

## **Nationalizing the Officer Corps: Prestige, Identity, and Civil-Military Relations in Interwar Czechoslovakia**

The prestige and social standing of the interwar Czechoslovak officer corps were shaped by the competing influences of the officially rejected yet enduring Habsburg military legacy and the democratic ideals of the new republic, as represented by the tradition of the Czechoslovak Legions. From the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 to the Munich Crisis of 1938, the status of officers evolved in response to broader societal and political transformations, chiefly by the process of nationalization. This operated on two levels: first, the officer corps was redefined from an insular military caste into a body of state officials under democratic civilian control; second, this successor of anational Austro-Hungarian officer corps gradually became dominated by ethnic Czechs, reflecting the broader trends within this multinational, yet aspiring to be a nation-state.

How did the evolutions of the Czechoslovak officer corps affect its prestige and social role within a democratic society, and how did it interact with broader political and nationalizing processes? The efforts to integrate officers into a national society coexisted with officers perceiving themselves as a distinct professional estate, shaped by a supposedly retrograde sense of honour. Particularly after 1933, the perception of officers as defenders of the state contributed to the expansion of their prestige and public role, even as scepticism toward militarism remained.

Examining military regulations, disciplinary proceedings, professional journals, and public discourse, this paper sheds light on the evolving relationship between the officer corps and Czechoslovak society. It highlights the attempts to reconcile civilian oversight with military exclusivity while navigating the complexities of nationalization in a multinational state. Structures of hierarchy and notions of professional exclusivity persisted, shaping internal military culture and external public perceptions, through negotiation between institutional continuity, political necessity, and shifting societal expectations.

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**Abstract:**

**Title: “Social Democrat Emmy Freundlich’s 1916 challenge to the idea of warrior homesteads”**

Warrior homesteads (*Kriegerheimstätten*) were a widely discussed idea linked to visions of post-war housing in Imperial Germany and the Habsburg Empire during the First World War. The concept of warrior homesteads originated from pre-war ideas on housing promoted by the German land reform movement. While these ideas had been marginal in the Habsburg government’s policy circles before the war, they became influential in 1915/16 in the name of meeting the needs of returning soldiers and their families.

Scholars have addressed debates on warrior homesteads. Yet, there is a gap in historiography regarding the social democrats’ discussion of them. This paper contributes to filling this gap. My proposed case study focuses on the Viennese social democrat Emmy Freundlich and her critique of warrior homesteads. The paper argues that Freundlich rejected the movement’s goal and way of posing the problem. She criticised the warrior homesteads movement for turning housing into a nationalist means to increase population, ensure economic self-sufficiency, and raise national and military strength. Instead, Freundlich argued that the aim of housing provision had to be well-being and care based on equality. She also repudiated the movement’s proposed solution. The paper offers an explanation of why Freundlich rejected how the movement envisioned the relationship between the state and the economy, which, in her eyes, led to the economic bondage of workers.

I outline Freundlich’s role as a social democrat and woman in criticising proposals for warrior homesteads. I also discuss and offer a possible explanation for the ambiguity of some social democrats on the issue of warrior homesteads. As sources, I employ minutes of conference proceedings, letters, newspaper articles and published works.

Ultimately, this case study aims to contribute to our understanding of debates about the relationship between the state and the economy during the First World War.

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### **War disability and production of urban space in interwar Polish cities**

The paper places the city in the centre of the analysis and focuses on the interconnection between disability and urban social space. It explores how war disability was constructed by the state and society and experienced by disabled veterans in interwar Lviv, Kraków and Łódź. The complex historical legacy of Poland resulted in a heterogeneous veteran population that had fought on different sides but became citizens of the same state. The territory of the Second Polish Republic incorporated parts of the former Russian, German and Austrian Empires, but the permanent borders of Poland were established only in 1923 after the Polish-Soviet War and a series of borderland conflicts. The return of hundreds of thousands of disabled soldiers and their reintegration into society was one of the challenges for the post-war government.

The modern city revolves around the concept of circulation (including the physical mobility of people and economic circulation) and around visual monumentality. Consequently, those factors shaped social and economic relationships and created a disabling urban environment. As the Polish state transitioned from democracy to authoritarianism, the cities went through a similar political trajectory. At the same time, there were significant differences between them: the different imperial heritage, war experience, economic specialisation, ideological profiles and symbolic place in the Polish national narrative. By studying the production of urban space and exploring the physical space of everyday practices, representational space and representations of space, I aim to bridge the top-down approach with the examination of the lived experience of war disability in multiethnic Polish cities. The paper argues that disabled veterans were not passive beneficiaries of the welfare programs, and focusing on the inclusionary and exclusionary forces of urban social space of impairment (consisting of institutions, workplaces, and streets) allows for recovering their agency and grassroots activism.