once in *Bund Bayern und Reich*, were obliged to cover a couple of costs in order to help the group run effectively. All members had to subscribe to the weekly newspaper, *Bayern und Reich*, which reinforced the ideological program of the organization, and to which individual associates were encouraged to submit articles on a periodic basis. These subscriptions were ordered through the post office, or the printer, though the state leadership preferred the latter as it allowed them to use their own financial officials in the transaction. In addition, members had to contribute dues to the organization, as *Bayern und Reich* was independent of government assistance. Considering the economic distress of the period in which the group was founded (just before the Hyperinflation of 1923), the leadership took great pains to keep dues to the bare minimum. Each local unit was required to charge all of its associates twenty Pfennig per month. For units that contained more than fifty men the contribution was to be ten Marks for the unit as a corporate body. It was expected that the leadership in each town and city would make the case for such contributions.⁴⁴

The Ideology of *Bund Bayern und Reich*

The ideological program of Pittinger's organization built upon the foundations begun by the *Einwohnerwehr*. These foundations placed a premium on support for a highly stylized nationalism, hatred of all radical (read: socialist) tendencies, and a desire to return to the sense of solidarity that prevailed at the beginning of the First World War.⁴⁵ In the new group these tendencies were given more concrete expression. Thus, the *völkisch* tendencies that had been hinted at in the *Einwohnerwehr* became the overt

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Heimatland*, "Gedanken am Königsplatz," 30. September 1920, BHSA, IV, EWB, B. 3.

world view of *Bund Bayern und Reich*. The differences that existed between Pittinger's group and organizations like *Bund Oberland* and the Nazi Party were not based in *völkisch* ideology, which the Nazis accepted, but in certain aspects of the program that Hitler and his interlocutors believed were backwards-thinking.

The main purpose of the *Bund Bayern und Reich* was to help free Germany from without and within. In their regulations and many of their correspondences they referred to themselves as a "freedom league," or *Freiheitsbund*. In this capacity they sought to transform the nation. "Our league wants to be a school for the people, wants to unite the best forces in the land, and wants to rear our young boys into men."⁴⁶ To achieve their lofty goals, *Bayern und Reich* spent a great deal of time on outreach to the young, establishing local youth chapters in most Bavarian cities and requiring their members to enroll their children in such organizations. They also sought to reach German mothers, whom they saw as critical for propagating the *Bund's* ideas and values within the family, which was the "cornerstone of the state." Given a firm foundation in the family and with the young, the radical nationalist ideology of *Bayern und Reich* would help revive Germany.⁴⁷

Völkisch ideas ran throughout the political mission statement of Pittinger's organization. Key among these was the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or community of the people. This notion, as noted earlier, had been held by *völkisch* thinkers and groups since the late nineteenth century. As George Mosse, who chronicled the development of this ideology, noted, the tendency of these groups was to emphasize the

⁴⁶ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 11, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 15-17.

interlocking nature of German society. Theirs was not an egalitarian ethos, but a stratified culture where all parts worked for the betterment of the whole.⁴⁸ It was a utopian vision, one that most patriotic groups held in the early 1920s and it was a key element in the program of *Bayern und Reich*.

The members were pledged to work for this *Volksgemeinschaft*. “Each member does his part in his region to this end; that class differences are overcome, that finally the true community of the people is effective.”⁴⁹ This was to be accomplished by bridging the divide between the classes, a divide that had been exacerbated by war and revolution. One way of doing that was to permit wide membership. The regulations stipulated that *Bayern und Reich* had an open membership policy. Anyone could join the group, provided they had a *völkisch* worldview, were German, and did not subscribe to any ideologies or belong to any groups outside of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. As Captain Hofberger, the ostensible author of *Bayern und Reich: Deutscher Freiheitsbund*, put it, “only when the German citizen, the German farmer, and the German worker go hand in hand and work together, will it succeed in overcoming the emergency and saving our Germany.”⁵⁰

Propaganda materials spent a great deal of time extolling the virtues of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Pittinger’s group distributed a fair amount of nationalist literature, teaching materials, songbooks, and other materials designed to increase nationalist feeling and spread the message of the group.⁵¹ Patriotic songs, for instance, emphasized

⁴⁸ Mosse, *Crisis of Germanic Ideology*, 20-30.

⁴⁹ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 21, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Deutscher Kalendar: 1925*, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1-1. The German calendar in 1925 was filled with invective over the Treaty of Versailles and against the allied powers, *ibid*.

military marches, traditional folk tunes, and songs written exclusively for *Bayern und Reich*.⁵² Additionally, the leadership ran a number of instructional courses that highlighted the organization's program. The members who took part in these courses were those who seemed especially capable of rhetorical argument. Classes were conducted in small groups and held at the group's headquarters at Möhlstrasse 10. Costs were borne by the local offices. Once completed the individual member would be able to continue instructional work in the organization's regions and districts.⁵³

Due to the overt *völkisch* bent of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, Jews were not allowed to become members, and reducing their influence became one of the overarching goals of the organization. This differed greatly from the former *Einwohnerwehr* where the leadership maintained an ecumenical stance despite the fact that antisemitism was widespread amongst the local units. In Pittinger's association though anti-Jewish sentiments were an integral part of the program and were expressed outright by both the leadership and the organization's members. The regulations stated it thusly, "There is no place in our league for members a different race than the Germans. We are racial Germans; therefore Jews also cannot be taken in."⁵⁴

Like many other *völkisch* groups of the period, and in previous decades, *Bund Bayern und Reich* accused Germany's Jews of every conceivable ill that befell the country. Their charges consisted of all the usual antisemitic tropes. They were accused of being behind the spirit of materialism, which they saw as corrupting society. "The Jewish materialistic spirit of the revolution has brought about an egotistical hedonism,

⁵² Bundesleitung an Bezirksleitungen, Betreff: Bundesliederbuch, October 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1-2.

⁵³ Bund Bayern und Reich, Abteilung Propaganda; verteilt bis zu den Bezirken, September 12, 1924, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 7, IfZ, Sk 337.

which not only damages our image domestically and internationally, but our national economy and the national health as well.”⁵⁵ Jews were responsible for the scourge of Marxism, whose political representatives they saw as responsible for the revolution and the Weimar Republic. Hofberger’s ideological pamphlet made this explicit with the extraordinary claim that nearly ninety percent of socialist and labor union leaders were Jews. They were behind economic woes, whether as high finance capitalists, or as swindlers and black marketers – a scourge that *Bayern und Reich*, like the *Einwohnerwehr* before them, saw everywhere. Finally, Jews were accused, along with others, of being the traitors who had helped to defeat the country in the First World War.⁵⁶

Diminishing the position of German Jews, and those from Eastern Europe who were seen as dangerous immigrants, was thus central to the program of *Bund Bayern und Reich*. This stance was clearly in line with the thinking of other patriotic groups, but owing to the prominent position of Pittinger’s organization in the calculations of the army and government their antisemitic stance was challenged by Jewish leaders in the state. The most prominent of these Jewish critics was Fritz Buchmann, a lawyer from Regensburg, who sought to persuade the *Bayern und Reich* leader of the error of his organization’s *völkisch* stance. In a couple of letters in October 1923, Buchmann attacked the racial conceptions on which the group’s worldview was based.⁵⁷

In Buchmann’s view the patriotic associations, and *Bayern und Reich* as the most significant of them, made several categorical errors in their antisemitic program. The

⁵⁵ Ibid, 16.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 13-24.

⁵⁷ Rechtsrat, Justizrat Dr. Fritz Buchmann an Herrn Sanitätsrat Dr. Pittinger, 16 October 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 2.

first of these was that all German Jews were treated as one, undifferentiated, mass. No complexity was allowed to enter their narrative about Jews. Moreover, no exception was made in the program of Pittinger's organization, or others, for differentiating between Eastern European Jews (*Ostjuden*) and native born German Jews. Buchmann complained that only in Germany could one find the kind of bewailing about Jewish influence in society and politics, even though in most European countries one could find Jewish ministers and officials with nary a complaint, even though some countries, like France, had a more pronounced history of official antisemitism. Most important of all, Buchmann's letter attacked the notion that Jews were responsible for the radical politics of the Marxists, noting that it was a German Jew who was one of the founders of the German National People's Party.⁵⁸

The central message of Buchmann's letters to Pittinger was that, for a healthy patriotic movement to flourish, it needed to be free of the racial ideas that placed German Jews outside the community of the people. "The healthy patriotic movement ought to find means and ways, to attract those patriotically hostile Germans and so also the core German parts of the Jewish community in any form to spiritual and material service."⁵⁹ He rejected the notion that one could separate Jewish influence or culture out of German society as many patriotic groups wanted to do. Jews were crucial to the history of Germany, he noted, and had always been in the German fatherland since the time of the Romans. What he proposed was that *Bund Bayern und Reich*, which he called the most important organization in the patriotic movement, enter into collaboration with the

⁵⁸ Rechtsanwalt Justizrat Dr. Fritz Buchmann an Herrn Sanitätsrat Dr. Pittinger, 10 October 1923, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Rechtsrat, Justizrat Dr. Fritz Buchmann an Herrn Sanitätsrat Dr. Pittinger, 16 October 1923, *ibid.*

organization he represented, the National Association of German Jews, to help rebuild Bavaria and Germany.⁶⁰

The desire of some Bavarian Jews to help out in the patriotic movement was not without precedent. The membership of Jews in the *Einwohnerwehr* has already been documented. Many Jewish politicians also oriented themselves to the political right, as Buchmann noted in his letter. Even outside of Germany some Jews gravitated towards right wing political movements. Many Italian Jews joined Benito Mussolini's Fascist Party in the early 1920s, some even advancing to positions of leadership within it. They did so because Mussolini rejected, at least in this period, the kind of racial antisemitism practiced by many on the German right – though Mussolini had been known to make anti-Jewish statements. Individual Fascists might attack Jews over the issue of Zionism, but the wholesale rejection of Jewish membership as seen in Pittinger's organization was not practiced.⁶¹ These examples notwithstanding, the efforts of people like Buchmann to change the ideological direction of *Bayern und Reich* failed to move the leaders of the group and it would continue to maintain a *völkisch* stance *vis-à-vis* Bavarian Jews.

Closely related to antisemitism was the organization's unrelenting hatred of Communism and Socialism. One of the eight principles that all volunteers had to agree to in order to become a member was "the Struggle against Marxism as the enemy of any racial political system."⁶² For the leadership of the organization Communism went hand in hand with their antipathy towards Jews. Like all *völkisch* ideologues, the members of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Alexander Stille, "The Double Bind of Italian Jews: Acceptance and Assimilation," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-9.

⁶² Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 9, IfZ, Sk 377.

Bayern und Reich saw German Jews as essentially rootless cosmopolitans, who foisted materialism and Bolshevism on the nation. Thus the struggle against this ideology represented the high water mark of nationalist thought and sentiment.⁶³

In a very practical way this meant struggle against the Marxist parties of the German left: the Social Democrats, the Independent Social Democrats, and the Communists. Unlike the *Einwohnerwehr*, *Bund Bayern und Reich* did not make any distinction among these parties. To them, the socialist parties were all guilty of unpatriotic activity and thought; their sins against the fatherland were numerous. They were responsible for the country's loss in the First World War and the advent of the Weimar Republic. "On November 9, 1918 'all power to the people' belonged to the leaders of social democracy. The republic was here. No one could stand against them; no one did stand against them. All roads were open to socialism."⁶⁴ As the originators and first leaders of the republic, the political left was accused of collusion with the wartime allies, particularly in the fulfillment of the country's treaty obligations and their failure to oppose allied measures, something which they claimed made another European war more likely, not less.⁶⁵ In later years they accused Social Democrats of fomenting civil war by creating their own paramilitary organization, the *Reichsbanner*, to protect the republic from patriotic organizations like *Bayern und Reich*.⁶⁶ Finally, the Social Democrats and its allies were accused of making the economic conditions in Germany and Bavaria worse through their economic program, which included measures designed to help the workers and increase the social safety net. "A social democratically influenced government

⁶³ Ibid, 21-2.

⁶⁴ Hast du die letzten 5 Jahre vergessen?, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1-2.

⁶⁵ Wer stürzt uns in einen neuen Krieg?, *ibid*.

⁶⁶ Schwarz-rot-gold gegen Schwarz-weiß-rot, *ibid*.

benefits international financial powers, from whom the Social Democracy and their unions are admittedly being strongly subsidized financially and bring us certainly new inflation and grisly wretchedness.”⁶⁷

The First World War loomed large in the ideological world view of Pittinger’s men. *Bund Bayern und Reich*, like the *Einwohnerwehr* before it, believed that the unity provided by World War I had been the high water mark of German national feeling, and the loss of that during the course of the war and following went a long way towards explaining the country’s predicament in the early 1920s. To overcome it Germans and Bavarians would need to get back to the unity of 1914, especially for the sake of the young. “Awaken again in our young love of the homeland. Honor the old traditions and the old habits and customs of our homeland, the traditional dress of our people. Who has knowledge of our local history and geography, should tell it to the others, for whom the history of a people is a master teacher.”⁶⁸

One way to help revive this feeling of unity was to dramatize German heroics in the war. The leadership’s propaganda department published a series of essays about the war designed to instill pride in German military exploits amongst the young. Authored by Rudolf von Xylander, these essays covered all the important campaigns in the conflict. They also justified the actions taken by the German armed forces and government. For instance, in the eighth essay, which concerned the war at sea, Xylander highlighted the success of surface units of the German navy, which had effectively been bottled up by British forces, while downplaying the actions of U-boats. When these were mentioned

⁶⁷ Wer verbessert die Löhne und Gehälter? Vor neuer Inflation?, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 16, IfZ, Sk 337.

the authors justified their use as being consistent with the rights of nations at war and by pointing British hypocrisy in the matter.⁶⁹

Perhaps the easiest way to revive the “spirit of 1914” was of course to agitate against the Treaty of Versailles. German opinion about the dictated peace ran high across the political spectrum. For *Bayern und Reich* the fight against the peace treaty was the group’s highest goal. “In order to become a free people again, we must struggle against the disgraceful peace of Versailles, which is nothing more than the instrument of our enemies to rob, subvert, and finally to fully destroy us.”⁷⁰ For Pittinger’s organization the Treaty of Versailles represented the high point of national disgrace. The German government, in their view, had trusted the word of the allies which, according to one propaganda leaflet, was undermined by the machinations of French policy and the perfidy of the British and Americans.⁷¹ Moreover, the republic’s Social Democratic leaders had not only gone along with the travesty, but further encouraged the fulfillment of the treaty’s provisions. The members of *Bayern und Reich*, and other patriotic groups, believed this was shameful and that it would be necessary to hold out for an “honorable peace.”⁷²

The patriotic movement and *Bund Bayern und Reich* in particular were to be the vanguard for helping the German government overcome Versailles. This would be done through maintenance of the weaponry of the paramilitary group, its actions against leftist interests in Bavaria, and most of all working to replace the republican form of

⁶⁹ Des großen Krieges Bedeutung und Verlauf; Der Seekrieg um Großbritannien bis Februar 1915, von Oberst Rudolf von Xylander, 8. Fortsetzung, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 30.

⁷⁰ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 23, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁷¹ Wer stürzt uns in einen neuen Krieg?, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1-2.

⁷² Ibid.

government in Germany.⁷³ Once again, the country's internal political dynamic was tied to the international situation. The advent of the Weimar Republic had been a consequence of World War I, and the new political constitution that resulted from it was seen as the ultimate marker of the country's defeat. The liberties that came with it were in their view false. "With this freedom, through this equality, under this sovereignty we the people come under the hands of robbers, windbags, and charlatans. So the most undetachable of all rights, the sovereignty of the people ends up a continuous struggle between swindlers and dupes."⁷⁴ Replacing the republican government, thus, was a necessary step in nullifying the treaty.

The question of course was what form of government to pursue, and it was in this question, among others, that the real differences between *Bund Bayern und Reich* and even more radical groups like the Nazi Party emerged. The ideological program in these areas is what has traditionally marked Pittinger's organization as a conservative group in the eyes of historians rather than a true *völkisch* entity like *Bund Oberland*.⁷⁵ *Bayern und Reich's* different stance on these issues that helped contribute to many of the internal squabbles amongst patriotic groups beginning in late 1922. It also helped to partially explain the reticence that the leadership had in helping out with the Beer Hall Putsch.

The most decisive difference the group had with more radical *völkisch* groups was in the type of government that they hoped to see implemented in Germany. In its

⁷³ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 13-24, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁷⁴ *Sechs Jahre Republik und Revolution*, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 30.

⁷⁵ Most scholars who have claimed *Bund Bayern und Reich* to be a conservative rather than radical nationalist organization have pointed to the *weiß-blau* nature of the group and used this as evidence that *BuR* was hardly radical, but instead a bourgeois-conservative association, with radical leanings, that wanted little more than to restore the old order. For discussions on *Bayern und Reich's* ideological mix see, Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 100-7, Fesnke, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 172-4, and Harold Gordon Jr., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 109-17.

regulations *Bund Bayern und Reich* made the restoration of the monarchy an important part of their program. In the eyes of the leadership this was crucial for the revival of both Bavaria and the *Reich*. “We hold the monarchy as the most appropriate form of government for the German race.”⁷⁶ They believed that a royal government in Bavaria and Germany had several important benefits, not the least of which was its perceived ability to stand above party interests. In addition, a monarchical form of government would help to revive federalism, an issue of particular importance in Munich. Finally, they believed a king would be more capable of taking the reins of government in their hand more forcefully than a parliamentary democracy, something they believed was necessary at the time.⁷⁷

The leadership of *Bund Bayern und Reich* was well aware of the difficulties in achieving this goal. As the regulations put it, “The people should then decide the monarchical question when the time for it is ripe.”⁷⁸ The means, by which monarchy would return to Bavaria and Germany, were spelled out in an essay, *Ways to the Monarchy*, put out by the organization. In it they stated that the return of dynastic government could only be accomplished in the individual states, not in the *Reich* as a whole, where the “fanaticism” of republicanism was too well entrenched. This left *Bayern und Reich*, and its allies, with one of two options, either reestablish a monarchical form of government claiming that Bavaria was a special case in Germany, or work with

⁷⁶ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 23, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁷⁷ Wege zum Königtum, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 30. See also, Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, p. 23, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

royalists in other states to overturn the Weimar Republic and its constitution. The leadership was convinced that the second of these options was more likely.⁷⁹

Once established the second difficulty was in finding a king, or kaiser, to rule. As noted none of the dynasties of the old German Reich were popular, and *Bayern und Reich* did not overtly suggest that a member of one of these houses be given the throne. Instead they sought one man who had the right ideological characteristics who could take charge of the situation, and then be proclaimed, or elected, as sovereign. This solution bore striking resemblance to the way in which the Catholic Church selects Popes, picking the man who had the esteem of the College of Cardinals.⁸⁰ Whoever fit these characteristics would then begin to transform German society from, “a leaderless mass into monarchical organism.”⁸¹

The inclusion of monarchism in the ideological program of *Bund Bayern und Reich* created a significant split between it and more radical *völkisch* groups. Organizations like *Bund Oberland* and the Nazi Party were not prepared to accept the return of monarchy to Bavaria, or Germany. Their position was that the ruling house had “run away” from their responsibilities in 1918. As a result it was useless to bring such elements back into power in Germany, even by popular acclaim. One officer even said that the great struggle on the right was between those who wanted a greater German republic and those who desired a “south German Catholic monarchy.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Wege zum Königtum, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 30.

⁸⁰ The essay, *Wege zum Königtum*, noted that the person who became king had to conform to a *völkisch* worldview, *ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Gordon, *Hitler and Beer Hall Putsch*, 49-59.

Another important difference between Pittinger's organization and the other elements of the patriotic movement was in its view of federalism. The regulations of *Bund Bayern und Reich* stated that, "What we want is a strong Bavaria in a strong Reich."⁸³ For the group's leaders the Bismarckian Reich had been the high point in German political organization, a state that respected the rights of the individual provinces (Bavaria above all) while maintaining a powerful national government. "Only if the individual members of the Reich can be given complete, full, and invigorated expression in themselves, if the individual federal states are animalistic and developable, if we also again have a Bavaria as it was before the revolution, standing strongly on its own feet, worthy of its many centuries of history, than we will again attain past German glory and power."⁸⁴

The federalist issue was one that complicated *Bayern und Reich's* relationship to the other groups in the patriotic movement, as well as the government in Munich. The desire to create a unitary Reich is partially what drove the Nazi Party, *Bund Oberland*, and Ernst Röhm's *Reichskriegsflagge* to leave the League of Patriotic Associations (*Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände*) and form the Fighting League, or *Kampfbund*, in January 1923. As the leadership noted in a circular memo, differences between *Bayern und Reich* and Hitler, on this issue, were unbridgeable.⁸⁵ Additionally, Pittinger's organization constantly encouraged the Bavarian government, controlled by the Bavarian People's Party, to stand firm against the encroachments of Berlin. In 1924, a dispute over the raising of fees on the German Rail service prompted Pittinger to write a detailed letter

⁸³ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 22, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Abschrift, 12. February 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 22.

complaining of the government's failure to stop the centralizing tendencies of the national government, a matter made worse by the fact that rate hikes were done partially in order to appease the allies.⁸⁶

The final difference in the ideological program of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, when compared to the Nazi Party, concerned the issue of religion. New members were pledged to uphold traditional Christianity. "Without religion and the fear of god there is no ordered house, there is no ordered political system."⁸⁷ They felt that the decline of religion would lead necessarily to the decline of the state, and this was something that could not be countenanced. Additionally, religious conflict was also considered anathema to *Bayern und Reich*. "Today whoever wants to begin confessional disputes is a criminal to the people."⁸⁸ This of course, placed Pittinger's organization somewhat at odds with the Nazi Party, which had its origins in the radical Thule Society – a group that believed in a German Christianity more in line with concepts of race.⁸⁹ Many leading Nazis firmly believed in the Aryanized form of the religion espoused by the Society, however, as numerous scholars have noted, the Party's relationship to the Church was always more opportunistic, using the Church when necessary, and ignoring, or even attacking, it when the situation called for it.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Brief an den Herrn Ministerpräsidenten, Herrn Geheimen Hofrat Dr. Held, 22. August 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 15.

⁸⁷ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 17, IfZ, Sk 337.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Detlev Rose, *Die Thule Gesellschaft: Legende, Mythos, Wirklichkeit*, (Tübingen: Grabert Verlag, 1994), 82-7. Many of the *völkisch* groups prior to World War I dabbled in all kinds of new religious impulses. One of these was Theosophy, which tried to combine Aryan myth – for instance the belief that Aryan civilizations existed in the German fatherland before the Romans – with more general *völkisch* ideas. This, of course combined with the religious ideas of Paul DeLagarde, the first major *völkisch* thinker, who posited that, *ibid*.

⁹⁰ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 58-9.

The ideological worldview of *Bund Bayern und Reich* clearly was radical and in line with almost all of the organizations of the German right. They desired to overthrow the current government, continue the struggle against Marxism, and reduce, if not eradicate, the influence of Jews in German society. This made them a threat to the democratic leaders in Bavaria and throughout the *Reich*. However, the differences between *Bayern und Reich* and groups like *Bund Oberland* and the Nazi Party were significant enough to create problems for Pittinger and his men as they conducted their activities. These became increasingly difficult to carry out as the years went on.

Chapter 8

Rising Discord – *Bund Bayern und Reich*, The Nazi Party, and the Rift in the Patriotic Movement

Due to the nature of its organization and ideological program, *Bund Bayern und Reich* was involved in more activities than the old *Einwohnerwehr*. Conceived as a force to defend the state against all radical threats, the *Einwohnerwehr* was circumscribed in the types of activities it could undertake. For instance, it could not plot to overthrow the government, advocate for the dissolution of the Weimar Constitution, or overtly coordinate with the army. Pittinger's paramilitary group, on the other hand, did not have these shackles, and fairly quickly became involved in the revolutionary challenge to Germany's republican leaders, even as it continued to engage in many of the practices carried over from the *Einwohnerwehr*.

Despite its more activist agenda, Pittinger's association was hamstrung in its actions by its close relationship to the army and certain political leaders. Their proximity to government power constantly undercut their ability to lead the organizations of the patriotic (*vaterländisch*) movement, which was beginning to split into two factions, one surrounding the United Patriotic Leagues of Bavaria (*Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände Bayerns*), to which *Bayern und Reich* belonged and a more radical wing that began to coalesce around Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party. Their rapid rise to prominence in 1923 posed a challenge to Pittinger and his associates. Not only did the revolutionary rhetoric of Hitler begin to weaken the loyalty of many local units to *Bayern und Reich*,

but it also attracted allies who firmly believed that the Regensburg health inspector had no stomach for the struggle against the Weimar Republic.

The Activities of *Bund Bayern und Reich*

As a standalone organization, *Bund Bayern und Reich* undertook the activities typical of many paramilitary groups of the period. They trained constantly with illegal weapons, which were stored in caches all over Bavaria.¹ They protected businesses from the depredations of radical workers and their communist organizers.² They held patriotic festivals and evenings,³ where singing and speeches were always on order.⁴ Many of these actions had been staples of the former *Einwohnerwehr* and were continued by *Bayern und Reich*. The most prominent of these, naturally, were the shooting festivals. A frequent occurrence amongst the local groups of the *Einwohnerwehr*, these celebrations served the same purpose for *Bayern und Reich*: to celebrate the group's mission, which was self-defense, and to help hone their shooting skills. They also allowed the organization to send an intimidating message to its enemies about its willingness to resort to arms in defense of the Bavarian homeland.⁵

The group, however, expanded its activities into areas that the *Einwohnerwehr* had been unable, or unwilling, to go. One of these involved ideological campaigns against the Weimar Republic, and its democratic leaders. The *Einwohnerwehr* put out

¹ Oberstleutnant a.D. Paul Schmitt an die Bundesleitung von Bayern und Reich, 24. April 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24. The letter here discussed the need to protect the weapons cache in the area around Passau from Socialist groups, *ibid.*

² Bericht der Gau Oberland (Murnau), 23. August 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 26.

³ Festfolge, Kreistag Aschaffenburg, 22. u. 23. September 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1/1.

⁴ *Ibid.* The *Bund* put out its own songbook composed of patriotic marches, folk songs, war ditties, and music written especially for *BuR*, Max Hieber an den Bund Bayern und Reich, 14. July 1925, *ibid.*

⁵ Stadtleitung München an die Mitglieder der Ortsgruppe München, Landesschiessen des Bundes am 4. Oktober 1925, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 3.

propaganda that attacked Social Democrats, Communists, and their affiliated organizations.⁶ In addition to this they argued for the revival of a patriotic Germany and the “Spirit of 1914.”⁷ The posters, essays, and placards of Pittinger’s organization, however, not only took aim at radical groups, but the mainline Social Democratic Party and the Weimar constitution itself. To be sure, the materials never endorsed a particular political party on the right. They did, however, support a position, a worldview that left the reader in no doubt as to the organization’s preferences.⁸

Bund Bayern und Reich’s propaganda activities were always designed with Bavarian youth in mind. It was necessary to win the young for the patriotic movement. This had been a major point in the organization’s ideological program,⁹ and would manifest itself in the group’s activities. Local units helped maintain, or start, youth clubs which their children joined. There the young would be trained in the pedagogical and, more importantly, the ideological worldview of the movement. Physical fitness, personal sobriety, a sense of service, and love of the fatherland were all major aspects of the work of the youth groups run by Pittinger’s group. Additionally these clubs were designed to create a pool of future recruits for *Bayern und Reich*. Youths were to be trained in the use of small caliber weaponry and given lessons in how to be a soldier, and why it was honorable to serve as one.¹⁰

In spite of their efforts, however, many of the youth of Bavaria gravitated away from *Bund Bayern und Reich* as they matured. One of the characteristics of Bavarian

⁶ Hast du die letzten 5 Jahre vergessen?, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1-2.

⁷ Hauptmann a.D Hofberger, K., *Bayern und Reich – Deutscher Freiheitsbund. Vom Bund und seiner Arbeit*, 16, IfZ, Hk 337.

⁸ Sechs Jahre Republik und Revolution, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 30.

⁹ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 21-2, IfZ, Sk 337.

¹⁰ Ausbildung der Jungmannschaften, Inn Gau, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 4.

youth, noted by the Pittinger and his men, was their tendency to join multiple paramilitaries or other patriotic organizations. As James Diehl noted, many of the young adult and teenagers of the 1920s had been weaned on the *Wandervögel* movement of the early twentieth century, where they were exposed to many of the *völkisch* ideas espoused by *Bayern und Reich*. However, influenced by the experiences of the previous decade they found some of the political ideas of Pittinger's group to be quaint and outdated, and were attracted to the more revolutionary rhetoric of the Nazi Party and its allies. Despite this fact, Pittinger and the leadership remained confident that, given the opportunity, youth would come back to *Bayern und Reich* because of its *völkisch* world view and plans for the revival of the fatherland.¹¹

The activities of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, like its propaganda, were also aimed at the country's internal enemies on the left, the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party, and their affiliated organizations. For the leadership it was imperative to strike against the left because they represented utopian thinking at its most dangerous. German socialists, in their view, sought to separate the workers from the community in which they had been raised. The imposition of an un-German political and economic form on the country by the Social Democrats – unsurprisingly they blamed this on Jewish influence – was exacerbated by the example of the Soviet Union, where civil war and famine had followed the Bolshevik seizure of power. Thus, in their view, the history of socialism and communism was a cautionary tale for the *Reich*. When coupled with the

¹¹ James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 103-7.

difficulties of the early post-war period, fear of the political left and the need to fight it became an imperative for groups like *Bund Bayern und Reich*.¹²

In practical terms this meant a continuation of the kinds of activities against the German left that had characterized the *Einwohnerwehr*. These included defending business interests, monitoring and breaking up communist agitation amongst the working class, and protecting the state from revolutionary activity. The paranoia that had defined the Bavarian government, under both Hofmann and Kahr, from 1919 to 1921 continued in 1922 and 1923 and, coupled with the deteriorating international and economic situation, gave *Bund Bayern und Reich* a situation they and other patriotic groups exploited.

Reports from government officials reported on any hints of discontent amongst the population and they found plenty to cause worry. For instance, in 1922 in the region around Dachau small farmers expressed discontent with rising prices and taxes. While normally this would be a group that would have been solid supporters of the existing order, in this case the government worried about the efforts of the Communists in Bavaria to reach out to smaller farmers.¹³ Communist leaders in Bavaria were often monitored, and then arrested for their activities. These included trying to set up workers councils in Bavaria, especially in the Bavarian Palatinate, a region directly under allied control at the

¹² *Bund Bayern und Reich* believed that socialists overlooked a natural break on the development of capitalism – the self-interest of employers who would have to hire from within the community. This, rather than state control of the means of production, was the key to a successful rebuilding of German society, *Vom Sozialismus und Kommunismus*, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 26.

¹³ Präsidium der Regierung von Oberbayern an den Herren Vorstände der Bezirksämter, zum Bericht des Bezirksamtsvorstandes Dachau vom 28. April 1922, 6. May 1922, BHSA, I, M Inn 71 708. What made the discontent of small farmers so dangerous is that the larger landowners did not suffer proportionately, and seemed to profit from their misfortune, *ibid*.

time.¹⁴ By the beginning of 1923 fears of communist insurrection had become so acute amongst official circles that the government felt that the only way they could deal with the situation was by increasing cooperation with organizations like *Bayern und Reich*.

Pittinger's group often found itself in violent altercations with workers and their representatives, the people often most discontented with the political and economic situation as it then stood. These incidents usually tended to see a fair amount of cooperation amongst patriotic units, usually one of the few times they did cooperate amicably, according to Harold Gordon.¹⁵ One such incident occurred at the German Day celebration held in Coburg in October 1922. There altercations broke out between rally participants and the roughly 200-300 workers who sought to break it up by confronting the demonstrators at the train station. Despite their efforts, police were able to keep order long enough for participants, including Hitler, to make their way from the train station to the local beer hall.¹⁶ Similarly during an anti-Fascist Day held in the city of Rosenheim in July 1923 the local unit of *Bayern und Reich* became involved in violent exchanges with the protesters.¹⁷ Claiming that they were "radical communists," local leaders asserted that they had been attacked due to the atmosphere of such demonstrations, and thus were forced to defend themselves.¹⁸

The increasing vehemence of these clashes, particularly during the difficult year 1923, found *Bund Bayern und Reich* increasingly at the center of the government's

¹⁴ Staatsministerium des Innern an das Staatsministerium der Justiz, 6. December 1922, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Harold J. Gordon Jr., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 108-16.

¹⁶ Staatsministerium des Innern an das Staatsministerium des Äußern, Betreff: Deutscher Tag in Coburg, 26. January 1923, BHSA, II, MA 100 411.

¹⁷ Bezirksgruppe Chiemgau an die Leitung des Bundes Bayern und Reich, 31. July 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 4.

¹⁸ Bundesleitung an die sehr vererhliche Redaktion der Münchener Neusten Nachrichten, 6. August 1923, *ibid.*

preparations for potential emergencies. Authorities were convinced that civil strife could break out into open conflict at any time and felt it was necessary to be prepared for this eventuality. The army in particular, was concerned for the need to maintain control in Bavaria. They already had a working relationship with health inspector Pittinger and his paramilitary unit, one that was exclusive. However, as the situation deteriorated over the course of 1923, army leaders found it imperative to make the relationship even closer.

One way of doing this was to exercise direct control over the military half of *Bund Bayern und Reich*. The army had already done so in the fall of 1922, with Pittinger still allowed to be in charge of the political department, and overall, head of the organization, but with a reliable military man in charge of the W.O. office.¹⁹ The reorganization was just the beginning, however, as the army chose to use *Bayern und Reich* to help create a military reserve, or *Volkswehr*, in Bavaria. Pittinger's organization was chosen because "the state cannot even do it after the current political situation, the setting up and organizing of one (military reserve) in determined strength."²⁰ The reserve was designed primarily to help preserve state authority. Units were to be organized by *Bayern und Reich* on the local level, just like their own group. The men who were to be recruited into these units, however, were much older, between thirty-five and forty-five years of age, and free from any party political influence. Unlike Pittinger's association, which financed itself via membership dues and donations, the military reserve would be supported by the state itself.²¹

¹⁹ Denkschrift of Bavarian Reichswehr over the Military Leadership of Bund Bayern und Reich, IfZ, NSDAP Hauptarchiv, MA 144/6.

²⁰ Denkschrift über Aufstellung einer bayerischen Volkswehr, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 13.

²¹ Ibid.

The leadership had a difficult line to walk with the military reserve. On the one hand, they saw its usefulness, particularly in times of war when the army would need to mobilize men very quickly. In this instance, they could count on the support of a military reserve. However, they doubted whether the organization was useful in the case of domestic disturbance, particularly when *Bayern und Reich* provided all the functions of a reserve in those instances. Moreover, as an official military reserve under army control they were subject to orders from Berlin, which *Bayern und Reich* was not. “The *Reichswehr* is the instrument of the Reich government in all instance of domestic disturbances and that must be reckoned with, that it [*Reichswehr*] – as was already the case, being needed for use in strife filled territories outside Bavaria.”²² With the national government in the hands of a coalition (Cuno) they saw as detrimental to the interest of patriotic paramilitaries, the *Bayern und Reich* leadership felt they could only support the creation of a military reserve as long as their own domestic program was not undercut.²³

Having run into resistance with their idea of a military reserve run by *Bund Bayern und Reich*, the military leaders sought different ways to coordinate the patriotic groups. Conceiving of a Bavaria defended by three forces, the *Reichswehr*, the paramilitaries of the patriotic movement, and a reserve police used in emergencies, the government created an emergency police force, or *Notpolizei*.²⁴ This entity, created in the spring of 1923 was designed to help rural areas maintain law and order. The Ministry of the Interior took the lead in organizing the force, but groups like *Bund Bayern und*

²² Gedanken zur Frage der bayerischen Volkswehr, 15. March 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 22.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bayerisches Landeskommandant an den General der Kav. von Stetten, 10. April 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 13.

Reich were critical to helping fill its ranks. On the part of the authorities this was designed to further improve coordination amongst the patriotic bands.²⁵

Despite their hopes, the creation of the emergency police did create problems amongst patriotic groups. The regulations set out by the Ministry of Interior specified that only organizations loyal to the state (*staatstreu*) were allowed to participate in the emergency police. This had the effect of disqualifying the Nazi Party and the other groups because of their extremism and even their distrust of the reigning conservative government in Munich.²⁶ This extended to *Bund Oberland*, whose members believed that the emergency police was being set up exclusively through *Bayern und Reich*. In the case of *Oberland*, however, the government's reticence partially stemmed from the organization's long feud with Pittinger in 1922 as by their radicalism.²⁷ This led to a new round of accusations between the two groups, as Pittinger accused the new *Oberland* leaders of spreading lies about him and his organization to officials in the Interior Ministry.²⁸

It also created problems for *Bayern und Reich*, which had difficult relations with several local districts and units in 1923. Particularly noteworthy in this respect was the local region around Freising, which was a part of Pittinger's paramilitary group, but often styled itself as *Organisation*, or *Bund Unterland*. The leadership wrote the local leader there in May 1923 inquiring if his group was suitable as a participant in the emergency police. The danger, from Pittinger's perspective, was that *Unterland's* participation in some local events with the Nazi Party, including a rally where Hitler was feted as "a great

²⁵ Brief an Hauptmann Heiss, 23. May 1923, *ibid*.

²⁶ Brief an sehr geehrter Hauptmann Hoffmann, 23. May 1923, *ibid*.

²⁷ Leiss an Pittinger, 13. March 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 15.

²⁸ Pittinger an Herrn Eugen Leiss, 14. March 1923, *ibid*.

man,” might give the officials pause in working closely with *Bayern und Reich* or the Freising local.²⁹

The close coordination between the army and *Bund Bayern und Reich* naturally raised questions about the organization’s relationship to the Bavarian government itself. Most scholars have seen in the group’s interactions with the governing coalition in Munich a lukewarm to close relationship, depending on party. This relationship could become strained if the governing coalition strayed too far from patriotic ideas.³⁰ Mostly, though, *Bund Bayern und Reich*’s relationship to party politics was guided by its status as a paramilitary force. The majority of its interactions with officials were from the military. When it did interact with party politics it kept its activities confined to lobbying, sometimes intensely, for its own point of view.

The main efforts of *Bund Bayern und Reich* in the political sphere had to do with constitutional questions. Naturally this was an outgrowth of the organization’s program, which had as its goal a federal form of government and a monarchy.³¹ While the recreation of a kingdom in Bavaria seemed somewhat out of reach, the group was particularly keen to preserve the federal nature of the German Reich, something they, like the *Einwohnerwehr* before them, saw as under attack from the centralizing tendencies of Berlin. “In the Weimar constitution the federalist principle has been replaced by the

²⁹ Brief an sehr geehrter Hauptmann Hoffmann, 23. May 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 13.

³⁰ Harold Gordon Jr., claimed that party preferences in Munich governed reactions to *Bayern und Reich* and the other *Verbände*. The Middle Party tended to back off on full hearted endorsement of these organizations, while the Bavarian People’s Party (*BVP*) was much more enthusiastic in its support at first, though this waned in 1923, Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 27-33. Hans Fenske, on the other hand, portrayed a much more combative relationship between the two, one influenced heavily by ideology in which the *Verbände* frequently took up against the government, Hans Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus in Bayern nach 1918*, (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1969), 174-84.

³¹ Hofberger, *Bayern und Reich*, 9, IfZ, Sk 337.

unitary one.”³² For Pittinger’s men, the Bismarckian constitution, which granted rights and privileges to the individual states was more satisfactory, a Reich filled with individual, semi-autonomous, states as had prevailed, at least for Bavaria, prior to 1914.³³

Preparations for revising the Bavarian state constitution began in the spring of 1923.³⁴ These changes were a result of a two factors. One was the dynamics of party politics in Bavaria, where the governing coalition, particularly the Bavarian People’s Party, hoped to preserve local power.³⁵ Another was the advocacy of the patriotic movement, particularly *Bayern und Reich*. The ruling coalition parties, the Middle Party and the Bavarian People’s Party, promised Pittinger and other *vaterländisch* groups that they would introduce bills in the Diet to do away with parliamentary democracy, a major goal of *Bayern und Reich*. However, these bills ended up delayed for one reason or another such as religious holidays and the opposition of smaller parties. This created suspicion within the *Bund* as to the true intent of the government on this question, something noted quite clearly by the leadership.³⁶

Bayern und Reich’s purpose in doing away with parliamentary democracy was first and foremost, to protect the federalist structure of the old Reich. “The German national state is generally only possible in the concentration of the historically developed

³² Die Notwendigkeit der föderalistischen Revision der Weimarer Verfassung, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 29.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Brief an die Regierung des Freistaates Bayerns, 9. April 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 2.

³⁵ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 27-31.

³⁶ Abschrift der Bundesleitung an die Regierung des Freistaates Bayern, 14. August 1923, BHSA, BuR, B. 2. James Diehl is convinced that Pittinger’s exhortations on the constitutional question merely served as a way for him to ingratiate himself to the government by offering to protect it from Hitler and the Fighting League. However, it is just as likely that Pittinger pushed for constitutional changes to show the membership that he was just as devoted to overturning parliamentary democracy as was the increasingly popular Hitler, see Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 142-4.

German member states and on the basis of their political and cultural existence.”³⁷ They believed that the Weimar Constitution was part and parcel of the old struggle of German nationalists to create a unitary state in opposition to the individual state. It went against the will of the people as they saw it. It also violated what they felt was the special character of Bavaria within the German Reich. This compelled them to strive against any and all attempts by Berlin to expand its powers.³⁸

Their fears in this area approached hysterical paranoia. Pittinger and his men firmly believed that the national government was planning to take over Bavaria at any time. In October 1923, as the political situation built towards the Beer Hall Putsch, the *Bayern und Reich* leadership reported that the government in Berlin “waits only for the opportunity to bring the Bavarian state of emergency, and the inconvenient man, to an end.”³⁹ To this end, it was reported, the *Reich* cabinet was preparing a law to allow them to circumvent local statutes in Munich. Additionally, the army leadership in Berlin sought to impose new regulations on the Bavarian *Reichswehr*, which General von Epp (one of the originators of *Freikorps* in the state) saw as a reduction of the state’s rights.⁴⁰

Bund Bayern und Reich and the United Patriotic Leagues of Bavaria

Pittinger’s organization was certainly the largest of the Bavarian *Wehrverbände*, but not the only one devoted to helping create a patriotic utopia in the *Freistaat*. There were seventy-three such entities in Bavaria in the early 1920s, some of which, like

³⁷ Die Notwendigkeit der föderalistischen Revision der Weimarer Verfassung, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 29.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Führernachrichten, 12. October 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Bayern und Reich, were paramilitary formations.⁴¹ Others, like the Pan-German League, were patriotic groups devoted to a certain ideological line. Others, like the Nazi Party, were involved primarily in politics. Patriotic groups grew exponentially in the wake of the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*, but it also weakened the movement in the pursuit of its goals. This situation would need to be overcome if the patriotic movement hoped to play any role in Bavarian, or German, politics and society.

The solution was the creation of the Union of Patriotic Leagues of Bavaria, or *Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände Bayerns*. This organization itself was part of a much larger entity, the United Patriotic Leagues of Germany (*Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände Deutschlands*), and the Bavarian group was nominally subservient to the leaders in Berlin, though it was the largest and most important of the provincial organizations. The United Patriotic Leagues was organized in the summer of 1922 and was headed by Dr. Hermann Bauer, a man that Harold Gordon referred to as Theodore Roosevelt in reverse.⁴² Composed of a wide diversity of patriotic societies, the group acted only with the consent of the leaders of the individual associations. Thus Pittinger, as head of the organization's major paramilitary, held great influence.⁴³ It also potentially served the interests of the army leadership, who despaired over the need to bring all the paramilitary groups together in one entity.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 137-8.

⁴² Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 92-3. Bauer, according to Gordon, was a person with little real authority, but who thought he had more than he did. Thus "he talked and walked loudly and carried a very small stick," *ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Bayerischer Landeskommandant an den Herrn General der Kav. Von Stetten, 10. April 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 26.

Numerous organizations were involved in the United Patriotic Leagues. Some were political organizations like the Pan-German League. Others were veteran groups like the National League of German Officers (*Nationalverband deutscher Offiziere*) and the Union of Bavarian Regimental Officers (*Verband bayerische Offiziers-Regimentsvereine*). Special interest associations, such as the Central union of German War Wounded (*Zentralverband deutscher Kriegsbeschädigter*), were also included in the organization. The diversity of members led to the creation of nine different groupings to allow Bauer the ability to coordinate their activities more effectively. *Bund Bayern und Reich* held a special place in the United Patriotic Leagues. Not only was it the largest paramilitary organization, but by December 1924 it was the only one.⁴⁵

The primary activities of the United Patriotic Leagues were propaganda campaigns designed to win adherents to a patriotic point of view. These were directed at the parties of the left during elections, or to argue against certain policies.⁴⁶ The purpose naturally was to get Germans to look at the post-war years as a time of defeat, weakness, and division; something that could only be rectified by adopting the posture and positions of the United Patriotic Leagues.⁴⁷ Another key component of the group's public relations strategy was to hold festivals to stress the nationalist point of view along with the unity of all the patriotic associations. These were the German Day, or *Deutscher Tag*, celebrations.

The German Day rallies had been organized by the German Racial Protection and Defiance League (*Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund*, or *DVST*) as an essential

⁴⁵ Rundschreiben über die Organisation der Vereinigten Vaterländische Verbände Bayerns, Anfang December 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 11/1.

⁴⁶ Kameraden! Frontsoldaten! Wählt!, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1/2.

⁴⁷ Hast du die letzten 5 Jahre vergessen?, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1/2.

celebration of German national consciousness.⁴⁸ Initially all of the major associations were represented at German Day events, though by November 1923 the celebration came to be more identified with the more radical organizations around Hitler and the Nazis. The vast majority of German Days in Bavaria were held during 1923 as the situation in Germany deteriorated precipitously, and in known Social Democratic strongholds, which guaranteed a certain level of violence.⁴⁹ The most violent altercation took place in Nuremberg, after the German Day, where clashes between radical nationalists and workers left one worker dead and two severely injured.⁵⁰

As the leading group in the United Patriotic Leagues, *Bayern und Reich* played a large role in these celebrations. Their leaders spoke at German Day events, and their men marched in the parades and demonstrations that usually accompanied them. Pittinger's men stressed unity when they appeared at the German Day. One speaker proclaimed: "Yes but for our people today it does not involve the form of government at all, but the state itself, whose existence is at stake. Reason enough, that all who think and feel racially close ranks together. You have done that here in Kulmbach and that give the meeting its special meaning."⁵¹ The addresses given by *BuR* leaders tended to emphasize areas of common interest. These included the struggle against the Treaty of Versailles, against the communist menace, but also against the depredations of international

⁴⁸ Kershaw, *Hitler*, 178.

⁴⁹ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 240.

⁵⁰ An die Staatsregierung des Freistaates Bayern, Betreff: Vorgänge anlässlich des Deutschen Tages in Nürnberg, 11. September 1923, BHSA, II, MA 100 411.

⁵¹ Deutschvölkischer Tag – Kulmbach, 11. August 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 22.

capitalism, which was a common theme for more radical groups like the Nazi Party but played up by the *Bayern und Reich* speaker at Kulmbach.⁵²

The proclamation of unity proclaimed by *Bayern und Reich* leaders usually masked very real differences between Pittinger's group and other associations affiliated with the United Patriotic Societies. These differences could not always be overcome. For instance the German Day in Bamberg in October 1923 was marked by a rather severe dispute between the representative of *Bayern und Reich*, von Xylander, and Hitler over ideological issues. The primary issue was over whether to trust the leadership of future actions of the patriotic movement to Gustav von Kahr, who was then General State Commissioner and an almost unofficial dictator in Bavaria. Pittinger's organization and the United Patriotic Leagues supported Kahr unquestioningly, whereas Hitler, in his remarks, argued that the former Minister-President lacked the natural instinct of a politician and was no revolutionary. The desire on the part of the more radical groups for a national revolution became another flashpoint amongst radical nationalists in the fall of 1923.⁵³

Such disputes naturally masked other areas of contention. One of these was religion. At the Nuremberg German Day in September 1923 Kaplan Roth of *Bund Bayern und Reich* spoke at length about how religious faith, particularly Catholicism, undergirded the *völkisch* world view. "Our savior model is Jesus, who came to the world not to bring peace, but to bring the sword."⁵⁴ In the address Roth claimed that the true savior for Bavaria and the Reich was Jesus, who "knew and wanted for his people no

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bamberger Tagung, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 100.

⁵⁴ Deutscher Tag Nürnberg 2. September 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 22.

neutrals; as he said: whoever is not for me, is against me. Neutrality in serious things is weakness of spirit and character.”⁵⁵ Though *Bayern und Reich*’s ideological program talked about traditional Christianity, Roth twisted it to serve *völkisch* purposes.

“Christianity, also Catholicism, in no way makes Christians defenseless in racial matters. The words, the judgments, and destinies of the savior speak for our opinions against the Jews.”⁵⁶

Bund Bayern und Reich, the Nazi Party, and the Widening Chasm of the *Vaterländisch* Movement

The United Patriotic Leagues and the organizers of the German Day Rallies tried to paper over the differences between the former, including *Bund Bayern und Reich*, and Hitler and his Nazi Party. However these were ever present and broke out into the open at the beginning of 1923. The major differences between Hitler’s party and Pittinger’s paramilitary were based on the former’s rejection of the monarchical, federalist, and religious worldview of the latter. The Nazi Party program, moreover, was revolutionary and modern. The militancy with which Hitler and his followers pursued their goals caused a great deal of unrest within *Bund Bayern und Reich*, and gained him followers willing to help him. They set up an alternate power center on the right that challenged the hegemony of *Bayern und Reich* and the United Patriotic Leagues right up to the Beer Hall Putsch.

The year following the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr* had been an important one for Hitler and his party. Having gained control of the Nazi Party as its preeminent

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

leader in July 1921, he spent the next year and half turning it into a power in Bavarian politics, and in the process began a process of self-transformation that turned the beer hall agitator into the *Führer* of the movement.⁵⁷ A ceaseless agitator, Hitler was referred to as the ‘drummer’ in these years and often sought after as a speaker by other organizations on the political right in Bavaria. Hitler spoke at a large rally in August 1922 organized by the United Patriotic Leagues and *Bund Bayern und Reich*, and quickly became a staple of the German Day Rallies that began to be held in Bavaria in late 1922.⁵⁸ Hitler’s success at these events only fed the growing *Führer* cult, one that made him the last word in all party matters and which he believed made him the man of the moment in the patriotic movement.⁵⁹

Hitler’s success in these venues was paralleled by the party’s entrance into paramilitary politics itself. In November 1920 Hitler and other party leaders had set up their own paramilitary force. Originally called the ‘Sport and Gymnastics’ department, it gradually evolved into the *Sturmabteilung*, or S.A. – more popularly referred to as the brownshirts or stormtroopers. This paramilitary force was small, but began to grow after November 1921.⁶⁰ One consequence of the creation of the brownshirts was that it brought Hitler into contact with Captain Ernst Röhm, the *Reichswehr*’s weapons liaison officer. Röhm introduced Hitler to several important people in the paramilitary

⁵⁷ Albrecht Tyrell, *Vom Trommler zum Führer: der Wandel von Hitlers Selbstverständnis zwischen 1919 und 1924 und die Entwicklung der NSDAP*, (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975), 150-65.

⁵⁸ Kershaw, *Hitler*, 175-82.

⁵⁹ Tyrell, *Von Trommler zum Führer*, 150-65.

⁶⁰ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 105-7.

movement who were able to help the Nazi leader build up his force, though it did not become a factor in paramilitary scene in Bavaria till late 1922.⁶¹

The rapid rise of the Nazi Party, and its militant stance, caused numerous problems for *Bund Bayern und Reich* internally. Beginning in late 1922 a number of local units left the organization. Most departed for ideological reasons. They simply no longer felt comfortable working towards Pittinger's goals. Some left because they found that *Bayern und Reich* was too constricted in its definition of itself and its work. This development could especially be seen in the case of the district of Lower Bavaria (*Niederbayern*). On February 8, 1923 this local unit resolved to leave *Bund Bayern und Reich* and form its own organization. The reason for doing so was because the Lower Bavarian leadership wanted to share their weaponry with like minded paramilitaries, something that the state leadership prohibited.⁶² Despite efforts to bring the local group back into the fold, the leadership and members held firm and on October 20, 1923 were recognized as an independent paramilitary unit.⁶³

Another unit with which *Bund Bayern und Reich* had difficulties was Alfred Zeller's United Leagues of Munich (*Vaterländische Verbände Münchens*). This organization, which comprised the remnants of the old *Einwohnerwehr* in the city, was to join Pittinger's group as a corporate body, but chose not to in January 1923 because they feared having their independent existence subsumed by *Bayern und Reich*. At a meeting on January 5, 1923 the United Leagues, the remnants of the old *Einwohnerwehr* units in the capital, declared that their reason for not joining Pittinger's association concerned

⁶¹ Kershaw, *Hitler*, 172-5.

⁶² Hillwerth an den Regierungspräsident, 20. February 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

⁶³ Hillwerth an General Freiherr von Tanstphoens, 20. October 1923, *ibid*.

issues of organizational cohesion; they feared that some of the cells (*Bezirke*) in the city would no longer follow Zeller's orders if they entered *Bayern und Reich*. They also wanted to maintain control of their mobile units.⁶⁴ The state leadership, despite their desire to see the United Leagues join as a body, was perfectly willing to let them keep their independence, rejecting the premise that local cells could control mobile units and warning of the competition that would result between the two groups for members.⁶⁵

Hitler's radicalism and success, coupled with the actions of local leaders like Heiß and Zeller, led to a split in the United Patriotic Leagues in January 1923. The Nazi Party, *Bund Oberland*, Zeller's *VVM*, and the *Niederbayern* group, among others helped to form the Working Group of Combat Leagues, or *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kampfverbände*.⁶⁶ This organization was dedicated to the type of radical revolution envisioned by Hitler and his counterparts in other groups like *Oberland*. It was also more volatile than the United Patriotic Leagues. There was frequent discord amongst the members, disputes that primarily concerned tactics. This could clearly be seen in the Working Group's only major event, the planned disruption of the May Day celebrations in 1923. In the days leading up to the demonstration, several groups, particularly the *VVM*, resisted the violence planned by the leadership. As a result, the disruption of worker's parades did

⁶⁴ Schiedsspruch, 16. January 1923, IfZ, NSDAP Hauptarchiv, MA 144/6.

⁶⁵ Abschrift des Vorstandes von Bund Bayern und Reich, *ibid*. Harold Gordon believes that Captain Röhm and General Ludendorff might have influenced Zeller's decision. The *VVM* would continue to train as a paramilitary, but without assistance from the *Reichswehr*, Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 92-4.

⁶⁶ Originally the Nazi Party had belonged to the United Patriotic Leagues, but left according to Hans Fenske, so that Hitler would be able to control his own fortunes, something that was not possible in the United Patriotic Leagues, Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 185-7.

not go off as planned. Several groups left the Working Group due to the bloodlust shown by the leadership in this instance.⁶⁷

Helping to fan the flames of discord amongst patriotic organizations was Captain Ernst Röhm, who was the *Reichswehr* liaison officer to paramilitary groups like *Bund Bayern und Reich*. In this capacity he provided illegal arms to radical nationalist groups, during 1922 to Pittinger almost exclusively. Röhm had been a fixture in the patriotic movement since right after the war. He helped establish and supply Escherich's *Einwohnerwehr*, and was later involved with more shadowy organizations like the *Black Reichswehr*. A combat veteran of the First World War, Röhm believed in decisive action. By early 1923 he felt that the time was ripe for patriotic groups to strike against the government.⁶⁸

Röhm came to believe that paramilitary organizations like *Bund Bayern und Reich*, and its leader Pittinger, were incapable of carrying out a revolution against the political order. For him the year 1922 had been a decisive turning point, one in which the patriotic movement failed to take full advantage. In September of that year Röhm and Hitler planned a putsch against the government, the third attempted overthrow of the government in Munich since the fall of Kahr. Like the others before it, this planned uprising was scuttled in no small part due to the efforts of *Bayern und Reich* leaders. Röhm accused them of spreading rumors about him and his circle, referring to them often as "psychopaths." The weapons needed for the putsch were never distributed. Failure to

⁶⁷ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 92-5 & 191-209, and Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 129-30 & 142-3. The failure to disrupt the May Day demonstrations in the main helped contribute further to the schism that already existed between *Bund Bayern und Reich* and the VVVB on the one hand, and the Nazi Party and their allies in the *Kampfbund* on the other, see Nußer, *Konservative Wehrverbände*, 238-9.

⁶⁸ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 125-29. Diehl argues that Röhm viewed himself as a political soldier, and this influenced his thinking in regards to organizations like *Bayern und Reich*, *ibid*.

move, in the captain's view, was a failure of will and led to a decisive break between the captain and Pittinger in January of 1923.⁶⁹

Röhm's attack on the *Bayern und Reich* leader caused an open rupture in the patriotic movement, one that became increasingly bitter. In his break with Pittinger Röhm made a number of charges. One was that Pittinger divided the radical right by attacking its leading members, like General Ludendorff, while supporting less savory characters, like the United Patriotic League's head Hermann Bauer. Rather than work for unity, at a time when it was needed, Röhm claimed that Pittinger undermined figures like Hitler who worked tirelessly for the movement. The *Bayern und Reich* leader was also accused of cowardice in the face of government pressure. Röhm referred specifically to planned disturbances in Munich and the Chiemgau, each of which Pittinger called off due to his inability to make a decision – in the case of the latter by questioning the patriotism of his own subordinates. Finally, the captain accused the health inspector of hoarding weapons for his own purposes, rather than sharing them with other paramilitaries. These facts convinced Röhm that Pittinger was incapable of bringing the paramilitary formations together to fight the internal and external enemy.⁷⁰

The person that Ernst Röhm increasingly saw as vital to reviving the fortunes of the patriotic groups was Adolf Hitler. The Nazi leader had the necessary political skills to effectively struggle against the nationalist's enemies on the left; he also had the will to do so. The captain implied as much in the explanation he put forward in January regarding his split from *Bayern und Reich*.⁷¹ Such a viewpoint was not unknown

⁶⁹ Abschrift, Die Gründe meiner Trennung von Dr. Pittinger, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

amongst many right-wing Bavarians. Pittinger was well aware of Röhm's opinions. In fact the *Bayern und Reich* leader argued that the timing of the discord between him and the *Reichwehr's* liaison officer had as much to do with his attempt to create a power center on the right, as it did with his alleged cowardice, or the break between him and Escherich. The increasing difficulties Pittinger and *Bayern und Reich* had with subordinate groups, like Zeller's in Munich or Hofmann's *Bund Unterland*, were heavily influenced by the captain and his machinations in regards to Hitler.⁷²

The break between the two men was simply the beginning of the feud. More allegations were made in the first half of 1923. In these Röhm had an ally, General Erich Ludendorff. The former army commander had taken refuge in Bavaria following the Kapp Putsch, and from his new home remained very much involved in radical nationalist politics. At first this was a welcome development to many on the political right in Munich. Ludendorff had numerous connections in Austria and Hungary, both of which were important to the patriotic movement. Pittinger himself had worked closely with the general in regards to this, having traveled to Budapest on Ludendorff's and Colonel Bauer's behest to coordinate activities with right-wing elements there.⁷³ Ludendorff had also developed close connections with several key paramilitaries in Bavaria, most decisively *Bund Oberland*.⁷⁴

Pittinger's relationship to General Ludendorff was nearly as prickly as his relationship with Ernst Röhm. Ludendorff did not care much for the federalist Germany idealized by the Pittinger and his group. Thus he sought, early on, to undercut *Bund*

⁷² Stellungnahme des Sanitätsrat Dr. Pittinger zur Hauptmann Röhm'schen Schrift, *ibid*.

⁷³ Erklärung Pittingers, 5 March 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 16/1.

⁷⁴ Abschrift über Ludendorff, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 26.

Bayern und Reich. One memo, describing the general's relationship to other patriotic groups, noted the close relationship that existed between Ludendorff and Captain Römer of *Bund Oberland* and made the allegation that the former quartermaster was behind the dispute between Pittinger and them.⁷⁵ He also accused the *Bayern und Reich* leader of pursuing separatist politics in the 1921 trip to Austria and Hungary. Major von Wandeleben, an associate of Ludendorff and Bauer's claimed that the *Sanitätsrat* negotiated for the creation of a Bavarian-Austrian state that would be separate from the Reich itself.⁷⁶ By February 1923 the relationship between the two men had grown so toxic that, at a meeting of nationalist organizations held in Klagenfurt, Austria, Ludendorff claimed that any Austrian organization that continued a relationship with *Bayern und Reich* could not in any way be tied to him.⁷⁷

With Ludendorff in his corner, Röhm proceeded to make a number of claims against Pittinger in early 1923 designed to decrease the confidence army and political leaders had in the leader of *Bayern und Reich*. Several of these had already been given voice in the memo of January 1923. Pittinger was accused simultaneously of cowardice in the face of the government, lack of resolve in organizing a putsch, the use of weapons provided by the army to make other units bow to his will, and failing to unite, and provide leadership, to the other organizations of the patriotic movement.⁷⁸ To these Röhm added another – financial malfeasance. The *Reichswehr's* liaison officer accused

⁷⁵ Das Verhalten Bezug auf Bund Oberland, IfZ, NSDAP Hauptarchiv, MA 144/6. Röhm's relationship with Ludendorff was also very close. The general clearly leaned on the liaison officer for advice about the radical nationalist scene in Bavaria, and it was Röhm who brought Hitler to Ludendorff, Abschrift über Ludendorff, BHSA, IV, BuR, B.26.

⁷⁶ Anschuldigungen gegen Dr. Pittinger, Aus dem Bericht des Herrn Major Wandeleben vom 18. Oktober 1922, *ibid*.

⁷⁷ Abschrift, Besprechungen Sr. Exzellenz des Herrn General von Ludendorff in Klagenfurt, 6. March 1923, *ibid*.

⁷⁸ Abschrift, Die Gründe meiner Trennung von Dr. Pittinger, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

Pittinger of misappropriating funds to the tune of fifty million Reichsmarks in February 1923.⁷⁹

During 1922 army leaders, along with politicians like Gustav von Kahr, had been trying to find ways to maintain a secret weapons cache in contravention of the Versailles Treaty and numerous other agreements of the Allied Control Commission. Bavarian leaders feared using government funds so soon after the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*. At an October 1922 meeting attended by General von Epp, Kahr, Dr. Pittinger, and ministerial counsel Dr. Roth it was decided that money for these weapons should come from business and industrial concerns in Bavaria. Dr. Kuhlo, acting as a representative for a consortium of German industrialists, apparently gave the *Bayern und Reich* leader nearly fifty million Reichsmarks to purchase weapons for use by patriotic groups. As the liaison officer responsible for obtaining and maintaining the weapons cache, Röhm claimed that the weapons were never purchased, nor that he saw any of the money himself.⁸⁰

Röhm's accusations were serious enough to warrant a military investigation. General Franz Ritter von Epp, a figure intimately involved with many of the paramilitary groups of the period, presided over the inquiry. Epp's query went far afield. He interviewed, most naturally, Röhm, Ludendorff, Kuhlo, and Dr. Roth.⁸¹ Over the course of the investigation several things became clear. One, despite the representations of Dr. Roth and Captain Röhm, the sum of fifty million Reichsmarks was never doled out to

⁷⁹ Niederschrift, 12. May 1923, IfZ, NSDAP Hauptarchiv, MA 144/6.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Erwiderung auf das von Herrn General Ludendorff übersandte Schreiben vom 8. 4. 23, *ibid*, Epp an den Landeskommandanten Herrn General von Lossow, 27. April 1923, *ibid*, Erklärung Dr. Kuhlo, 29. March 1923, *ibid*.

Pittinger or any of his men. The testimonies of both men were undercut by that of Dr. Kuhlo, who claimed to have never dispensed money on the part of industrialists to *Bund Bayern und Reich*. The rumor, as he saw it, came from someone within industrial circles who misrepresented a statement from someone close to Pittinger.⁸² Two, it became clear that whatever money had been transferred from industrialists to patriotic organizations went to the Working Group set up by Röhm, Hitler, Lenz, and Hofmann in January 1923. According to Kuhlo, the address given for *Bund Bayern und Reich*'s headquarters was the same as for the Working Group's.⁸³ Three, Ministerial Councilor Roth appeared to misrepresent his testimony, both about the October meeting and the claim that Pittinger received the money.⁸⁴ Part of the reason for Roth's mendacity stemmed from reports that he was closely tied to Zeller, Hofmann, and the rest of the Working Group.⁸⁵ Epp's findings brought the charges of financial malfeasance to an end.

Having cleared his name in the financial charges, Pittinger struck back at Röhm, asking the Bavarian *Reichswehr* to remove the captain from his responsibilities as the liaison officer for the patriotic paramilitaries. The *Bayern und Reich* leader's request led to the convening of a special commission to investigate the entire feud to see if Röhm had made an honest break with Pittinger, whether he had slandered the man as a coward, and his fitness to serve as weapons officer. The conclusions drawn by the commission exonerated Röhm in many ways, making it difficult for the army to comply with Pittinger's request for his removal. They did however, manage to extract a retraction of the cowardice remarks that the captain had made in reference to the *Bayern und Reich*

⁸² Abschrift Dr. Kuhlo, Beilage 1, 15. March 1923, *ibid*.

⁸³ Erklärung Dr. Kuhlo, 29. March 1923, *ibid*.

⁸⁴ Abschrift General von Epp, Beilage 3., 5. April 1923, *ibid*.

⁸⁵ Abschrift Hauptmann u. Adjutant Dasser, 11. May 1923, *ibid*.

leader. The findings of the commission were accepted by Röhm, Pittinger, and the head of the Bavarian *Reichswehr*, General Otto von Lossow.⁸⁶

The length of the Röhm-Pittinger feud, which lasted for much of 1923, had helped bring about and exacerbate the split in the patriotic movement epitomized in the creation of the Working Group. On September 17, 1923 the intransigence of the radical circles around Röhm calcified further with the creation of the Fighting League, or *Kampfbund*. This new organization was an umbrella group consisting of *Bund Oberland*, Captain Adolf Heiss's *Reichsflagge*, and the SA of the Nazi Party. The organization had a three headed directory of Heiss, Dr. Friedrich Weber of *Bund Oberland*, and Adolf Hitler, who quickly rose to the position of political leader within the group.⁸⁷ As Harold Gordon noted, the creation of the Fighting League reflected the increased power of Hitler in the patriotic movement, something that was reinforced by the fact that the SA and not the Nazi Party as a whole belonged to the organization. The Fighting League was radical *völkisch* in its ideology and totally committed to revolutionary violence, making it difficult for the United Patriotic Leagues or *Bund Bayern und Reich* to work with it.⁸⁸

By May 1923 *Bund Bayern und Reich* was the preeminent paramilitary organization in Bavaria, but found itself increasingly under siege. Using its contacts with the Bavarian *Reichswehr*, Pittinger's organization undertook activities designed to maintain the conservative order in Bavaria even as they planned to overturn democracy. To that end the group became a leading voice in the United Patriotic Leagues, an

⁸⁶ Bayerischer Wehrkreiskommando VII, Der Befehlshaber, Hpt. Nr. 21625, 17. July 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

⁸⁷ Vaterländischer Kampfbund, Weiß an Dr. Weber, Adolf Hitler, Hauptmann Heiß, und Hermann Kriebel, 17. September 1923, IfZ, NSDAP Hauptarchiv, MA 144/1.

⁸⁸ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 92-5.

umbrella association designed to serve as a rallying point for the patriotic movement.

However, the rapid growth of the Nazi Party in 1922 created challenges for Pittinger and his men. Hitler's radicalism and increasing popularity carved out space on the revolutionary right for himself and his party. Their success began to cause problems for Pittinger and the leadership of *Bayern und Reich*. Local units fell away, the organization's leader was involved in a dispute with Ernst Röhm and General Erich Ludendorff that encompassed the first half of 1923, and Hitler set up two organizations, the Working Group and the Fighting League, designed to foment revolution, and setting the stage for the Beer Hall Putsch.

Chapter 9

The Constraints of Independence – *Bund Bayern und Reich*, the Beer Hall Putsch, and its

Aftermath

The opportunity for patriotic (*vaterländisch*) organizations like *Bund Bayern und Reich* to overthrow democracy was probably never better than in November 1923. A year of international strife and economic collapse had left the Weimar Republic with few defenders. The belief that the time was at hand galvanized and radicalized the patriotic movement, pushing its various parties, associations, and paramilitaries towards action. However differences amongst the different groups made a coordinated uprising impossible and insured that, when it did happen, it was marked by confusion and delay.

Bund Bayern und Reich's role in the Beer Hall Putsch was marginal at best, and this reflected the limits of its brand of paramilitary politics. Dedicated to the overthrow of Weimar democracy and revocation of the Treaty of Versailles, Pittinger's men found themselves hampered in their pursuit of their goals by the close relationship they had with the Bavarian *Reichswehr*. When that body was for the overthrow of the government, they were just as prepared to march on Berlin as the Nazis were. When the army backed off, *Bund Bayern und Reich* stood down. The ramifications of that act would affect the organization for years to come.

Bund Bayern und Reich and the Beer Hall Putsch

The events of the Beer Hall Putsch of November 8 & 9, 1923 capped off a year of strife for the patriotic movement and *Bund Bayern und Reich*. Having found its own agenda increasingly surpassed by the revolutionary program of Hitler and the

organizations of the Fighting League, Pittinger's group would play a rather interesting role in the events of those two days. Committed to some type of action, Bavaria's largest paramilitary group nevertheless remained loyal to Gustav von Kahr, who had been a patron to the patriotic movement, and to the army, from whom their prominence amongst the paramilitaries was owed. They did so despite discontent among local units that felt that the time was right to move against the government and many of whose members were attracted to the revolutionary ideals of Hitler.

The prelude to the abortive coup saw an increase in radicalism by the organizations of the Working Group during the spring of 1923. In particular they agitated against the Law for the Protection of the Republic and planned to disrupt the traditional May Day celebrations in Munich. They were very open about their intent and goals and one result of their radicalism was that it alerted the Bavarian government to the very real danger posed by Hitler and his allies. Accommodation to their demands was out of the question for the Knilling cabinet.¹ Additionally, authorities were seriously undercut by other paramilitaries, particularly *Bund Bayern und Reich*, who hoped to push their ideological program but were unwilling to go the route that Hitler intended to take. Pittinger's exhortations on the constitutional question was just one example of the pressure that reduced the government's "room to maneuver," and forced Knilling to walk a tight rope between the two camps.²

¹ James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 142-3. The latter did not go off as planned, much to the consternation of Hitler, caused difficulties in the Working Group, *ibid.*

² Harold Gordon Jr., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) 205-11, and Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 144.

Such a balancing act became more difficult over the course of the summer as the government had to deal with numerous protests by the Nazis, who used the economic distress of the summer and autumn months as an excuse for demonstrations. These were difficult to put down or keep quiet despite the best efforts of the Bavarian government to hush up such activity.³ They also tended to become violent as the Nazi Stormtroopers were just as willing to attack police and security forces as they were communists. One such event occurred on July 14, 1923 where a demonstration on Arnulfstrasse by the Nazis was violently broken up by police. One eyewitness to the event swore that the police charged the demonstrators with swords and rubber truncheons, though this was preceded by the virulence of the protestors who moved to within fifty meters of police, who had cordoned off the post office.⁴

The government's response to such provocations was increasingly to crack down on civil disturbance from both the left and the right. Police and prosecutors were instructed to undertake any and all measure to preserve security and order. However, even as they ordered such measures the cabinet continued to undercut their efforts against Hitler and the Fighting League. They refused to move against the German Days organized by the patriotic movement in communities throughout Bavaria. These had increased throughout the year and became increasingly marked by its strident overtones. Nevertheless the Interior Ministry continued to be more concerned with the actions of the

³ Abschrift, der Erste Staatsanwalt München, 4. June 1923, BHSA, II, MA 100 411.

⁴ Abschrift, Freiherr von Rotberg an das Präsidium der Vereinigten Vaterländischen Verbände Bayerns, 7. August 1923, *ibid.*

communists, who had organized their own paramilitary organization – the Communist One Hundreds – to take advantage of the chaos of the Ruhr Crisis.⁵

Unwilling to move against the more radical elements of the patriotic movement, the government in Munich decided to turn to a man who had an intimate working relationship with them, Gustav von Kahr. After leaving the post of Minister-President in 1921 Kahr returned to his previous position of provincial governor of Upper Bavaria. From there he continued to be heavily involved in right-wing politics and the paramilitaries. Kahr was involved with many of the coups planned in Bavaria in 1921 and 1922, and he remained close to the leaders, such as Pittinger and General von Möhl, who were prepared to carry these out.⁶ As a result of these connections Kahr was recalled to the government on September 26, 1923, but this time in the post of General State Commissioner (*Generalstaatskommissar*). In this post, the former Minister-President was given virtual dictatorial powers in Bavaria.⁷

The reaction of the working class and their Social Democratic allies to Kahr's appointment was to prepare for action to defend the republic, which they were convinced was now under attack. Many workers and socialist organizations in Bavaria formed councils in response to protest, according to one pamphlet, the increasing treason of patriotic organizations against the republic and its leaders.⁸ Naturally Pittinger's men claimed that it was the worker's councils that intended revolution and the government agreed with them. The fear and paranoia over a potential communist insurrection had

⁵ Abschrift des Ministerium des Innern, 23. September 1923, BHSA, II, M Inn 71 708.

⁶ Von Kahr zu Lerchenfeld: Der zweite bayerische Rechtsputsch mißlungen, (Munich: Verlag des Bayerischen Wochenblattes, München, February 1922), 90-5 & 106-7, IfZ, Gk 1279.

⁷ Abschrift der Leitung des Vereinigten Vaterländischen Verbände Bayerns, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 22.

⁸ An die Bayerische Arbeiterschaft und Ihre Betriebsräte!, 30. September 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

grown so acute amongst official circles that the government felt that the only way they could deal with the situation was by increasing their cooperation with organizations like *Bayern und Reich*.⁹

The elevation of Kahr, however, was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by *Bund Bayern und Reich* and the other organizations of the United Patriotic Leagues.¹⁰ They saw in the creation of the position of General State Commissioner the beginning of the end of the republic. All during the summer of 1923 Pittinger and his men had been advocating for the creation of a dictatorship as a way to restore the old Bismarckian constitution. They favored a “return to Kahr” as the means by which to achieve their goals.¹¹ Both *Bayern und Reich* and the United Patriotic Leagues pledged to do their utmost to help the new General State Commissioner achieve these objectives and to deal with the crises that they saw enveloping both Germany and Bavaria.¹²

Upon assuming office Kahr made efforts to unite the *vaterländisch* movement around his person. One of the means by which he did this was to suspend the Law for the Protection of the Republic that was so hated by all the paramilitaries. He also pardoned the leader of the *Reichsflagge*, Captain Adolf Heiss, who had been under arrest at the orders of the Berlin government.¹³ These measures seemed to have a rejuvenating influence amongst many of the patriotic organizations. Though Kahr was attacked by the Fighting League in the pages of the Nazi paper *Völkischer Beobachter*,¹⁴ many organizations that had been a part of the defunct Working Group pledged support to the

⁹ Staatsministerium des Innern an das Präsidium der Regierung von Oberfranken, 26. September 1923, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Abschrift der Leitung des Vereinigten Vaterländischen Verbände Bayerns, BHSA, IV, BuR, B 22.

¹¹ Verfassungsfrage, *ibid.*

¹² Abschrift der Leitung des Vereinigten Vaterländischen Verbände Bayerns, *ibid.*

¹³ Merkblatt 49, Bund Blücher Bundesführung, 28. September 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 100.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

General State Commissioner. For instance, the *Blücherbund* decided to throw its support to Kahr because not to do so threatened the “peaceful and vigorous development of the patriotic movement,” and was the only way to affect a “German racial revolution.”¹⁵

The coming together of the patriotic groups was facilitated, in no small part, by a renewal of the strife between Kahr and Berlin that had begun with the dispute over the old *Einwohnerwehr*. This new conflict began with a ban on the *Völkischer Beobachter* by the Reich government. The paper had printed a derogatory article against General von Seeckt, the leader of the *Reichswehr*, and his wife, claiming that she was Jewish. The Berlin cabinet, whose negative reaction to Kahr’s appointment led them appoint a “dictator” of their own, used the incident as a means of undercutting the new Bavarian leader. In the crisis they also tried to make use of the army, ordering the head of the Bavarian military district, Otto von Lossow, to carry out the ban. These were to no avail, as the Bavarian “dictator” simply ordered Lossow, who reported to both men in the case of emergencies – which both states were now officially under – to ignore orders coming from Berlin. This move led to his removal from the post by national authorities, though he was ordered to stay in the position by Kahr and the cabinet. Even though the crisis was eventually resolved by late October,¹⁶ the conflict poisoned federal relations, and further led to calls for a takeover of the Reich government by forces on the right – forces that now believed a takeover of Bavaria by Berlin would come any day.¹⁷

Pittinger and the leadership of *Bund Bayern und Reich* worked hard to rally all patriotic organizations to the General State Commissioner because they believed that a

¹⁵ Merkblatt 48, Bund Blücher Bundesführung, 28. September 1923, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 227-31.

¹⁷ Politische Nachricht, 19. October 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

takeover, or *Reichsexecution*, would come via the army and were confident that Lossow and Bavarian troops would stand with them thus bringing about a final reckoning with the republic.¹⁸ Their efforts naturally began within their own group. Many local units had expressed dissension throughout the year 1923 with the direction of the organization. With the agitation of Hitler and his circle it was unknown how some of the local units would react. Luckily for Pittinger, most local units stood foursquare behind Kahr. Throughout October many units of *Bund Bayern und Reich* pledged their loyalty to him and the Bavarian leadership.¹⁹ In one example the local leadership of Schiltberg bei Aichbach greeted the creation of a national unity front amongst all paramilitaries and promised to work against anyone who tried to disrupt Kahr's political goals.²⁰ Other units followed with similar declarations.²¹

The full unity of purpose that Pittinger and Kahr hoped for amongst the *vaterländisch* groups failed to materialize however. For many of the organizations affiliated with Hitler in the Fighting League, as they took stock of the situation in the fall of 1923, they came to believe that a dictatorship headed by the Nazi leader was preferable to one headed by Kahr. In an anonymous memo distributed by the leadership of *Wikingbund*, one of the successor groups to the *Einwohnerwehr* and one of the most radical, they spelled out precisely what a dictatorship by the state commissioner would look like. "As mentioned above the dictatorship of Kahr in reality has sprung not from strength, but from weakness. ... This development involves both for the dictator Kahr and for the farther future considerable dangers. If the present exponent of the

¹⁸ Führernachrichten, 12. October 1923, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Resolution der Ortsgruppe Hof, 6. October 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

²⁰ Resolution der Ortsgruppe Aichach, 23. October 1923, *ibid.*

²¹ Chiemgau Ost an den Herrn Generalstaatskommissar Excellenz Dr. von Kahr, 29. October 1923, *ibid.*

dictatorship does not do justice to the hopes of nationally active circles, then he will fall just as quickly as he came and the civil war follows after him.”²² However, a dictatorship led by Hitler promised to fulfill the goals of national/racial solidarity, antisemitism, and national activism that the author found appealing.²³

The result was that the Fighting League worked feverishly to undercut Kahr. However, this was not without its dangers, as there were pressures exerted upon Hitler to stand behind the General State Commissioner. Harold Gordon described the two camps as tomcats that warily eyed one another upon first encounter. Each made conciliatory gestures but did nothing to strike a killing blow.²⁴ An example of the virulence of their attacks can be seen in the German Day celebration held in Bamberg in October 1923. At the meeting the representative of *Bayern und Reich*, von Xylander, made an impassioned speech defending the course of action set by Kahr and appealing for unity. This was rejected by Hitler and his associates with laughter, sneers, and speeches where the General State Commissioner was attacked as a man of the past. “But apart from that in the history of all the revolutions, that never could a man from the old system master it, only a revolutionary.”²⁵

In the eyes of the Fighting League Kahr was the worst possible person to lead Bavarian resistance against Berlin. They believed that the national government would come at Munich with the strongest possible measures, and that the “dictator of Bavaria” would wilt under the pressure. In their view ample evidence existed that Kahr lacked the necessary resolve. At the Bamberg meeting, Hitler and Weber complained that the

²² Die Diktatur von Kahr, Ihr Entstehen, Ihr Wesen, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 98.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 234-7.

²⁵ Bamberger Tagung, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 100.

General State Commissioner seemed more concerned with disrupting the activities of the Fighting League than preparing for a showdown with the “socialist” government. Kahr used police powers to disrupt the meetings of the Fighting League, fourteen of which were planned for October 1923 alone.²⁶ In the eyes of leaders like Ludendorff and Röhm, this was only the continuation of what they saw as harassment by the Knilling Cabinet, who had been banning people from attending Nazi meetings since the summer.²⁷ With the workers of Bavaria stirred up by their leaders into calling workers councils upon news of Kahr’s appointment,²⁸ Hitler and his associates argued that it was no time for weakness on the part of patriotic organizations or their allies.²⁹

Kahr, and his allies in *Bund Bayern und Reich* and the United Patriotic Leagues, were just as interested in undercutting Hitler and his allies. The banned meetings of the Fighting Leagues were just the beginning of this process. Pittinger and his associates prepared a propaganda campaign in October 1923 about the current political climate that was to be sent to other German *Länder*, but made sure that the message remained in the hands of the United Patriotic Leagues and Pittinger. A letter sent to the *Bayern und Reich* leadership on October 23, 1923 showed the importance of controlling the message. Local leaders in the town of Ehingen in Württemberg requested that propaganda material be sent there with the hope that this would move the local populace into the patriotic (as defined by Kahr and *Bayern und Reich*) camp. The request had been induced by a Hitler

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Nachricht, 18. July 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1-1.

²⁸ An die Bayerische Arbeiterschaft und Ihre Betriebsräte!, 30. September 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

²⁹ Abschrift, 8. October 1923, ibid.

speech, and the materials would help not only in reinforcing the message, but ensuring that the enthusiasm of the people in the town was channeled correctly.³⁰

The back and forth between Kahr and his allies and the Fighting League took place in the context of the rapidly deteriorating situation, both economic and political, in Germany during the fall of 1923. The collapse of the German *Reichsmark*, following the Berlin government's disastrous response to the French occupation of the Ruhr Valley, had destroyed the life savings of many in the middle class. The economic desperation, and the feelings of political impotence it engendered, led many Germans to call for the abandonment of parliamentary democracy. Kahr, already an unwelcome figure to the republic's democratic leaders, was deep in negotiation with General von Seeckt of the *Reichswehr* and the leaders of northern associations like the *Stahlhelm* to put pressure on the Reich government to step aside in favor of a directorate or military dictatorship. This was the expected coup that many on the right had favored, including the leaders of *Bund Bayern und Reich* and with the backing of the army seemed to be within reach. All that was needed was a broad based-backing for such a move in the north and in Bavaria.³¹

Such support unfortunately did not come. In the north of Germany the crowd around Seeckt did not have the prestige necessary to carry out a putsch, and the general himself seemed unwilling to go along with anything illegal. The dissolution of the republic, were it to take place, had to be done legally, according to him. The patriotic

³⁰ Abschnitt Jung an die Leitung des Bundes Bayern und Reich, 28. October 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 29. One of the questions put forward in the letter was who would run the campaign. The anonymous author seemed interested in having propaganda distributed by the Nuremberg *Reichsflagge*, an organization that had been a part of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* and the *Kampfbund*, but had fallen out with Hitler over the appointment of Kahr as *Generalstaatskommissar*, *ibid.* See also, Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 221-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 238-69. See also, Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 148-50.

groups were just as wary of the situation, though it seemed to give them the opportunity to achieve the major goals. The hang up for *Bayern und Reich* was Seeckt himself. In the eyes of the leadership a coup and new government led by the general would do nothing to resolve the “*national-völkisch*” question that was the organization’s major goal. Moreover, Seeckt was the one responsible for the Lossow affair and had prepared the *Reichswehr* outside of Bavaria to march against the state if necessary. Thus they had grave misgivings about the general, even as they continued to support Kahr and his negotiations with the army leader’s circle.³²

Despite their misgivings, *Bund Bayern und Reich* continued to prepare for action right up until a few days before the Beer Hall Putsch. During October plans were put in place to secure Bavaria in the case of a move against either the government in Munich or a national coup in Berlin. Of particular concern for Kahr and Pittinger was the danger posed by Bavarian communists. These needed to be neutralized to secure the state and many of their plans dealt with this issue. The local leader in Füssen reported to the chief of the Bavarian state police (*Landespolizei*), Colonel Hans von Seisser, on the deteriorating situation in the *Allgäu* region and the need to move against both communists and social democrats there. In this instance, a reported influx of communists and a lack of resolve by local authorities led to a request by the community leader to request for one hundred men of the state police to supplement the two companies of *Bayern und Reich* already there.³³

³² Brief, 2. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

³³ Ortsgruppe Füssen an Sehr geehrter Herr Oberst von Seisser, 28. October 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 2.

Pittinger's organization, however, did not take part in the Beer Hall Putsch. This was a result of the relationship of his organization to the *Reichswehr*. Despite being an independent group in terms of funding and its political activities, *Bund Bayern und Reich* depended to a much greater degree on the army to carry out its mission both politically and militarily. The army provided arms, training, and perhaps most importantly prestige. *Bayern und Reich* was the largest of the paramilitaries and one that the army leadership dealt with almost exclusively. Despite Röhm's challenge to this state of affairs, the relationship between the two organizations remained close up to, and beyond, November 1923. This arrangement stood in contradistinction to the relationship the *Einwohnerwehr* had to both the army and the state. In that case, Escherich's association, though essentially semi-official in nature due to having been formed and funded by government and military officials, was practically independent in how it operated. This freedom made the *Einwohnerwehr* a force in Bavarian politics, something that *Bund Bayern und Reich* never fully was.

The dependency of Pittinger's group on the military and political elite for guidance effectively constrained *Bayern und Reich* in the events that followed in a way that it did not with Hitler and the Fighting League. Whereas the latter went ahead with its own plans for a putsch upon the foundering of Kahr's negotiations with rightist circles in Berlin, the former saluted smartly and continued to support the General State Commissioner. Just two days before the Putsch the triumvirate of Kahr, Lossow, and Seisser met with all of the patriotic paramilitary groups, including both *Bayern und Reich* and the Fighting League. In that meeting the political and military leaders made it clear that any plans for a coup, whether planned in support of events in Berlin, or undertaken in

Munich, would be opposed by the Bavarian military and the state police.³⁴ A report by the leader of the Chiemgau leader of *Bayern und Reich* summed up the disappointment of the membership and their determination to carry on. “With heavy hearts we withdraw all of our orders. It succeeded in defiance of initially difficult dysphoria.”³⁵

The putsch itself provides the clearest indication of *Bayern und Reich*'s dependency upon political and military elites. Upon hearing of Hitler's actions at the *Bürgerbräukeller*, Dr. Pittinger phoned Kahr's office to confirm what he had been told. At first officials there did not have any real information about the events surrounding the meeting, as the hall was not accessible. Later, Kahr was told that it looked very much like a putsch. Pittinger insisted that the units in the Chiemgau be put on alert. However officials at Kahr's office informed the *Bayern und Reich* leader that the phones were down there. Upon hearing the news Pittinger personally took an army car down to Rosenheim to organize the units in support of the government, reporting back to Kahr's office in Munich on his progress.³⁶

The trip to the Chiemgau has remained somewhat shrouded in mystery, particularly as it relates to Pittinger's motives.³⁷ It is clear though, that Pittinger continued to throw his lot in with Kahr. At Aibling Pittinger instructed the local unit to follow only those orders that came from the General State Commissioner. He issued these orders to the unit at 3 a.m., plenty of time for the health inspector to discover

³⁴ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 255-8.

³⁵ Abschrift, Berichte von Augenzeugen, Berichte der Regierung, 11. November 1923, BHSA, II, M Inn 73 696.

³⁶ Bericht Dr. Pittinger, 27. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 16-1.

³⁷ Harold Gordon has an interesting take on Pittinger's motivations, believing that he was still uncertain as to the whether to support the Putsch, or not, and that it was not till the early morning hours that he made up his mind. This seems to explain some of the contradictory orders he gave, Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 367-72.

Kahr's position *vis-à-vis* the putsch.³⁸ This becomes even clearer when one reads the directive from Pittinger to Merz, the state's councilor in Aibling. In it he ordered roadblocks designed to stop the *putschists* from reinforcing their compatriots in Munich. Despite this, however, it was clear that Pittinger and his men approved of the dissolution of the government, regardless of the circumstances in which it occurred. The placards proclaiming the new national government of Kahr, Hitler, and Ludendorff were distributed by the Pittinger's men in Aibling, and these gave the impression that *Bayern und Reich* approved of the dissolution of the Diet and cabinet.³⁹

Mixed messages seemed to be the order of the day for Pittinger, for not every unit in *Bund Bayern und Reich* was informed of events or put on alert, and those that were sometimes found themselves with conflicting orders. The Chiemgau regiment that Pittinger had mobilized was distressed by the lack of information given to them by the *Bayern und Reich* leader, and unsure of their vague orders. These included massing in Rosenheim to be prepared to march, but no word was given as to the goal. By the end of the day of November 9 the numbers mobilized reached three thousand men, leading to problems of housing and feeding such a force, and this led to disillusionment.⁴⁰

Additionally the local unit in Pfaffenhofen was not informed by the leadership of the happenings in the *Bürgerbräukeller* until the next day. According to local officials, they

³⁸ Abschrift Merz, B.A. Aibling, 11. November 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

³⁹ Bund Bayern und Reich Bezirksleitung Aibling an Seine Exzellenz dem Herrn Generalstaatskommissar Dr. Ritter von Kahr, 19. December 1923, *ibid.* The placard was worded in such a way to make it seem as if Pittinger, and the Army and *Landespolizei* were behind Kahr in seizing power, when in fact the latter most decisively were not, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 367-72.

had no real information, beyond rumors, of the events in Munich until news reached them that the putsch had been put down.⁴¹

Their distress led to outright resentment at the leadership of *Bayern und Reich*, and indeed the political elite in Bavaria, in the days after the putsch. Regional leaders in the Chiemgau reported that, two weeks later, much of the rank and file had expressed unhappiness with the way they had been led during the Putsch. For the most part this anger was directed at the members of the Bavarian People's Party in the region.⁴² However, a fair amount was directed at the General State Commissioner. Kahr, in the minds of many local units, had missed a golden opportunity to overturn parliamentary democracy in Bavaria, if nowhere else.⁴³ "One expected a dictator and not a General State Commissioner, i.e. one is ill-humored, that the government is still visible as such. One encounters on that score so many harsh judgements, to a certain degree exasperation against the government that one is affected by."⁴⁴ For many members on the local level Kahr had simply not kept his word. For this he was called a "traitor" and a "knave."⁴⁵

The lack of action on the part of the General State Commissioner during the Putsch itself only explains part of the anger amongst the membership. Another was the demand for loyalty amongst the remainder of the patriotic organizations, including those that had not participated in the coup at all. On November 10 Kahr's office in Munich sent out a memo where it demanded that, to regain public confidence, the organizations

⁴¹ Der Vorstand des Bezirksamts Pfaffenhofen an das Präsidium der Regierung von Oberbayern, 10. November 1923, BHSA, II, M Inn 73 696.

⁴² An die Bundesleitung des Bundes Bayern und Reich, zur Hand von Herrn Sanitätsrat Dr. Pittinger, 23. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 2.

⁴³ Ortsgruppe Weiden an Seinen Exzellenz Herrn Generalstaatskommissar Dr. von Kahr, 11. November 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

⁴⁴ Bund Bayern und Reich Bundesleitung an den Herrn Generalstaatskommissar von Bayern, 10. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 2.

⁴⁵ Stadtrat Weiden an den Herrn Generalstaatskommissar, 13. November 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

of the United Patriotic Leagues provide explanations of their opinions on the Putsch, their political views, and pledge their support for the current government.⁴⁶ On this score the *Bayern und Reich* leadership was very prompt in their response. They claimed that the group stood behind Kahr one hundred percent, and blamed Hitler for the events of November 8 and 9, saying that he had broken his promise not to move against the General State Commissioner.⁴⁷ Pittinger's rapid response was seconded by the military leadership of *Bayern und Reich* which, while supporting Kahr and laying the blame at the feet of the Nazi leader, pointed out that the former Minister-president had the backing of both the Bavarian *Reichswehr* and the state police, making it necessary to back the stance adopted by Pittinger and Kahr.⁴⁸

Such reinforcement from the paramilitary's leadership had some effect on local units, though there continued to be some discordant notes. Some units registered their support for Kahr straight away. The leaders of Jura-Maingau stated that standing behind the General State Commissioner presented *Bayern und Reich* the opportunity to prove that they were the proper instrument in his quest to overturn parliamentary democracy.⁴⁹ Other units pledged support, but hoped for amnesty for lower level *putschists*, or leniency for their organizations. The local unit in Bad Kissingen insisted on saying that they only did what they thought would best serve the fatherland.⁵⁰ The district leader of Staffelstein stressed this too, writing, "Therefore we sincerely request (Kahr), to lift the

⁴⁶ Präsidium der Regierung von Oberbayern an die Polizeibehörden in München an die Polizeidirektion, und an Bund Bayern und Reich, 10. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR., B. 1/1.

⁴⁷ Bund Bayern und Reich Bundesleitung, Politische Orientierung, 13. November 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

⁴⁸ Bund Bayern und Reich Militärische Leitung an die militärischen Führer, 12. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

⁴⁹ Leitung des Jura-Maingaus an die Bundesleitung des Bundes Bayern und Reich, 14. December 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 99.

⁵⁰ Bezirksvorsitzender Bad Kissingen an Excellenz Dr. v. Kahr, 15. November 1923, *ibid.*

ban on the national leagues ‘National Socialists, *Oberland, Reichskriegsflagge*,’ in order to allow the collaboration of these organizations with us again, to let judicial proceedings against persons connected to the Hitler Putsch be suspended and at best to grant the convicted amnesty.”⁵¹

Other units took the opportunity to use Pittinger’s lack of leadership, and the leadership’s stance after the putsch to make a case for more thorough reforms of *Bund Bayern und Reich*. The leader in Oberfranken wrote to Pittinger two days after the failed coup and argued that much of the success of the Kampfbund was due to failure on the part of local leadership in *Bayern und Reich*. He noted that many men in positions of authority were not well versed in the ideological underpinnings of the paramilitary. These had been sacrificed, he believed, to the needs of military efficiency and political expediency. The regional leader also argued that the *Bayern und Reich* leadership had sacrificed traditional ideas of military organization and justice, for a top down system weighted too heavily in favor of the leadership. To prevent a revival of either the Nazis or the Fighting League, which he believed was a malevolent force in Bavarian politics, the local leader suggested more rigid discipline and adherence to the program and the traditional military code.⁵²

The actions of *Bund Bayern und Reich* during the Beer Hall Putsch, while controversial amongst the membership, did bring benefits to the organization. One of these was a renewal of its preeminent position within the patriotic movement. In a statement released after the coup ended, Kahr made special note of the loyalty of

⁵¹ Bund Bayern und Reich Gau Staffelstein an Kahr, 16. November 1923, *ibid*.

⁵² Freiherr von Gagern an Dr. Pittinger, 11. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

Pittinger's association. In the same proclamation the General State Commissioner banned those organizations that had participated in the coup. Naturally this included the Nazi Party, but also *Bund Oberland* and Ernst Röhm's *Reichskriegsflagge*.⁵³ The prohibition on these groups meant that many of their former members could now join other paramilitaries, including *Bayern und Reich*, which were not under the ban. This process began in earnest in the weeks following the abortive coup. In the Chiemgau, for example, many Nazi Party members joined *Bund Bayern und Reich* following the failure of the Putsch. There they joined the organization's third battalion led by a man named Jäger, who already had shown his displeasure with the health inspector's leadership, a sentiment shared by his men. Their main reason in switching allegiances, as an Interior Ministry memo stated, was to continue to agitate until such time as the prohibition was lifted.⁵⁴

The renewed prominence of *Bayern und Reich* was matched by the growing list of paramilitaries that fell into disfavor with the Bavarian government, or with Kahr himself. In late 1923 and early 1924 many sister organizations within the United Patriotic Leagues also came under the government ban. One reason for this was the stance taken by these groups following the Beer Hall Putsch. On November 10 a number of paramilitaries, *Blücherbund*, *Reichsflagge*, and *Bund Wiking* among others, penned an open letter to the General State Commissioner which, while supportive, cast aspersions on his willingness to fight for the goals of the patriotic movement. In particular they questioned if he would ban socialist organizations as he had the Nazi Party, or declare the Weimar constitution

⁵³ Bekanntgabe des Generalstaatskommissars, 9. November 1923, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Abschrift, 16. November 1923, BHSA, II, M Inn 73 696.

null and void.⁵⁵ Such opinions led to increasingly difficult relations, if not outright prohibition for several groups. *Bund Wiking*, which had belonged to the Working Group at the beginning of 1923, found itself under investigation by the Bavarian government at the insistence of the cabinet in Berlin,⁵⁶ while the government considered banning other groups, like *Jungdeutscher Orden*, in localities where they had caused particular problems.⁵⁷

The decision to stand by Kahr in the aftermath of the putsch became increasingly more tenuous for the leadership of *Bayern und Reich*. Rumors swirled about the General State Commissioner's relationship to the *Putschists* and his real intentions. Many of these rumors came from patriotic organizations themselves. A police report from Ingolstadt noted that placards began appearing on city streets after November 14 that detailed Kahr's infamy.⁵⁸ Titled, "Who has broken his word? Kahr!," the posters claimed that, rather than objecting to the putsch and working hard to defeat it after being freed, the General State Commissioner, along with Lossow and Seisser, continued to entertain the idea of a coup. As late as 11 p.m. one of the major conspirators, Ernst Pöhner, was with Kahr. The anonymous authors claimed that it was only after a 3 a.m. meeting with Cardinal Faulhaber, the archbishop of Munich-Freising, that Pöhner was arrested and energetic action against the putsch began. This made Kahr a traitor in their eyes. "Remember these four dates of the second November betrayal!"⁵⁹ Such assertions made Kahr a liability to the Knilling cabinet and led to the forced resignation of Kahr in

⁵⁵ Bauer an den Herrn Generalstaatskommissar Exzellenz von Kahr, 10. November 1923, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 100.

⁵⁶ Der Reichsminister des Innern an den Herrn Bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten und Staatsminister des Äußern, 18. January 1924, BHSA, II, G.St.K. 98.

⁵⁷ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 502.

⁵⁸ Ordnungspolizei Ingolstadt an den Stadtrat Ingolstadt, 14. November 1923, BHSA, II, M Inn 73 696.

⁵⁹ Wer hat das Wort gebrochen? Kahr!, *ibid.*

February 1924,⁶⁰ a move that the *Bayern und Reich* leadership believed was only done to appease the “members of the *völkisch* parties.”⁶¹

The Long Term Consequences of the Putsch for *Bund Bayern und Reich*, 1924-1928

The four years that followed the Beer Hall Putsch were ones that saw further changes to the structure of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, but also decline. Pittinger’s organization found it increasingly difficult to operate as a paramilitary association after 1924, and slowly began to evolve into a more traditional political organization. At the same time the process by which the group saw its position on the right further eroded to the more revolutionary voices on the right associated with Hitler and his Nazi Party continued unabated.

One thing that became increasingly clear to the government in Munich in the aftermath of the putsch was that its reliance on private patriotic associations for security had become burdensome. Public safety had not been served in November 1923 and this needed to depend on more stable foundations. In early 1924 members of the Bavarian People’s Party managed to persuade the government to create an emergency force called *Notbann*. This organization was conceived as public paramilitary dependent upon the state for its support, and which would direct itself against both the right and the left. For the Knilling cabinet this was the group’s greatest virtue. “A paramilitary free from politics. At last ‘duty’ includes the duty, to make themselves available unconditionally at each call up of the state government against a domestic threat.”⁶² General Franz Ritter

⁶⁰ Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch*, 491.

⁶¹ Bundesleitung an Herrn Amtsanwalt Endres, 16. May 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 4.

⁶² Abschrift, Der “Deutsche” Notbann, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 13.

von Epp, a major figure in the creation of many patriotic paramilitaries became the formation's first leader.⁶³

Bund Bayern und Reich welcomed the creation of the *Notbann*, though they were concerned with certain aspects of the new formation. They were pleased with the fact that they had a working relationship with the appointed leader of the group. They were also delighted that members of their organization could join. However, Pittinger and the leadership had several nagging questions. One concerned the relationship of *Bayern und Reich* to the *Reichswehr*. The creation of a new paramilitary force implied that the special relationship between the two organizations was null and void. A second concern was over the stipulation that members of the *Notbann* be completely free from politics. Members of Pittinger's group could join the new formation, but had to leave their politics at the door. The leadership believed that the work of its members in the new association should not preclude their work for *Bayern und Reich*. Finally, they expressed concern that Epp's new entity seemed to preclude the purely paramilitary functions of Pittinger's units, and they hoped that these could continue as much as possible.⁶⁴ Despite such misgivings they pledged their full support, even defending the new organization as vital to skeptics like General von Lossow.⁶⁵

The *Notbann* became a prime example of how bitterly the patriotic movement had been divided by the events of 1923 culminating in the Beer Hall Putsch. For those on the radical right, epitomized by the remaining groups of the Patriotic Working Group, the new organization was nothing more than the "dictatorship of the middle," the triumph of

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Abschrift der Bundesleitung, 16. January 1924, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Bundesleitung an Seiner Hochwohlgeboren Herrn Generalmajor Ritter von Epp, 1. February 1924, *ibid.*

Bavarian particularism in the face of the events of November 8 and 9. They doubted whether the working relationship between the new *Notbann* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* could even work. In their view, the patriotic and explicitly political program of Pittinger's organization had to be sacrificed to the needs of the *Notbann*.⁶⁶ Such a view was rejected by Epp himself, who said in an essay that his formation only followed the self-defense concepts pioneered by the *Einwohnerwehr*.⁶⁷

The creation of the *Notbann* led to further soul searching within *Bayern und Reich*, and with it to a second major reorganization. Many local leaders began in early 1924 to express doubts related to the group's paramilitary activities, the departure of local units, the upcoming parliamentary elections in Bavaria,⁶⁸ and their own difficult financial situation.⁶⁹ These problems were taken up by the state representative beginning in April 1924 and led to a reorganization of the state leadership. A new department was added: a chancellery, or *Zentral-Abteilung*, which coordinated all of the administrative work of the leadership, was responsible for enforcing regulations, and supervised most non-paramilitary activities. The Propaganda and Press department was split into separate offices, with the former coordinating its activities with the defense and organization department, while the press office ran the organization's newspaper, *Bayern und Reich*. The defense office's responsibilities remained unchanged from before. They coordinated all the personnel in the local offices, and coordinated their activities with the army. The

⁶⁶ Abschrift, Der "Deutsche" Notbann, *ibid*.

⁶⁷ Stellungnahme, zur Denkschrift der 'Vaterländischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft' über den 'Deutschen Notbann,' 28. March 1924, *ibid*. The Deutscher Notbann (DNB) foundered after a few years according to James Diehl because the groups came to the attention of the Inter-Allied Military Commission which forced the Bavarian government to shut it down – though they tried to keep it going, and due to the fact that they could not keep Fighting League members out of it despite the prohibition against them, Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 155-8.

⁶⁸ Nachricht der Bundesleitung, March 21, 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, Bund 24.

⁶⁹ Nachricht der Bundesleitung, April 15, 1924, *ibid*.

only additional activity assigned to this office was their coordination with the German Emergency Force (*Deutscher Notbann*), which had been created in the aftermath of the Beer Hall Putsch.⁷⁰

Pittinger's organization continued to be beset by the defection of local units in the aftermath of the Beer Hall Putsch. One local unit, in the months following the Beer Hall Putsch, dissolved its relationship with *Bund Bayern und Reich* because the leadership had become enamored with the political ideas of Hitler. This unit, from the region of Upper Franconia (*Oberfranken*), split off during the summer of 1924. The new group they created, *Wehrverband Oberfranken*, adhered specifically to a party-*völkisch* (*partei-völkisch*) line as enunciated by Hitler and the Fighting League (*Kampfbund*). Specifically, according to the report of a local diet held in the city of Kulmbach, the new group adhered to ideas of a unitary *Reich*, which was vehemently opposed by *Bayern und Reich*.⁷¹ They also hoped to revive the spirit of solidarity amongst that existed amongst radical nationalist organizations just prior to the putsch. "If we fail to liquidate completely the eighth and ninth of November completely in us, then we deserve our fate. Ludendorff, Hitler, Kahr, & Lossow must stand together. If the leaders are not ready to effect that, then they are not. ...otherwise we will not acquire freedom."⁷²

Another problem that continued into the post-1924 period was the bleeding away of members to more radical *völkisch* parties and units. This development was partially attributed to the feeling amongst many members that, with the creation of the *Notbann*, there was really no need to continue as a paramilitary unit. Those young people who

⁷⁰ Zur Organisation der Bundesleitung, Wehr- und Organisationsabteilung, July 22, 1924, *ibid*.

⁷¹ Tagung in Kulmbach am 5. Juli 1924, Der Standpunkt des Bundes Bayern und Reich, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 11/1.

⁷² Bericht an die Bundesleitung, Gau Bayreuth, 15. July 1924, *ibid*.

were in *Bayern und Reich* in particular saw things this way. Many joined other organizations, a trend that was worrisome to the leadership. However they continued to hope for the best. As Pittinger put it, “many members of our league belong to other associations, whose patriotic disposition cannot be doubted.”⁷³ He believed that once the transformation of *Bayern und Reich* was complete these members would return.

The transformation of the group from a paramilitary unit to a state political (*staatspolitisch*) entity was the point of the reorganization. What this meant for *Bayern und Reich* was that military training that had been partially undertaken to prepare its members for a foreign war, would be scrapped for a program that prepared the minds of the people of the state for defense thinking. However, this did not mean that all paramilitary activity was given up. Pittinger made clear that internal enemies still existed in Bavaria, and these still needed to be fought, particularly socialist and communist groups. The political program, however, would now take precedence over the other.⁷⁴

One way to do this was to continue to advocate for the abandonment of representative government, and they did this in a clever way. Beginning in 1924 Pittinger’s group began to agitate for the use of the people’s referendum (*Volksreferendum*) as a tool of democracy. On the surface this seemed very innocuous. Legislative power would be put in the hands of the people, not the representatives in Munich. The bill did not pass. The major roadblocks were provided by the democratic parties in the Diet and the Farmer’s League, both of which objected on the grounds that

⁷³ Pittinger and Kommerzienrat Kühner, 10. November 1925, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 3.

⁷⁴ Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 163-7. The adoption of a state political program did cause a rift between Pittinger and the WuO office, General von Tutschek, who still firmly believed in the paramilitary program, *ibid*.

the bill would strengthen executive authority at the expense of parliament. Their obstinacy, anticipated by the governing coalition, prevented easy passage, and this fact enraged the *Bayern und Reich* leadership.⁷⁵ Their response was to mobilize all of the local units to campaign on behalf of the bill's passage.⁷⁶ Despite the efforts the bill on the people's referendum went nowhere. Naturally the leadership blamed their erstwhile political allies for its failure.⁷⁷

They also continued to put pressure on the government in Munich to stand up for Bavaria's rights vis-à-vis Berlin. In August 1924, at the insistence of the allied powers, Berlin centralized the *Reichsbahn*, the national railroad. This move removed the Bavarian rail system from Munich's control and naturally outraged Pittinger and his men. The Bundesleitung sent a strongly worded letter the Minister-President of Bavaria, Dr. Heinrich Held, urging the Bavarian government to resist such measures as it would undercut Bavarian sovereignty.⁷⁸ Pittinger believed that the centralization of the *Reichsbahn* violated the state treaty of 1871, from which Bavaria received most of its privileges. Moreover it would deprive the state of control over much of its economy. For *Bayern und Reich* the actions of the *Reich* government proved that they were more than prepared to sever the bonds that bound Bavaria to the rest of Germany.⁷⁹

Perhaps the best example of the political work done by *Bund Bayern und Reich* was its propaganda activities on behalf the United Patriotic Leagues, of which it

⁷⁵ Bund Bayern und Reich, Bundesleitung, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 29. Considering the way in which this tactic was later used by Hitler, it stands to reason that most of the political parties lined up against it, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Bayern steht in diesen Tagen im Zeichen des Volksbegehrens, 7. February 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 24.

⁷⁷ Bund Bayern und Reich, Bundesleitung, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 29.

⁷⁸ Pittinger an den Herrn Ministerpräsident Herrn Geheimen Hofrat Dr. Held, 22. August 1924, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 15.

⁷⁹ Abschrift, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 28.

continued to be the leading member. The organization continued to put out propaganda at election time attacking the Social Democrats and the Weimar Republic. During the 1924 Reichstag elections they distributed a series of pamphlets to dissuade their fellows from supporting the Social Democrats or the Communists. Each essay had a theme, from fears of a revival of a European war to those of a civil war.⁸⁰ In spite of the changing topics, the message always remained the same; the Socialist leaders of the new Germany were responsible for the country's miserable state of affairs, and only by adopting a patriotic and *völkisch* view of homeland (*Heimat*) and Fatherland would Germany be revived. "The republic may go to hell, if only Germany, the fatherland, is being saved! Constitutions come and go. But the name 'fatherland' will outlast all storm periods, it is eternal."⁸¹

Bayern und Reich and the United Patriotic Leagues also undertook a similar propaganda campaign in support of Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg's candidacy in the 1925 presidential elections. While, in this instance, their support went to one specific candidate, Hindenburg filled the role of stand in for the type of politician Pittinger and his men felt should rule in Germany – a person who put country above party. "We are not allowed to ask, if the candidate belongs to this or that party, if he is Catholic or Protestant, if he promises to us all and everything. We are only allowed to ask: is he a veritable German man?"⁸² The former World War I military commander stood in sharp contrast to the party politicians who, in their view, conspired with each other to maintain the republican governing coalition. In particular Pittinger's organization, and their allies,

⁸⁰ Wer stützt uns in einen neuen Krieg?, and Wer rüstet zum Bürgerkriege?, Severings Kieler Rede, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1/2.

⁸¹ Schwarz-rot-gold gegen Schwarz-weiß-rot, *ibid.*

⁸² Rundschreiben der Vereinigten Vaterländische Verbände Bayerns, 11. April 1925, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 11/1.

targeted the Catholic Center Party, which they accused of not only betraying their country, but their faith as well.⁸³

Propaganda was not only put out during election time, but at any point that there was an issue of public policy of which *Bayern und Reich*, or the United Patriotic Leagues, did not approve. When the Treaty of Locarno was signed in 1925 the patriotic movement, and Pittinger's group in particular, reacted negatively to the news. Despite the agreement's positive effect on Germany's relations with the western allies, France in particular, *Bayern und Reich* and its allies attacked the treaty in no uncertain terms. For them, Locarno only underlined the status quo in Europe as epitomized by the Treaty of Versailles. The guarantees made concerning the country's frontiers in the west did not extend to the east, the area that most concerned Pittinger and his men. Moreover, by signing the treaty, Stresemann had only given official imprimatur to the "war guilt lie" that lay at the center of the post-war arrangements. *Bayern und Reich*, indeed the entire patriotic movement, pledged to continue to work to overturn the peace settlements by any means necessary.⁸⁴

What this meant in practice was to continue to use propaganda against the Paris settlements. The Treaty of Versailles in particular was always a major topic in the organization's efforts. Most materials put out by the group attacked the treaty, and its role in creating the conditions in which Germany and Bavaria found itself. For instance the German calendar for the year 1925 produced drawings and cartoons, fifty-three in all, attacking the agreement. Additionally, the written material was similarly vehement.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Locarno, Stichworte zur Aufklärung, October 1925, *ibid.*

“Think of Versailles! Think of it daily, what a humiliating disgrace has been done to us there, how we have been robbed and plundered, how it made us defenseless and dishonorable! The Versailles peace is no peace, but war, no treaty, but a breach of human rights.”⁸⁵

The Beer Hall Putsch showed the limits of paramilitary politics as practiced by *Bund Bayern und Reich*. Closely aligned with the government, and with an ideological program that aimed somewhere between the old imperial system and the racial fantasies of *völkisch* thinkers, *Bayern und Reich* was never in a position to act on the obvious wishes of their membership. The group’s lack of action, backed up by the army, delegitimized it in the eyes of some. In the Putsch’s aftermath, the organization charted a different course, one that forced it to eschew many of the trappings of its original mission. By the time that happened of course, the situation in Germany had changed, and even in the patriotic movement the momentum had shifted to Hitler and the Nazi Party.

⁸⁵ Deutscher Kalender 1925, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 1/1.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

When Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933 it marked the culmination of over a decade of agitation on the part of patriotic (*vaterländisch*) organizations in Bavaria, who had hoped to see German democracy overturned since the very first stirrings of revolution in November 1918. The hatred they felt towards the Weimar Republic, which they always identified with the political left and Marxism drove the proliferation of *Freikorps*, paramilitaries, and political parties in the republic's early years. The *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* were an integral part of this development, at different times, and their existence provided an institutional framework by which *völkisch* ideas gained widespread acceptance. That many members of the Civil Guards and *Bayern und Reich* found their way into the Nazi Party or, at the very least, voted and joined affiliated organizations stands a testament to the role such groups played in the formative years after 1918.

Many of the men who played such a large role in the history of these two organizations continued to participate in the politics of the patriotic movement, but often with less prominence than before. Georg Escherich, the former leader of the *Einwohnerwehr*, spent much of 1922 and 1923 in semi-retirement from politics. His opinions on the issues of the day were still sought after by prominent people, but kept his distance from the patriotic groups in the months preceding the Beer Hall Putsch.¹ In the late 1920s he returned to patriotic politics with the creation of a new group, Bavarian

¹ Escherich an Hugo Stinnes, BHSA, V, NL Escherich, B. 32.

Homeland Protection, but this outfit did not last long.² Escherich then went into permanent retirement, dying of natural causes in 1941.³

His second in command, Rudolf Kanzler, continued to be involved in the patriotic movement after the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr*, though not in a prominent way. He became involved for a while with the paramilitary group “*Treu-Oberland*,” though it appears he never held a large position within it.⁴ Retiring from public life, Kanzler returned to prominence in 1931 with his memoirs over his years in the *Einwohnerwehr*, *Bavaria’s Struggle against Bolshevism*. In the 1936 he was tried in a Munich political court accused of swindling a former associate.⁵ Like Escherich he died of natural causes in 1956.

Dr. Otto Pittinger, the Regensburg health inspector who was the head of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, continued to be a controversial figure in the patriotic movement. In 1924, in addition to his duties as head of *Bayern und Reich*, Pittinger served as a star witness in the Hitler-Ludendorff trial. There he testified to Hitler and Ludendorff’s knowledge of government warnings not to undertake a putsch against the state.⁶ His testimony did not make him popular with many in the patriotic movement, nor were his innovations accepted within *Bund Bayern und Reich*. The drop off in membership and in

² *Landauer Volksblatt*, “Politisches aus aller Welt,” 21. March 1929, Nr. 67, BHSA, V, Sammlung Personen 3672.

³ *Völkischer Beobachter*, “Oberforstrat Escherich Gestorben,” 29. August 1941, Nr. 242, *ibid*.

⁴ Aufruf, BHSA, IV, EWB, NL Kanzler, B. 17.

⁵ *Völkischer Beobachter*, “Politischer Prozeß,” 14. February 1936, Nr. 45, BHSA, V, Sammlung Personen 4017.

⁶ Pittinger Affidavit, 27. November 1923, BHSA, IV, BuR, B. 16/1.

financial support permanently weakened the group, and in 1928 it was folded into the *Stahlhelm*.⁷ Pittinger however did not live to see it. He died in 1926 of natural causes.⁸

Gustav von Kahr, who did so much to foster the development of the *Einwohnerwehr*, and whose actions on November 8 and 9, 1923 thwarted Hitler and his plans, was essentially retired from politics after 1924. Pensioned off as a civil servant, Kahr lived in Munich comfortably until June 30, 1934, when he was arrested by the Gestapo and SS. Taken to Dachau as part of the round up surrounding the event known as the “Röhm Putsch,” Kahr was tortured and killed for his role in putting down the Beer Hall Putsch. His badly mutilated body was discovered a couple of days later near the camp.⁹

Ernst Röhm, who had been such a help to both the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* in his role as weapon’s liaison officer, continued to play an important role in the patriotic movement and Nazi Party right up until his death. Not tried like the other conspirators of the Beer Hall Putsch, Röhm spent the next year trying to set up a new paramilitary organization, the *Frontbann*, and later was elected to the German *Reichstag* on the ticket of the *Deutschvölkischer Block*. Later Röhm left Germany to serve as a soldier of fortune in South America, before returning in 1931 to take command of the S.A. Under his leadership the organization grew rapidly until by 1934 it had nearly a million members. Always controversial and difficult to handle, Röhm hoped to see his men supplant the regular German army once Hitler came to power. In 1934, hoping to secure army support for his succession to the presidency once Hindenburg died, Hitler

⁷ Horst G.W. Nusser, *Konservative Wehrverbände in Bayern, Preussen, und Österreich; 1918-1933: mit einer Biographie von Forstrat Georg Escherich, 1870-1941*, (Munich: Nusser Verlag, 1973), 262-6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Max Gallo, *The Knight of Long Knives*, trans. Lily Emmet, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 238-9.

made an arrangement with army leaders and had Röhm murdered as part of a general purge of the S.A.¹⁰

The murder of Röhm and Kahr at the hands of the Nazis, and with Hitler's approval, marked the final postscript to the patriotic movement. Killed by an erstwhile ally from the faction's early years, both men found themselves as captive to events as Escherich, Kanzler, and Pittinger had been before them.¹¹ Instead of leading to a renewal of Germany under *völkisch* precepts, the patriotic movement had been co-opted and superseded by a political organization that shared much of their worldview, but differed in ways so profound that it often led to division as much as unity. In the end, the ideological program of group's like the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* could not compete with the dynamism of the Nazis and this helped lead to the withering of the Bavarian paramilitaries.

This study of the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* has looked at the development of each group in terms of its ideology, its membership, and activities. Each in its own way had a distinctive history, but contained characteristics that made it similar to other patriotic entities. The primary similarities between these two paramilitary formations and the others can be seen in its loathing of Marxist Socialism in all its forms, an aggressive German nationalism, distrust, if not outright hatred, of parliamentary democracy, and a belief that there needed to be a return to an earlier vision of the German

¹⁰ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1998), 231, 265, 499-506, & 511-4.

¹¹ In the case of Ernst Röhm he was not only outmaneuvered by Hitler *vis-à-vis* the army, but within the Nazi leadership by more ambitious lieutenants like Hermann Goering and Heinrich Himmler, Kershaw, *ibid*, .

state, or German culture, or to the ideals of 1914. These major ideas, for a long time, united the patriotic movement and gave it coherence.

Patriotic paramilitaries had other traits in common as well. Most were begun by men who were part of the lower to middle reaches of the Bavarian state bureaucracy. These were people who, had the old regime continued past 1918, might have one day advanced to the highest reaches of the state and its bureaucracy. The revolution seemed to close the door on further advancement, and this partly motivated people like Gustav von Kahr, Rudolf Kanzler, and Otto Pittinger in creating, or helping set up various *Freikorps* and paramilitary units. A cozy relationship with the Bavarian army was another major commonality amongst patriotic formations, though this relationship was often one sided.

However it would be the differences in how the two organizations developed and operated that provide the key to their importance in the history of the radical right in Bavaria. This is a crucial point, for each group evolved in a particular historical setting that influenced not only how it reacted to the state, but also to the events of importance in the early republic. The *Einwohnerwehr*, organized in Bavaria following the events of May 1919, served the function of an umbrella organization. Not only did it come to supersede the various *Freikorps* units that had been created to deal with the *Räterepublik*, but it took in whole organizations like the *Freikorps Oberland*, which found itself fighting on the *Reich's* eastern borderlands. *Bund Bayern und Reich*, on the other hand, had been created out of a need to provide stability to a fluid situation following the dissolution of the Civil Guards. Its existence was tied to the need to keep as much of the old paramilitary structure intact as possible. That it was eventually unable to do so,

spoke to changed circumstances within the Bavaria amongst those predisposed to patriotic and *völkisch* ideas.

Four major conclusions can be asserted in relation to Georg Escherich's *Einwohnerwehr*. The first of these was that the Civil Guards were functionally *völkisch* in terms of their world view. Despite the regulation's insistence that the organizations only function was to protect the state, and all state-supporting elements within it, in reality the leadership carefully crafted its ideology and activities to support traditional social and political arrangements. For them the uprising of November 1918 was just as troublesome as that of April and May of 1919. That the new political order came from Social Democrats, first in an alliance between the SPD and USPD, later a revolt by more radical elements of the USPD in the *Räterepublik*, struck them as a misfortune to both Bavaria and Germany. The country's new masters were seen alternately as robbers, swindlers, and murderers who were prepared to give the Fatherland over to its enemies rather than work for its welfare. USPD and KPD members were routinely denied entry into the guards, and many SPD members also had problems reconciling the worldview of the *EW*'s units with their own political beliefs. For the leadership, the political left was outside the 'people's community,' and the only reason Escherich and Kanzler tolerated the SPD during the *Einwohnerwehr*'s existence was due to the fact that majority Socialist governments were in power both in Munich and Berlin. When the moment of truth came in March 1920, Escherich and his allies were just as willing to threaten Social Democratic leaders with violence just as they had with the Independent Socialists.

Another aspect of its *völkisch* stance could be seen in the thinly veiled antisemitism that prevailed in many local units. Officially non-sectarian, as well as non-

political, Civil Guard members and their leaders frequently ignored regulations to take in members regardless of religion. Jews were harassed in many rural units, most significantly in the Chiemgau, which was a stronghold for the *Einwohnerwehr*. Such incidents show that strong antisemitic tendencies were prevalent in Escherich's organization. Several members of the top leadership were broadly sympathetic to *völkisch* ideas and many, if not all, subscribed to the ultra-nationalist views of the Pan-German League, whose own leader, Heinrich Claß, often spoke out against Jews using the most abusive language.

As was the case with many of the men who joined more radical organizations like the *Freikorps* later-*Bund Oberland* and the Nazi Party, *Einwohnerwehr* members were deeply impacted by the First World War and its aftermath. Like many Germans who held to *völkisch* beliefs during the old Reich, the onset of the *Burgfrieden* in 1914 came to symbolize for them the true unification of Germany, when citizens of all stripes put aside political differences to fight a common enemy – a true people's community. Defeat and revolution tore apart their imagined vision of the *Reich*. For people like Rudolf Kanzler, the most important work of the guards was in reviving this spirit. Their propaganda frequently depicted the political environment of the new republic, particularly that emanating from the left, as essentially un-German. It was vituperative, contentious, and totally free of the unity that Escherich and his men believed necessary to return Germany to a state of order and power. They believed only by putting aside party politics, i.e. adopting their ideological world view, could the Fatherland be revived.

Often this worldview was wedded to older concepts of homeland and white-blue Bavaria, something that was not prevalent in more radical organizations. This was

illustrated most clearly in the articles of the *Einwohnerwehr* paper *Heimatland* as it related to the first state shooting festival. The articles written about that event tied current events, the dispute over weapons, the fears of a more centralized *Reich*, and the need to return to the ideals of 1914 with an older tradition of solid Bavarian patriotism that described traditional Bavarian citizens upholding their rights and weapons in much the same way as citizens had done for decades and centuries. It also manifested itself in the group's obsession with the rights of the state within the new constitution written at Weimar, a document that they found to be overly centralized and detrimental to Munich's position in a federal German state.

The second major conclusion is that, over the course of its history, the *Einwohnerwehr* became a significant power player in the Bavarian state. Originally, this had not been the intention of the Social Democratic leaders who helped bring the Civil Guards into existence. They wanted a reliable force that could be called upon to supplement the army and defend the state. In Bavaria, however, factors came together that allowed Escherich and Kanzler to create a de facto independent entity there. The most decisive of these developments was removing the guards from the outright supervision of the army. By removing government oversight, while taking its money and arms, the *Einwohnerwehr* could develop its own practices and procedures. One can see the effect of this in terms of ideology where, as mentioned above, many local units discriminated against workers and Jews, even though the regulations allowed membership from those groups.

The extraordinary leeway given to the Civil Guards helped foster a sense of arrogance and entitlement amongst many of the men. Members of local units were often

involved in trouble with the law owing to the zeal with which they carried out their activities. Workers and working class districts tended to be targeted no matter the circumstance, economic or political, and this created tensions between the organization and the SPD Hofmann government, as both clashed bitterly over a number of issues. Eventually the acquiescence shown to Escherich's group came back to haunt the government as the guards played a decisive role in the events of the Kapp Putsch in Munich.

During the tumultuous days of March 1920, Escherich is said to have boasted that he had a hundred thousand men behind him. The implicit threat in that statement illustrates, perhaps better than any other, how powerful the *Einwohnerwehr* had become. Its power and influence only grew from there. Under the new government of Gustav von Kahr, the regional governor of Upper Bavaria at the time, Escherich's association was able to expand its influence. It moved into Austria with the *Organisation Kanzler* and into Silesia and northern Germany with the *Organisation Escherich*. Despite the political opposition from Berlin and the northern states, and the illegality of such activities, no sanctions were placed on the group. In fact the Kahr government went out of its way to defend the *Einwohnerwehr* against both the *Reich* government and the allied powers who had come to take a dim view of the paramilitary's activities.

Escherich's organization was not only a power player in Bavarian politics, but increasingly became bolder in its political program. This development, which went against the group's regulations, was a consequence of its expansion. Following the Kapp Putsch, Escherich and the Bavarian leadership came to believe that there needed to be a continued 'patriotic' presence in northern Germany. The need, as they saw it, helped

lead to the founding of the *Orgesch*, which was to keep alive a nation-wide patriotic movement. The criticisms leveled against the *Reich* government, coming under the auspices of this new entity actually had been present in the months prior to the Kapp Putsch, when propaganda materials out of Munich criticized the actions of democratic leaders in Berlin, and in Munich. Thus the Civil Guards, despite their protestations, became one of the focal points of resistance to the Weimar government, and its constitution.

Finally, the *Einwohnerwehr* became the means by which patriotic ideas were spread beyond the borders of Bavaria. The existence of a strong ultra-nationalist organization in Bavaria became crucial after March 1920 when energetic action by workers, and then the *Reich* government, had broken the power of far-right groups north of the Main. The activities of the *Orgesch*, founded in conjunction with the *Stahlhelm*, and the *Orka* (a sub group of the *Organisation Escherich*), helped to maintain the patriotic movement. In many ways they were crucial in helping spread it. Under the guidance of the *Orka*, the *Heimwehr* movement was established in Austria and would become a crucial player in politics there over the next decade. The *Orgesch* also helped to organize resistance to Polish ‘encroachments’ in Silesia, setting up numerous umbrella groups to coordinate fighting units, and sending *Freikorps* units from Bavaria, most notably *Freikorps Oberland*, to assist the Silesians.

The dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr* in the summer of 1921 opened up a vacuum in the patriotic movement, one that was not easily filled. Due to pressure from the allied powers, the Bavarian government could not set up a semi-official organization tied to the state, as the Civil Guards had been. In its place would come a plethora of

paramilitaries, each only a fraction of the size of the former *Einwohnerwehr* and without its influence. The fracturing of the nationalist right that resulted would characterize the far-right, now far more contentious amongst itself, right up until the Beer Hall Putsch and beyond.

Bund Bayern und Reich, which came into existence in this milieu, quickly became the most prominent of these organizations, but was different in its character and activities than the old *Einwohnerwehr*. The most significant difference between the two groups was that Pittinger's association was much more radical in an overt way. The *Einwohnerwehr* had been functionally *völkisch*, but *Bayern und Reich* was explicit in proclaiming this orientation. Its program spoke of creating a racist Bavaria and Germany, excluded Jews from its membership and spoke of eliminating their influence in the *Reich*, and sought to overthrow the Weimar Constitution and Republic. Anti-Marxism continued to be a major point in the program, just like it had been with the Civil Guards, but now consciously included the SPD in its list of enemies. They also wanted to see the expansion of the *Reich* into a greater German state.

In addition to being a more ideological organization than the old *Einwohnerwehr*, *Bund Bayern und Reich* also was much more dependent upon its state sponsors in a direct way. In fact without support from the army, which became, after the dissolution of the guards, the primary – and secret – means of support for the patriotic movement, it is doubtful that Otto Pittinger's group would have made a major impact. Military support allowed money to flow into the health inspector's coffers. Their decision to deal with his organization, both the *Organisation Pittinger* and *Bund Bayern und Reich*, as the

exclusive paramilitary in the state helped to swell membership following its creation in 1922.

The backing of the army however, could not stop ideological infighting within the patriotic movement, or within Pittinger's group, and this fact made *Bayern und Reich* more dependent upon the army than ever before. The struggles between Pittinger and *Bund Oberland*, the dispute with Ernst Röhm over weapons and funds, and the strife between the United Patriotic Leagues and the Patriotic Working Group/Fighting League ordinarily might have spelled the death knell of any organization, and *Bayern und Reich* suffered many defections from within its own ranks, both members and whole units, during the year. During all of this the *Reichswehr* maintained its strong connection to Pittinger and his men, siding with him in nearly all of these disputes. They also took over control of the military arm of the organization, a discordant note that denoted lack of faith in Pittinger and also only served to bind *Bayern und Reich* even more closely to the army.

The fruits of such a relationship could be seen in the group's reaction to the Beer Hall Putsch. Actively supporting a 'March on Berlin,' when that seemed a possibility, *Bayern und Reich* backed off the moment the negotiations between Kahr and far-right activists in northern Germany broke down. Like the other associations, *Bayern und Reich* was warned not to undertake any operations that would force the army's hand, a promise they kept. Of the major paramilitaries in Bavaria in 1923, Pittinger's organization was the only one that did not participate in the putsch and actively worked to squelch it outside Munich by preventing outside reinforcements from reaching the capital.

Another striking characteristic of *Bund Bayern und Reich* was its seeming provincialism, a tendency which caused a great deal of strife for the organization. Pittinger's strong inclinations towards a federal constitution, in which Bavaria maintained the rights it had under the old Bismarckian constitution, was a hallmark of the group, indeed all the associations united under the United Patriotic League banner. They sharply opposed further centralization of the German state, which was one of their major complaints about the Weimar constitution. It also fed their paranoia about a possible strike against Bavaria from the national government, and helped make the case for their continued existence as a prop of the Bavarian state.

However, their adherence to federalism and states' rights came under sharp attack from other entities on the far right. The organizations around Hitler and the Fighting League often accused them, wrongly, of pursuing separatist politics at the expense of the *Reich*. This became the subject of numerous investigations, both in the *Bund Oberland* controversy and the Röhm-Pittinger dispute. In each case Pittinger was accused of dealing with foreign emissaries to divide Bavaria from Germany, whether to create a Danubian state or a sovereign state on its own. The investigations into these allegations exonerated Pittinger in each case, but the rumors would persist right through the Beer Hall Putsch.

Finally, *Bund Bayern und Reich* found itself increasingly outflanked by the Nazi Party and groups affiliated with the Fighting League. This became a huge problem for Pittinger and the leadership in late 1922 and throughout 1923 as the situation in Germany deteriorated precipitously. In the Ruhr Crisis of 1923 *Bayern und Reich* found itself agreeing with the strategy outlined by the government, one that seemed ineffectual and

doomed to failure by Hitler and his allies. Their attacks and simple slogans, coupled with the crippling hyperinflation brought about a shift to the more radical paramilitaries and their spokesman.

One consequence of this was that *Bayern und Reich* began to lose members. As an association that had the restoration of monarchical government as one of its goals, there was already a perception of Pittinger's organization as solidly establishmentarian, despite the radical nature of their program and their willingness to advocate for and plan the overthrow of democracy. Despite the leadership's best efforts, many of the younger members found their way into Fighting League-affiliated groups, and many local units disassociated themselves with *Bayern und Reich* for what they perceived was its lack of radicalism. Many of the leaders of these outfits became enamored with the revolutionary ardor of the Nazi Party, and its leader, something that Pittinger and his men could not replicate due to their beliefs, the lack of anyone to match Hitler's charisma, and the ties that bound *Bayern und Reich* to the army and state.

In the end, both the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich* helped prepare the groundwork that later bore fruit for Hitler. By adopting the world view of *völkisch* ideologues, consciously or not, they helped acculturate many Germans of varied backgrounds to the idea that the Weimar Republic, and the society it was trying to create, was essentially un-German and thus worthy of destruction. The paramilitaries of the early republic in Bavaria essentially helped this process along by engaging in violence against organizations on the left, and against workers, by propaganda activities, and by plotting to violently overthrow the government. Even though they did not succeed in many of their endeavors, they did succeed in de-legitimizing democracy for many

Bavarians who might have, under better circumstances, given the new government a chance. This was the true legacy of the *Einwohnerwehr* and *Bund Bayern und Reich*.

Appendix A

Chronology of Major Events

1918

January 1918 – Demonstrations in Munich led by SPD and USPD leaders. Kurt Eisner jailed after protest.

October 1918 – Kurt Eisner released from jail in Bavaria.

November 7, 1918 – Joint rally of SPD and USPD in Munich leads to revolution forcing the last Wittelsbach king to flee. Bavaria becomes a Free State, Kurt Eisner becomes head of the government, and the first Worker, Soldier, and Farmer councils set up.

December 1918 – Rudolf Kanzler forms first paramilitary militia in Rosenheim.

1919

January 12, 1919 – Parliamentary elections lead to defeat for Eisner's USPD.

February 21, 1919 – Kurt Eisner assassinated while entering Bavarian Diet.

March 1919 – the establishment of the Hofmann government and the radicalization of the councils.

April 5, 1919 – *Räterepublik* (council republic) set up in Munich, Hofmann government flees to Bamberg.

April 8, 1919 – First attempted assault on Munich is defeated by council forces

April 14, 1919 – Hofmann government calls for creation of militias to deal with *Räterepublik*.

May 1, 1919 – Government forces retake Munich and suppress the *Räterepublik*.

May 17, 1919 – Hofmann government calls for creation of *Einwohnerwehr* in Bavaria.

May-August 1919 – Organization of the *Einwohnerwehr* in Bavaria under Georg Escherich with help of the Bavarian *Reichswehr* and Governor of Upper Bavaria, Gustav von Kahr.

August-December 1919 – Spread of *Einwohnerwehr* throughout Bavaria, difficulties with workers entering the organization, and problems with SPD Hofmann government.

1920

February 21, 1920 – Meeting in Munich to discuss the creation of self-defense organizations in Austria. Followed by meeting in Salzburg on February 28.

March 12-22, 1920 – Kapp Putsch in Bavaria resulting in the resignation of the Hofmann government, the creation of a conservative government under Gustav von Kahr, general strikes in Bavaria, and the suppression of industrial workers in northern Bavaria, particularly in Hof.

April-June 1920 – Founding and organization of the *Organisation Escherich (Orgesch)*.

April-August 1920 – Creation of *Heimwehr* in Austria under auspices of *Organisation Kanzler (Orka)*.

July 9, 1920 – Interallied Military Commission demands the dissolution of the *Einwohnerwehr* and the *Orgesch*.

August 7, 1920 – Law for the Disarmament of the Population passed by the *Reichstag*.

August-September 1920 – Antisemitic incidents in Rosenheim *Einwohnerwehr*.

September 25-30, 1920 – The first *Einwohnerwehr* state shooting festival (*Landesschießen*) held in Munich, including a large rally at the *Königsplatz* on September 26.

1921

May 5, 1921 – Allied powers issue ultimatum to the Bavarian government calling for the disbandment of the *Einwohnerwehr*.

June 1921 – *Einwohnerwehr* disbanded, *Organisation Pittinger (OrgPi)*, as successor to *Einwohnerwehr*, created on June 12.

June-November 1921 – Feud between Georg Escherich and Otto Pittinger over control of the *OrgPi*.

1922

January-July 1922 – Feud between Pittinger and Josef Römer of the *Bund Oberland*.

April 1922 – Creation of *Bund Bayern und Reich*.

Summer 1922 – Creation of the United Patriotic Leagues to coordinate all patriotic organizations

1923

January-December 1923 – French occupation of the Ruhr due to German unwillingness to pay war reparations. German government adopts passive resistance in Ruhr, then decides to print money, destroying German currency. Country slides into economic chaos.

January 28, 1923 – Nazi Party and other organizations leave United Patriotic Leagues to form Working Group of Patriotic Fighting Leagues.

January-March 1923 – Several local units leave *Bund Bayern und Reich* to form alliances with Hitler and Working Group.

January-June 1923 – Röhm-Pittinger dispute over questions of competence and the misallocation of funds further divides patriotic organizations in Bavaria.

Spring 1923 – *Bund Bayern und Reich* encourages changes to Bavarian constitution that would have overthrown republic in the state.

May 1, 1923 – Planned disruption of May Day celebrations failed, causes dissent within the Working Group.

Summer 1923 – Bavarian government having greater difficulties with all patriotic groups, especially the Nazi Party.

September 26, 1923 – Gustav von Kahr named General State Commissioner in Bavaria with dictatorial powers.

October 1923 – Efforts to unite all patriotic organizations around Kahr begins and fails. Kahr resumes his feud with Berlin and plots with patriotic circles in northern Germany for a putsch against the Reich government.

November 7, 1923 – Having failed in negotiations with ultra-nationalist circles in Berlin, Kahr, Otto von Lossow, and Hans von Seisser obtain a pledge from all patriotic organizations, including *Bund Bayern und Reich* and the Nazi Party, to abstain from any coup attempt.

November 8 & 9, 1923 – Hitler, Ludendorff, and the Fighting League attempt to seize power in the Beer Hall Putsch. *Bund Bayern und Reich* remains loyal to Kahr and works to subvert the coup attempt after a period of confusion.

November-December 1923 – Aftermath of the Beer Hall Putsch. Kahr bans Nazi Party and Fighting League groups and obtains loyalty from *Bund Bayern und Reich* and other patriotic organizations. Discontent within *Bayern und Reich* with Kahr and the leadership of Pittinger begins to surface.

1924

January-March 1924 – Bavarian government begins to organize the *Deutscher Notbann* to serve as a reliable self-defense force. *Bund Bayern und Reich* members allowed to join, but not do political work while members of the force.

February 1924 – *Bund Bayern und Reich* continues to urge constitutional reforms that will undercut democracy in Bavaria.

February 26, 1924 – Hitler-Ludendorff Trial begins in Munich. *Bund Bayern und Reich* head Otto Pittinger is a witness in the trial.

March-July 1924 – Continuing organizational issues for *Bund Bayern und Reich* as local units defect and a reorganization of the leadership is carried out.

1925-1928

1926 – The head of *Bund Bayern und Reich*, Dr. Otto Pittinger, dies of natural causes.

1928 – Losing members, *Bund Bayern und Reich* is folded into the *Stahlhelm*.

Appendix B

Glossary of Important Terms

Anschluß	-	Term refers to the desire for union between Austria and Germany amongst many people from both countries in the years after World War I.
Auflösung	-	A term meaning dissolution, this referred to the struggle to disband the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> in 1920-1921.
Bund Bayern und Reich	-	League of Bavaria and the Reich, founded by Otto Pittinger in April 1922 and was the most significant paramilitary force in Bavaria after the dissolution of the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> .
Bund Oberland	-	Formed out of the <i>Freikorps Oberland</i> , which had helped in the “liberation” of Munich, Bund Oberland’s leadership became embroiled in a feud with <i>Bayern und Reich</i> head Pittinger and later allied with Hitler in the Beer Hall Putsch.
Burgfrieden	-	A term that means civil peace, this was used to connote the intense national feeling in Germany brought about by the outbreak of the First World War.
Deutscher Notbann	-	Paramilitary unit created by the Bavarian government in the wake of the Beer Hall Putsch to ensure a more reliable emergency force.
Einwohnerwehr	-	Civilian Defense Guards, or force, set up in the months after the suppression of the <i>Räterepublik</i> in Munich.

Entwaffnung	-	Term meaning disarmament, this term was used in the dispute over the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> .
Freikorps	-	Translated literally as Free Corps, these units were made up of ex-soldiers who followed charismatic officers. They helped suppress the Spartacist Revolt, the <i>Räterepublik</i> , and fought the new Polish state in the east.
Gauleiter	-	District leader in the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> and <i>Bund Bayern und Reich</i> and was later used to denote a district leader in the Nazi Party.
Germanen Orden	-	Pre-World War I <i>völkisch</i> group that was a predecessor of the Thule Society.
Heimat	-	Homeland, often used interchangeably with fatherland.
Heimatland	-	This was the official news organ of the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> .
Heimwehr	-	Name given to the Austrian paramilitary organization created by the <i>Orka</i> in 1920.
Kampfbund	-	This was the name of fighting league created by Hitler and Ludendorff in September 1923, would participate in the Beer Hall Putsch.
KPD	-	An acronym for the Communist Party of Germany, this party formed after the war and was opposed to the Nazi Party and the SPD alike.
Kreisleiter	-	This was a Regional leader in the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> and <i>Bund Bayern und Reich</i> .
Landespolizei	-	A militarized police force created in the early 1920s in Bavaria, its leader, Hans von Seisser, was taken hostage

		by Hitler at the beginning of the Beer Hall Putsch.
Landesschießen	-	This was a state shooting festival held in Munich by the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> in September 1920.
Notpolizei	-	An emergency police force created by the Bavarian government in spring 1923.
Organisation Escherich	-	Group created by Georg Escherich and Franz Seldte in the Spring of 1920, which was designed to coordinate all patriotic groups. Known by the acronym <i>Orgesch</i> .
Organisation Kanzler	-	A subset of the <i>Orgesch</i> , this group helped to organize paramilitary units in Austria in 1920. Known by the acronym <i>Orka</i> .
Organisation Pittinger	-	Group created upon the dissolution of the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> , was intended as a coordinating agency for other paramilitaries. Known by its acronym <i>OrgPi</i> .
Ortsgruppe	-	This was a local cell of both the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> and <i>Bund Bayern und Reich</i> .
Räterepublik	-	The council republic that developed in the aftermath of the Eisner assassination and which is known more popularly as the Munich Soviet.
Reichswehr	-	Name given to the German army during the Weimar Republic.
Reichsbahn	-	The name of the national German railway during the Weimar Republic.
Ruhe und Ordnung	-	Term that was often used by the <i>Einwohnerwehr</i> to justify their actions.

SPD	-	An acronym for the Social Democratic Party, which was the political party representing Germany's working class and who took power in Germany following World War I.
Stahlhelm	-	Translated as Steel Helmet, this organization began as a paramilitary, but also served as an advocate for veterans. Akin to the American Legion.
USPD	-	An acronym for the Independent Social Democratic Party, which was formed during World War I as a result of the schism within the SPD. They took power in a coalition government in Bavaria following World War I.
Vaterländisch Movement	-	Patriotic movement that included a number of paramilitary organizations and political parties in post-1918 Bavaria
Völkisch Nationalism	-	A racially-based form of nationalism developed in post-unification Germany. Völkisch thinkers emphasized German superiority and preeminence while denigrating all those who did not belong the racial community, or whose political viewpoints were at variance with their own.
Volksgemeinschaft	-	A term referring to the concept of the community of the people, where it was believed that all Germans would live in harmony despite differences of class or religion.
Wandervögel	-	A pre-World War I German youth movement that emphasized getting in touch with nature, and was suffused with <i>völkisch</i> ideology.

Appendix C

Map of Bavaria



Source: Travels Through Germany website: www.travelsthroughgermany.com/bayern-map.htm

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- 100 411 Parteien, Politische Vereine
- 100 423 Frontbann
- 100 424 Wikingbund
- 100 428 Bund Oberland
- 100 478 Entwaffnung der Bevölkerung
- 102 380 Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr
- 102 381 Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr
- 102 382 Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr
- 102 383 Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr
- 102 384 Privatkorrespondenz Dr. von Kahr

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- 95 Deutscher Schutz- und Wanderbund
- 96 Jungdeutscher Orden
- 98 Bund Wiking
- 99 Bund Bayern und Reich
- 100 Verschiedene Vaterländische Verbände
- 101 Vaterländische Verbände Bayerns

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- Bund 4 Einwohnerwehr in der Presse
- Bund 5 Organisation Escherich

Bund 6 Organisation Escherich in der Presse
 Bund 13 Akten der Leitung der Einwohnerwehr München
 Bund 14 Einwohnerwehren München, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Inngau,
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