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The Unknown Field Marshal

A Biographical Approach to the Life of Austro-Hungarian Field Marshal Franz Rohr
von Denta Through the Eyes of His Wife Marie Rohr von Denta

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Introduction – The unknown

The following paper is a collection of many things, firstly it is a biographical approach to the Austro-Hungarian field marshal Franz Rohr von Denta (1854-1927), mostly through the eyes of his wife Marie Rohr von Denta. It is not only an examination of Franz Rohr but also of Marie, she is in stark focus, because she delivered the main source material for this study, her memoirs and diaries contain most of the information available about the field marshal; there are some other sources, newspaper articles and qualification sheets of the military bureaucracy, amongst others. The focus of this paper is to gain insight into the personality of Franz Rohr, to find out how the person Franz Rohr lived, with all his emotions, fears and dreams; in short: Of particular interest are the things that make us genuinely human. While the genuine human experience is in focus, the second, more scientific, focus is a look at memory and its impact when remembering and writing down the past. Here emotions come into play, emotions and events that shape how the past is remembered and which parts of the past are remembered – and which parts are not.

When it comes to scholarly literature the amount of usable works sinks below the number of usable sources. Rohr and his deeds are mostly forgotten by scholarship, a fear that some contemporary newspaper articles mentioned.¹ Next to a diploma thesis from 1989² there are virtually no works that provide a concise view of Franz Rohr. Even this diploma thesis is only a rough summary of Rohr's military career, which is only the focus of a small chapter; the bigger topic of said paper is a comparison of all Austro-Hungarian field marshals and their achievements. But again, in this thesis forgetting is mentioned; the author Georg Ludwigstorff states that Rohr is the most unknown of the marshals and also gives the reason for this: Rohr mostly was tasked with defensive operations during the First World War.³ Ludwigstorff's assessment continues to be true until this day, Rohr remains the most unknown of the Austro-Hungarian commanders. One might count oneself lucky if there is a (small) mention about the field marshal in literature about World War One as a whole⁴. In works that are more specific and focus on individual fronts (here Italy and Romania, where Rohr served) the situation is not

¹ Emil Seeliger, Ein wenig genannter Feldmarschall (Franz Rohr.), in: Neues Wiener Journal 29.07.1923, 4, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nwj&datum=19230729&query=%22Rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 27.09.2024.

² Georg Ludwigstorff, Die Feldmarschälle der k.u.k. Armee im 1. Weltkrieg und ihre Orden und Auszeichnungen (diploma thesis), Vienna 1989.

³ Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 97.

⁴ e.g.: Manfred Rauchensteiner, Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie 1914-1918, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2013.

much better, Rohr is mostly mentioned in footnotes, if he is mentioned at all.⁵ The reasons for this have been mentioned above, Rohr is not “interesting” enough, as there is no drama surrounding his person. Someone who “simply” holds his defensive positions cannot shine like the commander, who captures whole provinces. Even the ones who are unsuccessful, who lose whole provinces attract more attention than a successful defender.⁶ Another lack in scholarship, that is among the main foci of this paper, is a look at memory, emotions and personality. While German literature is almost completely silent about this topic, we have to look to the anglophone world to gain insight into the minds and habits of the generals. Again, there are few that deal with Habsburg generals, but a specific book that also deals with “the person” and not only with “the general” is Lawrence Sondhaus’ book “Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse”⁷ on field marshal Conrad. Sondhaus not only retells the happenings of the most important battles but also includes Conrad’s mindsets and its origins, his feelings, hopes, dreams and fears and thus creates a more complex and more holistic picture of the former chief of staff.

So, this paper will focus on “the person” behind “the general” Franz Rohr, personality and emotions are in focus here. The methodical approach of this paper is thus tailored towards the sources used. While the “main approach” is inspired by the classical historical method and Qualitative Content Analysis by Philip Mayring⁸, a big part of the analysis will be a critical approach to the sources (*Quellenkritik*). This critical approach to the sources is of high importance, because the political and societal circumstances the source-authors found themselves in, deliver a lot of important and analytical material; also, the analysis of the writing itself, the abundance or the lack of coverage will bring many new insights. Because the roles a person plays in their life are of great position for this paper, intersectional analysis⁹ will also be part of the inspirations for the analytical approach. Especially when analysing Rohr’s – chosen – Hungarian identity. If we take intersectionality literally, if we imagine an intersection, an intersection of ways of life we will gain insight into many interesting topics; Rohr was Hungarian and Austro-Hungarian at the same time, officer and civilian, field marshal and

⁵ e.g.: Gundula Gahlen, Deniza Petrova, Oliver Stein (ed.), Die unbekannte Front. Der Erste Weltkrieg in Rumänien, Frankfurt/New York 2018. and Alexander Jordan, Krieg um die Alpen. Der Erste Weltkrieg im Alpenraum und der bayerische Grenzschutz in Tirol, Berlin 2008.

⁶ Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 97.

⁷ Lawrence Sondhaus, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse, Boston/Leiden/Cologne 2000.

⁸ Philipp Mayring, Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse, Weinheim/Basel 252015.

⁹ e.g.: Nina Degele, Gabriele Winker, Intersektionalität als Mehrebenenanalyse, 2007 (<https://www.soziologie.uni-freiburg.de/personen/degele/dokumente-publikationen/intersektionalitaet-mehrebenen.pdf>, 10.09.2024).

family man. Aspects of life that condition, exclude and are in active proportion to each other; aspects of life that make up the special, the unique part of a human life.

This paper is thus a biographical examination of the life of Franz Rohr, the biography itself will be the framework, within which the life is to be examined and explored. The main focus will be put on personality as well as the roles a person plays during the lifetime; for example, as mentioned above: The role as officer in connection/in contrast with the role as family man. Other important factors within the analysis of roles are nationality and position within society. In particular, the importance of roles becomes apparent when dealing with nationality; many contemporary sources tell us, that Rohr chose his own (Hungarian) nationality and thus played his part as a Hungarian in Austria-Hungary. In connection with emotions, feelings and personality an approach is created, that has thus far neither been made with regards to the overarching topic (high ranking officers of the fading Habsburg monarchy) nor with regards to this particular topic (the person Franz Rohr). Historical thoughts about military, about society and about emotions should be combined in this new approach, which is among other things inspired by new military history (*Neue Militärgeschichte*)¹⁰. As *Neue Militärgeschichte*, this paper will not focus on battles, troop numbers and tactical reconstructions, it will focus on the personal and social part of the military, which is closely connected to emotions and memory.

Memory and perception will have a special focus in this study, because the main sources are the writings of Rohr's wife Marie¹¹. Her works will be analysed, her view on and her memories of her husband as well as of the lost world of the monarchy will be examined and will become the most essential part of this paper.

The following chapters will ask about the multifaceted roles Franz and Marie Rohr had during their lives and how they played these roles and to what purpose; the personal choice of Rohr's national identity will become important here. Were the choices to play said roles successful and well-considered, did they bring advantages or disadvantages? With a look at social and societal aspects we will ask about the position the Rohrs saw themselves in. Did the Rohrs think their lives were normal? Was their way of life, in their own perception, according to their social

¹⁰ e.g.: Laurence Cole, Christa Hämmerle, Martin Scheutz (ed.), *Glanz - Gewalt - Gehorsam. Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1800-1918)*, Essen 2011.

¹¹ Marie Rohr von Denta, *Meine Aufzeichnungen Heft I-III*. and Marie Rohr von Denta, *Tagebuch der Marie Baronin Rohr I-IV*. and Marie Rohr von Denta, *Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen*. The original manuscripts of Marie Rohr are kept in a private collection, copies of her works are stored at the *Sammlung Frauennachlässe* at the University of Vienna.

status? Did Franz and Marie, in their social lives and in the education of their children, follow the norms of society as they perceived them?

In connection to emotion and memory this paper examines the memory practices of Marie (and others): How and why does she remember her husband and the past? Is the process of writing down past experiences just a simple (re-)collection of her past, or is it more, is it perhaps a withdrawal to a happy – bygone – time?

While examining the questions about memory and emotion the composition date of Marie's memoirs becomes important. She starts to write down her collection of memories in the spring of 1938 in Austria. The contrast between the blissful golden past and the sad and grey present, as Marie perceives it, will become a telling factor of the analysis. The events that took place in the late 1930s in central Europe are best summarized by Eric Hobsbawm's term "age of extremes"; these extremes fuelled an influx of diaristic and memorial writing.¹² It is also important to keep Marie's position as a writer in mind: She was a woman writing about her husband, while this very significant aspect is not part of the following analysis it still needs to be kept in mind, that authorship by women during that time was neither something that was commonplace nor something that was completely freely done.¹³ But Marie's writing seems to be free, there is no apparent evidence that somebody besides her had any say in what she wrote and what she did not. Even if she seems to have written freely, there were social norms for writing that were so inherent in one's thinking that one hardly notices them.¹⁴ Also of high importance is the fact, that this sort of writing is a meeting point of social and inner/personal spheres – as established by Miriam Dobson – through which possibilities of actions, mindsets, norms and self-perceptions can be analysed.¹⁵ With all these thoughts and approaches in mind it will be easier to gain insight into the social reality of the memoir-authors, Marie in particular.

Added to these noteworthy details is the significance of diary writing for people (and women in particular¹⁶) of higher social echelons.¹⁷ Because Marie was not the only author to put her

¹² Li Gerhalter, Christa Hämmerle (ed.), *Krieg – Politik – Schreiben. Tagebücher von Frauen (1918–1950)*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2015, 23.

¹³ Gerhalter, Hämmerle (ed.), *Krieg*, 13 and 19.

¹⁴ Ingrid Bauer, Christa Hämmerle, *Liebe und Paarbeziehungen im ›Zeitalter der Briefe‹ – ein Forschungsprojekt im Kontext*, in: Ingrid Bauer, Christa Hämmerle (ed.), *Liebe schreiben. Paarkorrespondenzen im Kontext des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen/Bristol 2017, 20.

¹⁵ Bauer, Hämmerle *Paarbeziehungen*, 23.

¹⁶ Gerhalter, Hämmerle (ed.), *Krieg*, 12.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 11.

thoughts and memories of Rohr into writing, a comparison of her works with other authors will be interesting.

All the mentioned sources are written at the end of Rohr's life or once he had passed, thus memory and its creation, as well as shaping become integral parts of this examination. Memory therefore becomes an essential analytical category of this paper; Maurice Halbwachs stated that remembering is a social rather than a psychological phenomenon, (collective) memories are formed and re-formed by our social surroundings.¹⁸ This forming and re-forming will become important in chapter five specifically but also throughout the paper as a whole.

A central point of interest of this study is the understanding of emotions. All our actions and thoughts are accompanied and/or guided by emotions. Historical science and history were always influenced by emotions; a fact that was only acknowledged rather recently. Among the "explorers" of (historical) emotions is Ute Frevert with her book "The Power of Emotions. A History of Germany from 1900 to the Present"¹⁹, which studies emotions during a very formative time, that parallels the lives and times of Franz and Marie Rohr. Emotions influence the individual, the collective, the most intimate struggles and the most public problems.²⁰ Emotions motivate and demotivate us, now, in the past and in the future.²¹ But emotions do not exist by themselves, they are shaped by the culture and society we live in, by our own thoughts and the thoughts of the collective. Our feelings are heavily influenced by what we learned from our societal surroundings.²² Because of that emotions make history, but they are also made by history and they themselves have history. Some fears become important and some are forgotten; up until 1914, a time that will be central for the analyses of chapter four, the fear of war and its horrors had become very much forgotten in Europe.²³ One emotion that has retained its high importance throughout history is love²⁴, a topic that will be the focus of chapter two. Emotions are also present in our memories and in our recollection of the past, all the while they are influenced and sometimes censored by society²⁵, this connection between emotions and memory will become the main emphasis of chapter five.

¹⁸ Christina Simko, *Collective Memory*, Oxford Bibliographies, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0215.xml>, 10.09.2024.

¹⁹ Ute Frevert, *The Power of Emotions. A History of Germany from 1900 to the Present*, Cambridge 2023.

²⁰ Frevert, *Emotions*, 1.

²¹ *ibid.*, 2.

²² *ibid.*, 3.

²³ *ibid.*, 5.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 11.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 13.

Mentioned above was the golden past. Franz Rohr lived and was part of this golden past and was thus strongly connected to it and stayed connected to this past in later memory. Even if it was not the majority of Rohr, in the later descriptions of him it certainly became an important part. Thus, the formation and (re-)shaping of the past through memory will be a theme that flows like a river through the following chapters, sometimes it is a raging current, sometimes a little creek, sometimes it flows underground, but it is there all the time. Because the used sources are about him and not by him, he is remembered; there are no autobiographical or diaristic sources written by Rohr himself. What is examined here is the memory of him, thus memory shapes the past. There are many little anecdotes that “summarize” Rohr’s life and through the analysis of these stories a better understanding about Rohr as well as about how he was perceived will be created.

A theme that spans the whole of this paper is the cypher. As stated, there is not much scientific coverage of Rohr and thus he remains, more or less a blank sheet. But even with the following analysis and coverage, the cypher remains. As will be established, Rohr was a quiet man but a devoted man, devoted to his wife and to his profession. He remained silent and quiet and distinguished himself through prowess and kindness. These attributes made him a canvas, a canvas used by observers to interpret him, he became the loving husband, the defeated war hero, the nice old field marshal and a personification of the golden past. He became a vehicle for remembering the past, as will become clear in chapter five. He became a friendly, yet still unknown cypher. Even if this paper cannot fully decode this cypher and gain absolute insight into Franz Rohr, it still tries to create new understandings. Like in all scientific approaches the whole truth can never be unveiled. Here too – in this first step of trying to understand the unknown field marshal, and with him the elite of Austria-Hungary – a part, a beginning, of the truth is revealed.

Chapter one will deal with personal identity with examples of identity in the form of nationality and the military. Personal identity is defined here as the sort of personality one displays to the outside world. Nationality and military are used to create a clearer picture of the person through the analysis. But also, a part of the person that is rather held “in the shadows” is examined, Rohr’s fear of being treated unfairly. Chapter two will take a look at personal love with examples of the love Marie and Franz felt for each other and Marie’s love for others. Love is one of the most important driving emotions of human life, but love changes. This chapter also aims to underline this changing and fluid nature of love. Franz’s and Marie’s love is a love in between, between “old” and “new” forms of love. Chapter three will examine the social identity

of the Rohrs and their self-perception within society as well as social life, which forms and can be formed; underlined with examples such as their wedding, the education of their children and their values. Through the look at their children's education, we gain insight into their ways of thinking during a fast-moving time and see which values they regarded as so important as to include them in their children's upbringing. Chapter four will focus on the war, but as with the approach as a whole there will be no tactical or militaristic approach; here we will again focus on personal experiences, how the Rohrs saw the war and through the examples of Marie's writing we will look at the effects the war had on them and on the process of Marie's way of remembering. Chapter five will examine memory itself and legacy, here the theme of the cypher will be important for the analysis of other author's views of Rohr and again the shaping of the past through memory will make its return. A look at Rohr's legacy will examine what has stayed after his death and a final look at the Rohr family will round off this first attempt to understand the times and lives of Franz and Marie Rohr.

Personality is a word often used in this paper and its used definition connects to the parts of the human existence that make us unique. This uniqueness is visible through emotions and feelings, through one's thinking and acting. Works that have thus far centred around Austro-Hungarian generals mostly focus on their military achievements and their medals as a way of tracing their life's story.²⁶ This paper focusses on the person, on thoughts and feelings, hopes and dreams, fears and traumas. When leaving out these important parts of a person, the description becomes hollow, from describing the prowess during a campaign one cannot gain insight into the true human existence. It is my understanding, that history becomes the most interesting and the most understandable when focussing on a single person or a small group of people to gain knowledge about the past. Only through their experiences, their feelings, their lives we can hope to gain information about the past, we can hope to come closer to understanding the past.

This thesis argues, that emotions form memories and the way the past is remembered, thus it explores the reasons behind this practice, within the set boundaries. It argues that Rohr, despite being among the highest-ranking generals of the empire, is basically unknown and forgotten. Some contemporary authors did remember him, but in and through their remembering Rohr became a cypher. A cypher, used to remember the past, infused with emotions that created a specific way to view said past, a past that is looked upon fondly in contrast to the grey and sad present. Also, this paper argues, that the past, that is created through emotions, is a complex

²⁶ e.g.: Georg Reichlin-Meldegg, *Des Kaisers Prinz Eugen? Feldmarschall Hermann Kövess von Kövessháza. Der letzte Oberkommandant der k.u.k. Armee im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Graz 2010.

one. The lives of the Rohrs cannot be described by simple prototypes, such as the “typical general” or the “typical noble lady”, they were highly complex, like the empire they lived in.

Like all scientific works should be, this paper is transparent, not only in its use of citations but also in its explanation of interest and investment. I, the author of the following pages, am a relative of the main figures that are examined here, Franz and Marie Rohr are my great-great-grandparents. Personal investment in this topic might be both detriment and benefit. Since my earliest childhood I am connected to the overarching topics of this paper, a fact that can bring bias and prejudice but also insight like hardly anybody else could attain. Not only stories are handed down by the generations, also mindsets, understandings and outlooks on life. Edith Roosevelt, wife to Theodore Roosevelt, said of her son Kermit, that he had inherited the family’s melancholy.²⁷ This inheritance of a “mindset” or perhaps the closeness to this “mindset” since early childhood might be a benefit of being related to the persons one examines.

Most scientific topics are chosen individually and are connected to personal interests or investment, it does not matter if one chooses to research the identity of the victims or of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, the living standards after a plague wave through grain prices and wages or violence against children in the early modern period. Every researcher is personally invested and interested in his topic, the personal interest displayed in this paper is the analysis of a person/family and their surroundings.

Some might problematize the connection of personal investment and the fact that Rohr was a field marshal –whose job it was to order death. But then again, we need to recall that this here is historical science, whose goal it is to understand the past and not judge it. Nevertheless, this paper is pacifist (as will hopefully become apparent) and thus underlines the hope that one day war will be something only historians deal with. An important aspect of this study is the rampant militarism that reigned in Europe at the turn of the century, perhaps this paper is able to contribute to fulfil the wish uttered in the last sentence; British politician Tony Benn asked his audience during a speech in parliament about the West’s involvement in Iraq in 1998: “*What fools we are to live as if war is a computer game for our children or just an interesting little Channel 4 news item.*”²⁸

Before delving into the analysis, I want to thank Shane Bobrycki for guiding me through the process of writing this thesis, despite the quite long distance between the United States of

²⁷ Candice Millard, *The River of Doubt. Into the Unknown Amazon*, 2011, 268.

²⁸ House of Commons Hansard Debates 17 Feb 1998, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/vo980217/debtext/80217-14.htm>, 07.09.2024.

America and Austria we managed to keep a very fruitful knowledge exchange. Further, I want to thank Barbara Rohr-György, she provided me with most of the sources for this paper and gave many existential insights for the analysis.

For a better and better flowing understanding of the persons involved, a family tree of the Rohrs, some photographs, examples of Franz's fast writing system and Marie's memoirs are provided in the appendix; as well as a short biographical summary following this introduction. Each of the chapters leads to conclusions, these conclusions will be summarised in the conclusion-chapter at the end of the paper to avoid repetitions.

Biographical framework – A short ride through the life of Franz Rohr

The following short biography will give an overview of the life of the Rohr family, with the main focus being Franz, to create the framework for the subsequent analysis, which will take events out of their lives and examine them through love, identity, memory, etc. Some of these events will appear in short in this biographical part, as well as in the later chapters, others will solely appear in the analysis part. It should function as a stepping stone into the lives of the Rohrs, which are expanded in the following chapters. In the subsequent paragraphs a strong emphasis is put on the early life of Franz Rohr, because these years are then not further investigated in the following chapters. The analysis-parts focus much more on the middle and late life of the field marshal, here the most important examples for the analyses are to be found.

To be born in the Habsburg Empire was a strange venture. The nationality of the parents did not matter a lot, what mattered was the actual place of birth.²⁹ In our case the place of birth is Arad in the then Kingdom of Hungary within the then Austrian Empire and the date of birth is October 30th 1854.³⁰ With the established information of Arad and 1854 one could be contempt, if this was not Austria. Franz Rohr was born in the Austrian Empire, not the Austro-Hungarian Empire, this entity would be established in 1867. He was born in Arad and thus was a subject of the Austrian Emperor, for there would be no (crowned) king of Hungary until 1867.³¹ The nationality or the belonging of the boy was further complicated by his father, Josef Rohr. The name alone tells us a lot about his origin, or rather it tells us where he did not originate from: Hungary. Father Rohr was born in Bohemia, in Langendorf in 1831.³² Yet another complication: Father Rohr was more German than Bohemian. The chosen source (the memoirs of Franz's wife) mentions Langendorf, a clearly German name for a city in Bohemia. Also, his name is distinctly German: Josef Rohr. But let us come back to the first complication, little Franz. He was born in Arad, Hungary because his father was stationed there, by chance. Josef Rohr was a *Hauptmannrechnungsführer* in the imperial army, an officer versed in economical subjects to keep the logistics of the regiment going.³³ Josef was part of the Ulan regiment Nr. 7³⁴, a dashing dressed cavalry unit. Like father, like son, Franz (and his brother Karl) would also join the cavalry once he was an officer. To look at the bigger picture: Such a step was

²⁹ Tibor Hajdu, Das Alltagsleben österreichischer Offiziere in Ungarn, in: Waltraud Heindl, György Litván Stefan Malfèr, Éva Somogyi (ed.) Eliten und Außenseiter in Österreich und Ungarn, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2001, 114.

³⁰ Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 20.

³¹ Katrin Unterreiner, Franz Joseph. Eine Lebensgeschichte in 100 Objekten, Vienna 2016, 69.

³² Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 20.

³³ sometimes such an officer is referred to as a Fourier: Fourier, <http://www.zeno.org/Pierer-1857/A/Fourier+%5B1%5D?hl=fourier>, 03.01.2024.

³⁴ Geburts- und Taufschein Franz Rohr, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

common, most of the sons of career officers would also become officers and thus keep the “trade” socially secluded.³⁵ Some sources tell us of the humble beginnings of the family³⁶, but it is important to keep in mind that Josef was a cavalry officer, he must at least have had some money in order to tend to his horse(s). Both of his sons became cavalry officers and would likewise have to tend to their horses. Also, the education of his two boys was certainly not cheap. The fees for the *Militärkollegium* (Franz’s first stage of his military education) were only half the fees of the military academy but Josef would have to pay these fees twice, for Franz and Karl. There were exceptions however, some students were never required to pay the fees. Another Great-War-general, Josef Roth, was exempt from the fees because he was a half-orphan.³⁷ If there was also an exemption for the Rohr boys – for whatever reason – is unclear but not implausible. Nevertheless, the family was by no means rich, they, at most, were “middle class”; Josef’s father, Josef Sr., was a carpenter and his father Ignaz was a small farmer.³⁸

But we still need to detangle the national complications. Josef’s Ulan regiment was stationed in Arad in 1854 and it was here that his wife Rosalia would give birth to little Franz. Just to drive home the point of non-Hungarian origin: Rosalia was also born in Bohemia but had a more “exotic” last name, Zalud.³⁹ Zalud seems to come from the Czech word “*žalud*” for acorn. But the Hungarian law at the time did not care about acorns, chances or Ulans, if a baby was born on Hungarian soil, it was considered Hungarian. Little Franz was now a Hungarian, a fact that would become important in his later life and career.⁴⁰

As expected of the son of an officer, Rohr went to the *Militärkollegium* in St. Pölten and then to the prestigious *Theresianische Militärakademie* in Wiener Neustadt.⁴¹ The school in St. Pölten was a short-lived type of military education that should prepare young boys for the studies in a military academy.⁴² Rohr joined the academy after his attendance at one of these schools, but he also went to a public civilian high school. After his visit to civilian high school

³⁵ István Deák, *Der k.(u.)k. Offizier. 1848-1918*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar ²1995, 20.

³⁶ Ernst Dominig, *Aus den Erinnerungen des Feldmarschalls Rohr*, in: *Neues Wiener Journal* 29.03.1925, 8, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nwj&datum=19250329&query=%22Rohr%22+%22Denta%22&ref=anno-search>, 27.09.2024.

³⁷ Georg Reichlin-Meldeg, *Der Löwe von Limanova*. Generaloberst Josef Roth Freiherr von Limanova-Lapanów. Ein Leben zwischen den Epochen, Graz 2005, 16.

³⁸ Barbara Rohr-György, *Familienchronik Rohr*. “Ein Rohr kam nur selten allein” oder “Von Prorub nach Amerika”, Vienna 1992, Stammbaum.

³⁹ Rohr, *Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen*, 20.

⁴⁰ Hajdu, *Alltagsleben*, 114.

⁴¹ G.d.K. Franz Rohr, in: *Österreichisches Kriegs-Echo* 75, 1916, 5-6, [https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=oke&datum=19161075&query=\(text:franz+AND+text:rohr+AND+text:kriegs+AND+text:echo\)&ref=anno-search](https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=oke&datum=19161075&query=(text:franz+AND+text:rohr+AND+text:kriegs+AND+text:echo)&ref=anno-search), 27.09.2024.

⁴² Biografie des Generaloberst Josef Roth Freiherr von Limanowa-Lapanów, <https://www.milak.at/jahrgang-generaloberst-josef-roth/der-loewe-von-limanowa-lapanow>, 03.01.2024.

in Vienna in 1869 Franz was transferred to St. Pölten. In 1869 when he left the Viennese high school, he was 15. His graduation from the military academy in Wiener Neustadt was in September of 1876, the education at the academy was scheduled to last three years, thus he must have started his studies at the academy in circa 1873. The education in one of the pre-schools for the academy was also scheduled to last around three years, other later general-colleagues also had – similar – educational paths: Hermann Kövess von Hövessháza attended from 1865 to 1868⁴³, Josef Roth from 1873 to 1875⁴⁴ and Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf attended from 1863-1867⁴⁵.

Kövess studied for circa three, Conrad for circa four and Roth for circa two years. These three individuals attended different schools in different times and their educational paths were different, but we can gather from this, that the education in the “military pre-schools” was around three years. Franz Rohr must have started his education at the academy in 1873, if we now suppose that it took him around three years to finish the *Militärkollegium* in St. Pölten we would come to the conclusion that he must have started there in circa 1870. Because he finished his public high school career in 1869, his start at the *Militärkollegium* in circa 1870 seems very plausible.

So, after his attendance at the *Militärkollegium* from approximately 1870 to 1873, Franz was qualified to attend the prestigious Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. This educational site was the stepping stone of becoming an officer. His studies at the academy must have been a time on which he would look back fondly, for he mostly focused on military education in his career and would become a passionate teacher. But perhaps this view is completely wrong and he found many flaws and mis-evolutions in the imperial-royal military educational system and sought to reform and modernise it. Because of the lack of source-material of Rohr’s early military education we have to assume that it was accompanied by fond memories and good grades. The fond memories can be linked to his love of military education in later years and the grades to one of the first military qualification-sheets of his career: Reflecting on his studies before joining the army proper, the clerks of the military bureaucracy noted that he attended Wiener Neustadt with excellent success at the top of his class.⁴⁶

⁴³ Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 22-28.

⁴⁴ Reichlin-Meldegg, Löwe, 15.

⁴⁵ Sondhaus, Conrad, 6.

⁴⁶ AT-OeSTAKA Pers Quall HR 2792, 177 63/97 k.u.k. Generalstabs-Corps Franz Rohr, Austrian State Archive, War Archive.

In September 1876 Franz Rohr attained the rank of lieutenant, at the age of 22. Some of his later colleagues might have been made lieutenants when they were younger, Kövess and Roth were 18⁴⁷ and 20⁴⁸ respectively and Conrad was 19⁴⁹; but we need to take into account that Roth⁵⁰ and Kövess⁵¹ were both 17 when they went to the academy, Conrad was 15 when he entered.⁵² Rohr was 19 when he entered the academy and he attended the *Militärkollegium* before, as well as a civilian high school. In his later career Rohr would be praised for his knowledge and his erudition⁵³, perhaps his time in the civilian high school sparked an interest in topics not only connected to the military.

After excellent success at the Cavalry Brigade School from 1877-1879, Rohr attended the *k.k. Kriegsschule* in Vienna from 1879-1881 with good success.⁵⁴ The *k.k. Kriegsschule*, literally “War School” was the gateway into the general staff of the imperial-royal army. To join the War School, one had to take a pre-test, and had to secure the approval of their commanding colonel. The proper examination was though, only 50 out of 200 were chosen to become staff officers.⁵⁵ Once chosen to join, the young officers were drilled physically and mentally: Sport, languages and tactics were the main focus of this school. Free thinking was frowned upon, an aspect that was only added to the curriculum in the early 1900s. After the two years were over the officers were appointed to the general staff on a trial basis. If they did a good job, they were to remain in the staff, usually with the rank of captain. After this, successful careers were distinguished mostly by staff-officer-ship and a promotion to the rank of general in late life. The life of a staff officer was subject of great admiration and great envy. It was a prestigious position connected to many difficult steps one had to take.⁵⁶

For a newly made cavalry lieutenant the choice of the regiment was an important one, the cavalry was (still) the most prestigious branch of the army. Choosing a regiment was often tied to one’s social standing. The garrison of said regiment was irrelevant, most cavalry detachments were stationed in Galicia.⁵⁷ But Rohr’s career path was more directed towards the general staff, his attendance at the Cavalry Brigade School and War School in Vienna tell us that he could

⁴⁷ Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 22-30.

⁴⁸ Reichlin-Meldegg, Löwe, 11.

⁴⁹ Sondhaus, Conrad, 2-10.

⁵⁰ Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 22.

⁵¹ Reichlin-Meldegg, Löwe, 16.

⁵² Sondhaus, Conrad, 2-6.

⁵³ AT-OeSTAKA Pers Quall HR 2792, 177 63/97 k.u.k. Generalstabs-Corps Franz Rohr.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 136-137.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 138.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 117.

not have spent a lot of time “in the field”, he spent most of his early career in school. But the Austro-Hungarian general staff was known for sending its officers “into the field” to keep the officers in contact with the troops.⁵⁸ Rohr’s attendance at the Brigade School was “interrupted” by these squadron services at his Ulan regiment, where he was made regimental adjutant in 1878. In 1881, he just finished War School, Rohr was transferred to an infantry brigade, where he served as a staff officer; we heard of such a procedure just before, the staff officer on a trial basis. His stay was not for long, in November 1883, by now a captain, he was assigned to the General Staff Bureau for Operative and Special General Staff Appointments in Vienna (*Generalstabsbureau für operative und besondere Generalstabsarbeiten*).⁵⁹ Rohr’s career was thus connected to staff-officer-ship from the very start. He only spent some time “in the field”, but he spent much time in classrooms.

As well as his love for education, his love for stenography would accompany Rohr throughout his life. After the war, in 1919, he would publish his own fast writing system: “Alltagsschnellschrift. (Rasch erlernbare, sehr flüchtige Verkehrsschrift)”⁶⁰. In his introduction to his new writing, Rohr states that it should not replace the old stenographical models, it should be a new form of fast writing that represents a “golden middle way” between previous stenography and normal writing. It should be seen as a new and faster form of *Kurrent*. An aspect that combines teaching with this project is the fact that the new writing is easy to learn. Rohr mentions that stenography is too complicated and takes too long to learn, thus this way of writing has not and will not become a common form of communication. With his new invention, this problem can be solved, writers in bureaus, in trade and at universities could profit from this new, fast shorthand.⁶¹ Even his wife Marie would become a passionate stenographer; because of the love Marie felt for Franz she overcame the difficulties of learning stenographical writing. The two were so fond of shorthand, that they became known as the “stenographical couple” („*stenographische[s] Brautpaar*“). Every time they were separated, they wrote to each other in shorthand.⁶² Marie’s interest in stenography would also develop into a hobby, in 1944 she still mentions this writing form in her diaries.⁶³

Rohr did not stay long at one place. As a soon-to-be major, Rohr was transferred to the 2nd Corps in Krakow. Krakow proved to be the most important garrison for the personal life of

⁵⁸ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 138.

⁵⁹ AT-OeSTAKA Pers Quall HR 2792, Generalstabs-Korps Franz Rohr.

⁶⁰ F. von Rohr, Alltagsschnellschrift. (Rasch erlernbare, sehr flüchtige Verkehrsschrift), Vienna 1919.

⁶¹ von Rohr, Alltagsschnellschrift, 3.

⁶² Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 105.

⁶³ Rohr, Tagebuch II, 1.1.1944.

Franz Rohr, here he met his future wife Marie at a social event in the winter of 1890. Their connection must have truly been a special one, the following analysis-parts about love and memory underline this relationship. Without taking too much away from the later chapters – which deal with courting, wedding and love as examples for the analysis – it is fair to say that the time in Krakow had a deep impact on the lives of Franz and Marie. They found each other, they found the loves of their lives and from Krakow on – if we can use the memoirs as a mirror for real life – their focus of affection shifted towards each other. Soon after their wedding, which took place on 11th August 1891⁶⁴, the three children were born: Christine on 1st August 1892, Rudolf on 1st June 1895 and Stephan⁶⁵ on 21st December 1896.⁶⁶

Rohr's life remained eventful, he – now with his family – was transferred from garrison to garrison within the empire, Marie was always happy to experience new adventures and to be close to her love. The family moved a lot: Starting in 1891 from Vienna to Pozsony to Vienna, then two moves within Vienna (not to mention their moves to the vacation home in Rodaun every summer), then to Pécs, Pozsony, Székesfehérvár, Budapest and a move within Budapest, back to Vienna and back to Budapest again. Once the war started Marie was always as close to her “Feri” as possible: St. Georgen am Längssee, St. Andrä bei Villach, Trient, Székelyudvarhely and Brassó. After the war, their home was again Vienna.⁶⁷

Even while not on the move the eventfulness of their lives remained: In Pozsony (today's Bratislava) for example little Christine lectured Rohr's officer trainees⁶⁸ and in Vienna they met an anteater⁶⁹ – more on those stories in chapter three. Young Christine's second passion (next to animals) were Frankfurt sausages, Franz therefore took his little daughter to a restaurant in Rodaun during one of their holidays (the same restaurant where the *diner* after the wedding was held). Marie recounts the heart-warming sight of the big and tall lieutenant colonel and the little girl walking hand in hand up the hill to the restaurant. But this little trip was not without tragedy, once little Coco (Christine's nickname) took her first bites, the unruly sausage fell out of her hand straight onto the floor – there never was a bigger catastrophe. Lieutenant colonel Rohr acted with quick tactical genius and Coco soon had the other half of the sausage in her hands,

⁶⁴ Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 22.

⁶⁵ In this paper the version of Stephan with “ph” is used, because Marie used this version in her booklet “Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen”; many other sources use the version with “f”, Stefan. These two versions are interchangeable, but the situation is made even more complicated, since Marie uses Stefi with “f” as the nickname version of her son's name.

⁶⁶ Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 18.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 28-29.

⁶⁸ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 119-121.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 126.

which had remained on the plate in the meantime. But as Marie recounts, Franz later told her that he was quite helpless in this moment – how to engage in such a battle surely was not taught at the War School. Christine soon forgot this tragedy and proudly told everyone where she and her father ate lunch.⁷⁰

Rohr was a teacher and officer first and foremost but he also was a family man, in 1911 he combined these parts of his personality to teach his children how to ride horses, Christine and Rudolf found passion on horseback, Stephan not so much – at this time he had already decided to enrol in the naval academy.⁷¹ That the boys would become officers was a given, since all of their male relatives (father; both grandfathers; one of their uncles, the other one was a civil servant in Zara) were officers. This importance of the military was one of the main identities the Rohrs had. The military gave them their place within the empire, it formed their lives but it also allowed them to form their own lives. As will become clear in the analysis-parts, the Rohrs used the opportunities their – privileged – lives gave them, they chose their own identity, their own way. Some of those opportunities came in the form of important social connections, because Rohr became one of the most important officers of the empire, he made many acquaintances, one of these was the then Viennese police president, who frequently offered the Rohrs his loge in the opera house. A gesture Marie remembers fondly not only because of the gift aspect, but because of her Feri. One evening when they had the loge at their disposal, Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* was performed, a lengthy affair. Rohr had an inspection earlier that day and was quite tired in the evening but joined his wife and mother-in-law anyways. The first act was interesting but with time passing on, Rohr got more and more tired. He then went to the back of the loge, to lay down on a sofa and soon fell asleep – but he did not only fall asleep he also started to snore “to his heart's content”, as Marie puts it. He started – and continued – to snore at a very bad time during the performance, for the actors sang in *pianissimo* at the prelude of the colonel's *fortissimo* snoring. Marie was embarrassed by the annoyed looks of the other opera guests, but she was happy that her Feri was sleeping so well. Marie remembered this evening with great joy; every time there was a mention of the *Götterdämmerung*, Marie would think of this funny evening and her sleeping and snoring Feri⁷² (Marie referred to her husband as Feri, the short form of the Hungarian version of Franz, Ferenc).

⁷⁰ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 121a.

⁷¹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 50-51.

⁷² *ibid.*, 142-143.

As in Rohr's earlier career, life continued to be lively, in 1901 he joined the Royal Hungarian Army, the *Honvéd* and soon became its inspector general of the cavalry. Because of his dualistic and thus conciliatory personality, being a black-golden (Habsburg) Hungarian, he was the perfect choice to become inspector general of the military educational sites in 1909; before he was section chief for education in the war ministry (more on nationality and "duality" in chapter one). In his new position he helped to reform the education of the army and was again chosen because of his prowess and dualistic personality to become commander of the *Honvéd* in 1913. The position of commander would have been the last step before retirement, would Europe have been a continent of peace. Rohr's first task in the Great War was to establish a defensive line in southern Austria to prevent a breakthrough of Italian troops. Even though Italy was still neutral, both Rome and Vienna prepared for war in the alps.⁷³ Despite lacking funds and material Rohr managed to build and hold the defensive positions in Carinthia, first commanding *Armeegruppe Rohr*, which was renamed to *10. Armee* after substantial strengthening.⁷⁴ For his successful defence of the alps in Carinthia he was highly praised by contemporaries⁷⁵ and historians⁷⁶ alike. In 1916 he was called to South Tyrol to command the 11th Army. During his time with the 11th Army, Rohr's actions throughout the war continued its trend: He remained a defensive commander, a fact that among many, he himself lamented after the war. But here in South Tyrol Rohr also made important connections. At this alpine front, the soon-to-be emperor Karl served. The young heir acted somewhat recklessly and positioned himself too close to the front for the liking of Rohr. The warning the colonel general gave the young archduke, seems to have impressed the young heir and created a friendly bond between the two men, for Karl – once in power – lifted Rohr higher than ever before⁷⁷, in 1917 Rohr was made commander of the 1st Army in Transylvania, again a defensive task, but again Rohr excelled⁷⁸; he was ennobled in April 1917 and was allowed from then on to call himself baron with the noble suffix "*von Denta*".⁷⁹ Most important of all the promotions and decorations Rohr received was the one given to him in February 1918; Romania was defeated and emperor Karl made a visit to the east.⁸⁰ Rohr's promotion to the highest rank of the army was not only crowned by the personal

⁷³ Rauchensteiner, *Weltkrieg*, 405.

⁷⁴ Ludwigstorff, *Feldmarschälle*, 95-96.

⁷⁵ Alois Veltzé, *Unsere Heerführer. Erste Folge. Mit 33 Bildern*, Vienna 1917, 64. and Seeliger, *Feldmarschall*, 4.

⁷⁶ Ludwigstorff, *Feldmarschälle*, 96.

⁷⁷ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

⁷⁸ Ludwigstorff *Feldmarschälle*, 96.

⁷⁹ Generaloberst Baron Franz Rohr, in: *Pester Lloyd Morgenblatt*, 24. April 1917, 4.

⁸⁰ Reichlin-Meldegg, *Prinz Eugen*, 223-224.

attendance and promoting itself by the emperor, the emperor also removed his own field-marshal-collar-tabs and gifted them to the newest field marshal of the empire.⁸¹

With the Romanian front becoming quiet and with the dissolution of the 1st Army, Rohr was made captain of the Royal Hungarian Trabant Life Guards.⁸² Because the position as captain of the guards was more or less a position for retired war heroes⁸³ and there were no free combat commands⁸⁴, Rohr used his saved leave-days and went on holiday together with his wife and another general. All these happenings – baron, field marshal, captain of the guards and holiday – sound quite pleasant and relaxing but the reality was far from that. Even though there were no free combat commands, the situation Austria-Hungary was in, was alarming. Despite his choice to go on holiday Rohr knew of the dark future for the empire, which showed even during their trip. The decomposition of the empire was in full progress, nationalistic and political developments soon engulfed everything in central Europe. The Rohrs too had their run-in with “reds” – communists – during their trip.⁸⁵ Once they came back home to Vienna, the writing was on the wall, the empire fell and the old order was no more, symbols of the old army were ripped violently from uniforms and everything that reminded the “new masters” – as Marie put it – of the empire was torn down. The world the Rohrs knew was in shambles, their livelihood was gone, most of their wealth was gone and they were forced to sell their apartment in Vienna and moved to their summer home in Rodaun.⁸⁶ The field marshal, a passionate cavalry man, was even forced to sell his horses⁸⁷, the family rose so high and now fell so low, “*Was ich damals mitmachte lässt sich nicht schildern. Mein armer Feri tat mir so leid, das Höchste hatte er erreicht u. nun war alles zu Ende, wie schön stellten wir uns Feris Pension vor, wie oft sprachen wir davon u. nun stand diese Zeit als eine ganz schreckliche vor uns.*”⁸⁸ What was just a few months ago the main identification of the family was now completely gone, a part of their personality was gone, violently ripped from them like the old insignias were ripped from the uniforms that still displayed them. The field marshal was a broken man, he completely secluded himself, he now only spent time with his wife, they went on silent walks or sometimes to the cinema. While their time in Austria was gloomy, the events that unfolded in Hungary made their situation even worse, the recently established Hungarian Soviet Republic denied the

⁸¹ Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 96-97. and Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 223-224.

⁸² Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 97.

⁸³ Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 210.

⁸⁴ Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 97.

⁸⁵ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen III, 3-18.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 28.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 26.

payment of Rohr's pension. Rohr now had to look for a job⁸⁹ and occupied himself in the meantime with his old hobby – stenography – and published his book in 1919 detailing his own quick writing system (mentioned above).

In January 1921 the old field marshal found a job, he became employed at a department store in Vienna, because one of the people in charge there was a reserve officer that served under Rohr in Carinthia. This reserve officer also sent food to the destitute field marshal.⁹⁰ It is sadly unknown what position – it was a desk job – Rohr had in that department store but next to the relief of again being able to provide for himself and his family, the new position must have come with many haunting thoughts. The former baron and field marshal, decorated with the empire's most prestigious medals and orders now had to sit at his desk at the store from 07:00-18:00⁹¹, a lot of time to work but most certainly also a lot of time to think about the past and about what has happened in the past three years. Even if this job was important for him, it certainly reminded him every day that his former life was gone.

In November 1921 daughter Christine started her job at the Austrian National Library and thus could support the family a little in addition to her gardening in Rodaun, that supplied the family with food. Stephan joined the Dutch Merchant Navy in February 1921 and left his parents the majority of his advance on salary when he left for the Dutch East Indies on February 25th 1921. Rudolf finished his studies at the mining university at Leoben in May 1922 and soon went to Silesia to start as a mining engineer.⁹² Life started to look brighter again, in August of 1922 – some time after the Hungarian Soviet Republic had fallen – Rohr received his pension again and Marie now implored her husband to quit his position at the department store and he did. Now he found more time to focus on his stenography and his bookbinding. Marie recalls that life started to look happy again, they received the pension, could spend more time together and the children all were stably employed and content. For the celebration of his 70th birthday in 1924 old comrades and family members came to visit and the guests at the cinema applauded the old marshal and his wife when they attended that evening.⁹³

For Marie life could have stayed like that forever, but Franz's health started to fail. His sleep grew worse and fits of Angina Pectoris started to show.⁹⁴ His failing health certainly not only came from his age but also from the war and its aftermath, the huge amount of stress during the

⁸⁹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* III, 26-34.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 34-35.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, 35.

⁹² *ibid.*, 32-39.

⁹³ *ibid.*, 44-45.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 45.

conflict and the terrible uncertainty and anxieties after the armistice had a telling impact on Rohr's wellbeing. Despite that, he still went on ever-shorter-growing walks and was delighted to welcome his first grandchild Rudolf Jr. on visits with his parents in 1926 and 1927 to Rodaun.⁹⁵ During autumn 1927 the old marshal grew ever weaker, but he remained friendly and loving despite his rapidly failing health; Marie especially recounts how courteous the weak old field marshal was towards a barber who visited him on December 8th. His appetite left him and he was too weak even to read the newspaper, he just held the folded papers in his hand. On the morning of December 9th 1927, the doctor came to visit, like he did every day for the last weeks. Before being ordered the strictest rest the marshal, for a last time, hugged his wife and kissed her on the cheek, before laying down again. At noon the doctor came again, but the injection he gave showed no result. Marie quickly called for their daughter to come home from the library, Christine arrived shortly after 13:00 but at 12:50 "Feri" had died.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Rohr, Tagebuch I, Juni 1927.

⁹⁶ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen III, 52.

Chapter 1: Personal identity – Fire, nation and military

The analysis will start with a look at the personal identity/personality of Franz Rohr, through some examples, such as his (chosen) nationality and a fire-tragedy the two most important parts of Rohr's identity will be examined: His nationality and the military. The roles he took on/played here are not separated but mix like the currents of meeting rivers. While the military played some role in his national identity, the national identity played an impactful role in his military identity, as we will soon see. While nationality and military were important parts of his personal identity, they were not all the parts that made up Franz Rohr. The other parts, the parts his wife Marie deemed the most important, his love and kindness, do not feature in this analysis, they will become the focus of later chapters. The personal identity discussed here is a personal identity an officer would display to the outside world; but especially at the end of the chapter, there are some parts of the personal identity that were not part of public appearance but rather part of the most intimate fragments of personality, in this case the fears of being treated unfairly.

While the focus on personal identity is very much missing in German-“speaking” literature about Austro-Hungarian generals, we have to look to the anglophone world with Sondhaus' “Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse”. Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, the later famous and infamous chief of staff of the army is described in his schoolboy years as having an interest in natural science which, combined with his indifference towards Catholicism, resulted in a social-Darwinist way of thinking.⁹⁷ Social-Darwinism is a hard and tough worldview: Only the strong should/will survive. A worldview that among other things justified imperialism, eugenics, racism and social inequality.⁹⁸ A worldview that would think of war as something necessary, something one could prove oneself in. If the fittest would survive, war would be the best way to separate the weak from the strong. A worldview one could certainly find in Conrad's way of thinking.

Rohr on the other hand seems to have been removed from such big ideas. There are no sources directly indicating his worldview or his stance on politics. As we will later see from his attitude after the war, he seems to have been a monarchist. Understandable for a man, who served in the imperial-royal army for most of his life and whose life centred almost entirely around the army. This central position of the army is a central attitude of Austro-Hungarian officers, the

⁹⁷ Sondhaus, Conrad, 5.

⁹⁸ Sozialdarwinismus, <https://brockhaus-de.uaccess.univie.ac.at/ecs/enzy/article/sozialdarwinismus?isSearchResult=true>, 02.05.2024.

army was the important part, politics were somewhat frowned upon. An officer should focus on warfare and not on politics or worldviews.⁹⁹ Officers should and mostly did only focus on the army, economic aspects of everyday life where most of the time foreign to them.¹⁰⁰

Conrad might be a special case; he was among the few high-ranking officers who published their memories and thinking after the war. Conrad's upbringing also made him more hostile towards the other nationalities of Austria-Hungary, his father blamed the leaders of the nationalities for the problems the empire had.¹⁰¹ Rohr was more "multinational", he had German/Bohemian roots; was born in Hungary, became Hungarian and identified himself as a Hungarian¹⁰²; and went to many (nationality-wise) different schools: He went to a Polish elementary school in Lemberg, a German elementary school in Medgyes and Brasso, a Hungarian elementary school in Arad and went to high school in Szent György and Vienna. The source which tells us of his school career concludes, that within the first years of his life he concluded a "... *kleine Reise durch Österreich-Ungarns Völkerpsychologie* ...".¹⁰³ Conrad's father retired after a riding accident in 1848 and thus his son only went to school in Vienna and did not complete the "journey through the psychology of the nations of Austria-Hungary".¹⁰⁴ Rohr's "understanding" of the many peoples of the empire might shed light on his worldview and his attitude towards his soldiers in later life. He is described as friendly and fatherly towards his comrades and subordinates¹⁰⁵, a character trait that might have been influenced by that of his own father and the "understanding" of the "psyche" of the nations of the empire.

As well as studying and drills, social gatherings were a big part of an officer's life. Especially in the Habsburg monarchy the image of a gentleman officer was to be upheld and cherished. Officers were required to look sharp and behave like gentlemen. Their social status was high, often too high for their salary. Officers were supposed to act elegant, gallant and carefree. They had to uphold an image of nobility (even those who were without noble birth), officers were forbidden to eat in restaurants where "normal" people would eat, they were not allowed to take busses or to ride on trains in the 3rd class. Honour was the highest possession an officer could have and this often led to (technically forbidden but nevertheless carried out) duels. To protect

⁹⁹ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 18-25.

¹⁰⁰ Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 60.

¹⁰¹ Sondhaus, Conrad, 5.

¹⁰² Max Hoen, Feldmarschall Baron Rohr von Denta. Zum siebzigsten Geburtstag, in: Österreichische Wehrzeitung 24.10.1924, 1, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=daz&datum=19241024&query=%22Feldmarschall%22+%22Baron%22+%22Rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 27.09.2014. and Dominig, Erinnerungen, 8.

¹⁰³ Veltzé, Heerführer, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Sondhaus, Conrad, 2-3.

¹⁰⁵ AT-OeSTAKA Pers Quall HR 2792, 177 63/97 k.u.k. Generalstabs-Corps Franz Rohr.

the honour of oneself, a fellow officer, the army or a lady was required by all the dashing young men.¹⁰⁶ To summarize: Officers were required to act a certain way in public, as if they were playing a character, taking on a role. As far as the sources tell us, Rohr never got into a duel, it seems decency and level-headedness prevented him from getting into fights. He much rather attended colourful social events such as balls (more on a very important ball later) or theatre visits. Because Franz Rohr was stationed mostly in Vienna during his early career and during his studies at the War School, he was able to enjoy the rich social life at the capital. Karl, Franz's brother, also chose to become a staff officer and was stationed in Vienna in December 1881. The two brothers decided to visit the *Ringtheater* on the night of December 8th 1881.¹⁰⁷

On that evening *Hoffmanns Erzählungen* by Jacques Offenbach was performed. Due to a problem with the lighting on the stage a fire broke out, at the very start of the performance. The flames spread rapidly, the measurements to prevent a further spreading of the flames failed and like an explosion the flames engulfed the spectator area. The emergency-exit-lights were defect and the doors only opened to the inside. The panic that ensued in the theatre led to the horrific number of nearly 400 dead. Especially many guests who had their seats in the galleries perished cruelly, mostly due to suffocation.¹⁰⁸ A young observer, Marie Szilva von Szilvás, witnessed the tragedy from the window of her parent's apartment and described the shocking scenes on this December evening: "*Am 8. Dezember 1881 sahen wir von den Fenstern unserer Wohnung den so grauenhaften Brand des Ringtheaters bei welchem so viele Menschen ums Leben kamen.*"¹⁰⁹ The newspapers in the following days were filled with terrible descriptions of the fire and lists of the dead and missing, among them a certain "*Oberlieutenant Rohr*".¹¹⁰

The Rohr brothers as well as another officer, Franz Schnablegger, had their seats on the third gallery and came in civil clothes that evening. They took seats on the third gallery, because the seats on the *Parterre* were too expensive for young officers. We just heard of the image an officer had to uphold and that this image often overstepped the financial capabilities of the young men. The "Prager Tagblatt" states that these young officers had vanished without a trace,

¹⁰⁶ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 154-155.

¹⁰⁷ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 75.

¹⁰⁸ Ringtheaterbrand 1881, <https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Ringtheaterbrand>, 04.01.2024.

¹⁰⁹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 75.

¹¹⁰ Tödtete und Vermisste in: Neue Freie Presse. Morgenblatt 09. December 1881 Nr. 6209, 3, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nfp&datum=18811209&zoom=33&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 04.01.2024.

a tragic, horrible death. A death, these young men did not deserve, “*Sie haben wohl einen besseren Tod verdient und erwartet.*“¹¹¹

But on December 13th, a correction had to be issued in the “Neue Freie Presse”, it writes, that the vanished *Oberlieutenant* Rohr was saved from the inferno of the *Ringtheater*. He managed to escape the tragedy without any further complications, “*ohne übergroße Beschwerlichkeiten*”¹¹², because – as this paper states – he had his seat in one of the last rows on the “*Parquet*”. Sadly, though a correction on *Oberlieutenant* Schnablegger could not be issued, he became a victim of the flames, as the paper concludes.¹¹³ If *Oberlieutenant* Schnablegger was a friend of the Rohr brothers or if they really sat together is hard to establish. The “*Prager Tagblatt*” states that the officers were seated on the third gallery, the “Neue Freie Presse” describes Rohr’s seat on the “*Parquet*”.

What we can deduct from this is the immense confusion and panic this fire caused, accompanied by wrong statements in the newspapers. Another interesting aspect is the depiction in the correction in the “Neue Freie Presse”, the tone of the correction is understandably cheerful, a thought-dead man is actually alive, but the words “*ohne übergroße Beschwerlichkeiten*” are very interesting. Escaping such a tragedy cannot happen without complications no matter where one is seated. Perhaps it is the tone of the time, to convey the message of “everything is fine” or it is a reference to the prowess of the imperial-royal officers. We heard about the social standing of the officer class, their values and “requirements”. One such “requirement” would be to be fearless, in battle as well as everywhere else. Perhaps this depiction should underline the fearlessness of the officers, this class of gentlemen, these knightly fellows. Even during such a terrible event, one could rely on one thing: The gallant officers would remain gallant. To talk about knights in the 19th/20th century might sound strange but we have to keep in mind that knighthood and its attributes remained an important factor of everyday life (and still do to this day), the “character traits” of the officer class were certainly inspired by medieval knighthood; the architecture style of booming Vienna also took some inspirations from medieval time (the

¹¹¹ Beilage zum „Prager Tagblatt“ Nr. 346 in: Prager Tagblatt 14. Dezember 1881 Nr. 346, 5, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=ptb&datum=18811214&zoom=33&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 04.01.2024.

¹¹² Zur Liste der Vermissten in: Neue Freie Presse. Morgenblatt 13. December 1881 Nr. 6213, 7, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nfp&datum=18811213&zoom=33&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 04.01.2024.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

city hall for example¹¹⁴) and there were still “real” knights in the empire, one of the many noble titles one could attain for was “*Ritter*” (knight).¹¹⁵

If Rohr subscribed to these ideals is unclear, perhaps he wholeheartedly believed an officer had to remain gallant no matter what. Perhaps the inferno was an opportunity for him, to show his chivalry, to save the weak from the flames like a true knight, social norms certainly required him to do so. Or perhaps he was afraid in this traumatizing moment, death, chaos and destruction all around him. With chaos reigning, gallantry is powerless. We remember *Oberlieutenant* Schnablegger, he certainly was aware of the call for chivalry, he certainly subscribed to the ideals of the gallant officer. But what did it bring him? Perhaps he died as a gallant hero, saving someone; maybe he died as a gallant fool thinking the stars on his collar would make him invincible; perhaps he died afraid; perhaps Rohr got out of the inferno because he was afraid, because he did not act gallantly in this instance, or perhaps he did manage to escape because he was gallant; we might never know.

Gallantry was a part of Rohr’s personal identity, a part of the personal identity of every officer of the Austro-Hungarian army, as established above. Yet, this ideal of the brave and honourable knight did not live long. Schnablegger did not see its end, but Rohr did. With the end of the war and the end of the monarchy this defining image, this defining imperative of the dashing officer disappeared. A part of Rohr’s identity was now without value, he still perceived himself as an imperial officer, a gallant and dashing man but the times changed. Officers of the old army were attacked in the streets if they still had the imperial insignias on their uniform.¹¹⁶ To be “robbed” of one’s personal identity, a personal identity one developed and cherished for one’s whole life, must have been a terrible experience for the old field marshal. Not only did his empire, his army loose a war, his existence, his world collapsed. A world he lived in for most of his life, a world he protected, a world he loved. With this world lost, Rohr lost a part of his identity, a part of himself. Marie recounts, that her beloved Feri was mentally broken, “... *mein armer Feri war seelisch gebrochen* ...”¹¹⁷. The old field marshal withdrew completely from social life, Marie often watched him sitting at his table, lost in thoughts.¹¹⁸ One time she even saw her husband and another general sitting together, with tears in their eyes.¹¹⁹ For the Rohrs and many other

¹¹⁴ Rathaus, <https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Rathaus>, 10.09.2024.

¹¹⁵ Ritter, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ritter>, 10.09.2024.

¹¹⁶ Edgar Haider, Wien 1918. Agonie der Kaiserstadt, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2018 (<https://www-vr-elibrary-de.uaccess.univie.ac.at/doi/book/10.7767/9783205206835>, 15.11.2021), 335. and Heinz Fischer, Andreas Huber, Stephan Neuhäuser (ed.), The Republic of Austria. 1918-2018. Milestones and Turning Points, Vienna 2018, 20.

¹¹⁷ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* III, 19.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 21.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, 26-27.

families of a similar social background the world had ended, their lives were destroyed. Most of the family's wealth was invested patriotically into war bonds and Franz donated his allowance during the war to the Red Cross.¹²⁰ The possibility of losing the war never occurred to them and even if it did, such thoughts were brushed aside. They were completely engulfed in this Austro-Hungarian worldview, the empire and the army stood for centuries, the army had gallant officers that would protect the realm like true knights, what could go wrong?

Perhaps the tragedy at the theatre at the start of Rohr's career strengthened his military identity, perhaps it weakened it. Nevertheless, a very large part of Rohr's personal identity, of his personality was the military. For someone who spent most of his life in the army, military ranks were important and they certainly were for Rohr. In 1917 he was nobilitated by the emperor, he attained the title baron of Denta. His barony was Hungarian and because it was Hungarian the title was officially in Latin; the title thus was *de Denta*. Denta was the (then Austro-Hungarian, now Romanian) town where the 1st Army under Rohr was stationed during the 1917 Kerenski offensive, Rohr's army held the town during the offensive and thus he was given this specific title.¹²¹ The coat of arms was selected by the recipient himself, a friend of the family helped Rohr designing it¹²²: Two crossed swords in front of a laurel wreath with three stars; these sat on a parted shield: Gold, red, gold; it was crowned by the seven-pointed crown of a baron and accompanied by other regal symbols. The motto Rohr chose was: *Acta Non Verba*.¹²³ The coat of arms is soldier-like, swords, stars, a laurel wreath; in particular these symbols of his baronial power were representative of Rohr's current rank in 1917. The insignias of a *Generaloberst*, colonel general, were three stars on top of a laurel wreath¹²⁴ and the swords might be a general representation of the "warrior cast" or reference to the many "*Kriegsdekorationen*" Rohr got, these were little crossed swords atop of medals and orders that were awarded in war time.¹²⁵ The then *Generaloberst* used his nobility to underline his identity as a soldier. Gold, stars, laurel wreath and a barony might sound extravagant but to Rohr these things mattered little, he was a soldier, an officer, a position much more honourable to him than any rank of nobility, be it baron or prince; Marie certainly viewed his thinking this way.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Seeliger, Feldmarschall, 4.

¹²¹ Arno Kerschbaumer, Nobilitierungen unter der Regentschaft Kaiser Karl I/IV. Károly király (1916-1921, Graz 2021, 224.

¹²² Stenographical letter from Franz to Christine Rohr, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

¹²³ Wiener Genealogisches Taschenbuch Band IV 1931/1932, Vienna 1932, 119-120.

¹²⁴ Badges of Rank, <https://www.austro-hungarian-army.co.uk/badges/badges.htm>, 26.06.2024.

¹²⁵ Walter Schwarz, „Vergänglicher Glanz...“. Altösterreichs Orden, Vienna 2005, 24.

¹²⁶ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen II, 106.

Only a short while after the elevation to nobility Rohr, attained another symbol of appreciation from the emperor, in January/February 1918 he was made field marshal for his services at the Romanian front, the defeat of the Romanian forces and the following armistice.¹²⁷ This was the most important moment of Rohr's entire career, he served from 1876 to 1918, moved through the positions of the army and now he became field marshal, the highest rank a person could hold within the imperial-royal army. In this joyous moment, in which the emperor personally promoted him, Rohr had to think of his father, who had died not long ago and how proud he would have been to see his firstborn – and by then only living son – reach this highest honour. The impromptu promotion ceremony in the imperial-royal court-train was made even more emotional, because the emperor called in his tailors to remove his own personal field-marshal-collar-tabs and gifted them to Rohr to be sewn on to his uniform then and there. As the field marshal later told his wife Marie, he had to hold back tears of joy in this special moment.¹²⁸

Soldierly identity was (one of) the most important parts of Rohr's personality, his whole life he was a soldier and this is why the end of the war and its aftermath were such enormous tragedies for him. His world ended, with the lost war he lost (at least some of) his personal honour. Just a few months ago he was made field marshal and now he was nobody, the institution that gave him a right to exist, that gave him meaning in his "social" (besides personal/familial) life was no more.

Before moving on we need to look back at the inferno and at Franz's brother Karl and thus again at the first example of the military identity discussed here. The connection of Karl and the fire is only drawn in the memoirs of Marie Rohr, when she recounts that her husband had been present at this tragic event. The newspapers do not mention Karl, they only speak of a "*Oberlieutenant Rohr*", no first name. When only taking a quick look at the reports in the newspapers one could interpret that both brothers are mentioned, but the plural use of *Oberlieutenant* refers to Rohr and Schnablegger, not to two Rohrs and Schnablegger. It is interesting that the articles (some of them use the exact same words¹²⁹) do not use a first name to describe Rohr, while Schnablegger is mentioned with his first name, also Franz. It could be possible that Franz and Karl Rohr were supposed to be mentioned in the papers but the

¹²⁷ Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 223-224.

¹²⁸ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 105.

¹²⁹ Beilage zum „Prager Tagblatt“ Nr. 346 in: Prager Tagblatt 14. Dezember 1881 Nr. 346, 5, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=ptb&datum=18811214&zoom=33&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 04.01.2024. and Episoden aus der Nacht des 8. Dezember. in: Neue Freie Presse 12. December 1881 Abendblatt Nr. 6212, 3, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nfp&datum=18811212&query=%22Rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 04.01.2024.

confusion surrounding this whole event prevented complete accuracy. To add to the confusion, both of the Rohrs were officers and both had very common first names, it is plausible that one of the names vanished in the chaos in the editorial room.

Karl's name might have been lost due to its commonness or because of the chaos, nevertheless with the topic of names, let us shift away from the fire to personal characteristics: One's name is an important part of one's being, one's identity. We define ourselves with our name, we are given names in the hope that we live up to the deeds performed by the role model we got our name from.¹³⁰ In Marie's first mention of Franz in Krakow (he is of course referred to at the very beginning of her memories as well as in connection with the inferno at the *Ringtheater*) she speaks of him as "Franz Rohr", after that he becomes "*das Rohr*" – his nickname in Krakow – and once he had his appointment with Marie's uncle Edmund finalizing their engagement he becomes "Feri". Feri is the short form – the nickname form – of Ferenc, the Hungarian version of Franz. Maybe the "chronology" of the use of names is a coincidence, from "Franz Rohr" to "*das Rohr*" to "Feri"; but the usage of Feri certainly is not. One cannot come to Feri from Franz, one would have to go "through" Ferenc. "Feri" must have given the incentive of the name himself, Marie would only really learn Hungarian once they moved to Hungary because Franz was stationed there.¹³¹ Despite her Hungarian last name, Szilva von Szilvás (or Szilvási Szilva in Hungarian) and her father's service in the Hungarian honour guards, Marie never learned Hungarian as a child. Her father was on the Habsburg's side in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848¹³² and the family would thereafter only really live in Vienna. Hungarian became unnecessary until Marie moved to Hungary. This whole affair is rather paradox, Marie was Hungarian but did not identify as such. Franz on the other hand was not Hungarian, only his birthplace made him Hungarian, but he identified as Hungarian, he learned the language (or had to learn the language as a child) and would ultimately become commander of the Hungarian part of the army, the *Honvéd*, because of his nationality. Franz also gave his horses Hungarian names.¹³³ Franz actively chose his Hungarian identity, he identified with the Hungarian culture and its language, perhaps his love for horsemanship also connected to Hungarian-ness and its – somewhat mystical – connection to the steppe.

¹³⁰ Michael Mitterauer, Ahnen und Heilige. Namengebung in der europäischen Geschichte, Munich 1993, 245. and Margareth Lanzinger, „Meine Mutter wollte für ihre Tochter etwas Besonders, Modernes, ...“. Namenkulturen im Wandel, in: Nikola Langreiter, Margareth Lanzinger (ed.), Kontinuität: Wandel. Kulturwissenschaftliche Versuche über ein schwieriges Verhältnis, Vienna 2003, 87-92.

¹³¹ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen II, 1.

¹³² Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 11.

¹³³ Photo No. 2883, Vihar, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

The Hungarian *Honvéd* was only one of the three parts the Austro-Hungarian army consisted of. These three parts were: The common army of the whole empire, *kaiserliches und königliches (k.u.k.) gemeinsames Heer* plus the navy, *k.u.k. Kriegsmarine*; the Austrian *Landwehr*; and the Hungarian *Honvéd*. The common army would serve as a vehicle for war, for scenarios that concerned the empire as a whole, whereas the *Landwehr* and the *Honvéd* functioned as home defence units. As complicated as this trinity sounds, in the 20th century, the two “lesser” parts became incorporated into the common army. As with almost every Austro-Hungarian institution, its bureaucracy was even more complicated. The war ministry (Marie’s uncle Edmund von Krieghammer once was minister of war) would oversee the common army and separate ministries for home defence oversaw the *Landwehr* and *Honvéd* respectively. Thus, there were essentially three war ministries: *k.u.k. Kriegsministerium*; *m. kir. (magyar királyi = royal Hungarian) honvédtisztviselői* and *k.k. Ministerium für Landesverteidigung* for the Austrian part.¹³⁴

Rohr chose, Marie talks of a decision, to join the Hungarian *Honvéd*.¹³⁵ Max von Hoen (head of the army’s press detachment during the war¹³⁶) writes in his newspaper article that Rohr never failed to mention that he was Hungarian¹³⁷, and this decision can be seen as a manifestation of his Hungarian-ness. Franz’s choice to join the *Honvéd* was not only a Hungarian decision but also a cavalry decision. The cavalry’s officer corps was mainly made up of Polish and Hungarian men and the spirit of these units aligned more with the “people of the steppe” than with that of the “alpine dwellers” of the western parts of the empire.¹³⁸

Ex-chief of the army’s press corps, author and historian¹³⁹ Max Hoen describes Rohr’s personality as “dualistic”, he was a black and golden (Habsburg) Hungarian.¹⁴⁰ With such traits Rohr could have become the poster child of the army: Intelligent, promising, loved by his men and combining the very essence of the empire: (ethnic/national) Complexity. It is hard to answer why Rohr was not praised like the army’s chief of staff Conrad, but we can form some thoughts and speculations.

¹³⁴ Peter Jung, *The Austro-Hungarian Forces in World War I* (1). 1914-1916, 2009, 4.

¹³⁵ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 149.

¹³⁶ Hoen, Maximilian von, https://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1_2/360.pdf and https://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1_2/361.pdf, 26.08.2024.

¹³⁷ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1.

¹³⁸ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 125.

¹³⁹ Hoen, Maximilian von, https://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1_2/360.pdf and https://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1_2/361.pdf, 26.08.2024.

¹⁴⁰ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1.

Rohr was an imposing figure, tall and with a big moustache, wrathful but at the same time soft and kind.¹⁴¹ Perhaps it was this human side that made him loved by his men and liked by his superiors¹⁴² but not in the way Conrad was praised by the military establishment. The main mindset of the turn of the century was militarism, Austria-Hungary's society was very focussed on militarism and strength. The bourgeoisie became reserve officers and the imperial-royal uniform was a symbol of high status.¹⁴³ Militarism cannot be kind, it has to be hard and tough, it has to be social-Darwinist – Conrad was social-Darwinist.¹⁴⁴ If militarism is kind and loving; if it laughs at its men when they are schooled by a little girl; if it sleeps during a Wagner performance; if it builds for itself a loving image in the hearts and minds of the people it meets; if it respects all parts of the empire; if it tries to understand all the empire's people and its languages – it is not militarism. Militarism needs to be harsh and uncaring, unkind and brutal; it has to be social-Darwinist. Conrad was militaristic, he mainly focussed on the German-speaking Austrian side (the ruling side) of the empire, he was not very connected to the multi-ethnic side of the empire; Rohr on the other hand was, the description of the “journey through the psychology of the nations of Austria-Hungary” comes to mind again.¹⁴⁵ Rohr's “dual personality” would have best fitted into a world, that was less militaristic but where the military had an important position – an utopic Austria-Hungary without warmongers in the army and in politics. In the rather heated ethnic/national climate of the turn of the century and especially at the eve of the war, Rohr was a promising and good general, but he sat somewhat in between. He was Austrian and Hungarian (to be more precise: a pro-Habsburg Hungarian) but Austria and Hungary each wanted to be the ruling force in the empire – not the combined ruling force (the different sections of the army: main; *Landwehr*; *Honvéd* show this quite nicely).

The position of inspector general of military education (*Generalinspektor der Militärerziehungs- und Bildungstätten*) had become a delicate matter, especially in connection to Hungarian demands of being considered in such questions and in a better treatment of their cadets. Now, who could fit such a delicate situation better than Rohr, a black and golden Hungarian? Rohr had a career as educator, he was head of the department of military education in the war ministry and due to his “dualistic personality” (we recall Hoen) this promotion promised to prevent a one-sided treatment in military education.¹⁴⁶ Rohr performed very well

¹⁴¹ Roda Roda, Der alte Feldmarschall Rohr, in: Neue Freie Presse 12.03.1936, 1-3, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nfp&datum=19360312&query=%22Rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 27.09.2024.

¹⁴² AT-OeSTAKA Pers Quall HR 2792, 177 63/97 k.u.k. Generalstabs-Corps Franz Rohr.

¹⁴³ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 18.

¹⁴⁴ Sondhaus, Conrad, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Veltzé, Heerführer, 61.

¹⁴⁶ Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 95.

in his new position, distinguished by his knowledge and expertise¹⁴⁷, as well as his loving yet strict connection to the officers and men involved in education.¹⁴⁸ The then *Feldmarschallleutnant*, lieutenant field marshal, Rohr was responsible for a modernisation of the military educational system of the monarchy.¹⁴⁹ The author of “*Unsere Heerführer*” (a propaganda booklet published during the war) somewhat mournfully depicts the career of Rohr when he states that the marshal left this position only after two years, a position that had such high importance for the army and its future.¹⁵⁰ Had Rohr stayed longer, perhaps the army’s performance in the upcoming war would have been better.

1911 was not only the year of riding lessons with his children, it was also the year of acknowledgements for Rohr’s services, he was made head of the war ministry and was nominally made general of the cavalry (*General der Kavallerie, G.d.K.*), the complete and full elevation came in 1913. Max Hoen sees the elevation to head of the ministry as a credit not only to his services as inspector general but also because he used this position to elevate himself. Hoen, an expert in the ins and outs of the old imperial-royal army, as well as author-colleague Dominig, interpreted the position of inspector general as the last step of a military career in peace time.¹⁵¹ But Rohr’s vigorous and energetic character seems to have saved him from early retirement, because there was yet another free position (commander of the *Honvéd*) where a well-chosen person was needed – just as with the position of inspector general. Once again it was Rohr who was chosen for such a delicate matter.

The new heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, gained ever more power and influence¹⁵², for the Hungarian cause this was a problem. Franz Ferdinand was rather anti-Hungarian and even favoured a Triple-Monarchy (with an elevation of Slavic realms) – a threat to Hungarian sovereignty.¹⁵³ In addition, the heir apparent was quite opposed to the *Honvéd*.¹⁵⁴ With Franz Ferdinand’s advancement to inspector general of the whole army in 1913¹⁵⁵ tensions and fears arose he might harm Hungarian interests. The actual reasons for Rohr’s transition to commander of the *Honvéd* are somewhat unclear, contemporary observer Hoen and historian Ludwigstorff just speak of complications and because of those it was Rohr who was chosen as commander.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁷ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Veltzé, Heerführer, 63.

¹⁴⁹ Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 95.

¹⁵⁰ Veltzé, Heerführer, 63.

¹⁵¹ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1. and Dominig, Erinnerungen, 8.

¹⁵² Sondhaus, Conrad, 57.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 62.

¹⁵⁴ Gunther Rothenburg, The Army of Francis Joseph, 1976, 147.

¹⁵⁵ Rothenburg, Army of Francis Joseph, 170.

¹⁵⁶ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1. and Ludwigstorff, Feldmarschälle, 96.

For Hoen the transfer back to Hungary had a bad aftertaste, because he connects it to a demotion back to district commander before the promotion to commander of the *Honvéd*. It seems like Rohr only reluctantly went back “home”.¹⁵⁷ Marie delivers a different picture, in her memories just before Christmas 1912 (she accidentally writes 1913) Franz came home from the office baring an open secret, he was to be made commander of the *Honvéd*. Marie’s memory contains not a single ounce of sadness or anger, Franz returns home full of joy about the news he is now able to share with his wife. Marie too is over-joyous about returning to her beloved Hungary – but they had to keep it a secret for a little while, not even the children were told during the Christmas holidays.¹⁵⁸ The negative feelings Hoen describes are not present in Marie’s telling, also the demotion Hoen underlines is not to be found in the memoirs, in other sources the “demotion” is only a little bump in the road, if mentioned at all. Perhaps Hoen overinterpreted the short transfer back to district commander or perhaps he knew more than anyone else.

Marie’s memoirs tell us that the emperor had other plans for *G.d.K.* Rohr, he wanted to make him head of the ministry, but archduke Franz Ferdinand wanted Rohr to be commander of the *Honvéd*.¹⁵⁹ Marie must have mixed up some things here, the elevation to commander by the orders of archduke Franz Ferdinand are attested to in several other sources, such as Dominig¹⁶⁰, but Rohr was already head of the ministry before he was made commander of the *Honvéd*.¹⁶¹ What is interesting about Dominig’s version of the story is that here again the elevation to commander is not just connected to happiness. Dominig – and by that perhaps even Rohr himself; the article is based on an interview – states that Rohr never really wanted to become commander of the *Honvéd*; the article states that Rohr much rather wanted to be a corps commander. The reason why he was made *Honvéd* commander instead is because of the orders of the archduke but also because of Rohr’s adversary and advisor to the emperor Arthur von Bolfras.¹⁶²

The whole *Honvéd* story is quite hard to detangle, as the question about who was in charge arises. If we suppose the archduke was in charge, we follow Dominig’s telling but this comes in contrast with Marie, who states that the elevation was accompanied by happiness and not dislike. If we suppose the emperor was in charge – and by that Bolfras, as head of the

¹⁵⁷ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 59-60.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 59.

¹⁶⁰ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

¹⁶¹ Ludwigstorff, *Feldmarschälle*, 95.

¹⁶² Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

Militärkanzlei, he suggested elevations and promotions to the emperor¹⁶³ – we would have to think, because of Marie’s comment, that Rohr would have been made head of the ministry and not *Honvéd* chief. This again comes in contrast with Dominig who states that Bolfras (and the emperor) were responsible for the position of *Honvéd* chief, a position Rohr did not want – yet another contradiction with Marie. In the end it had to have been “the emperor” who made Rohr commander, as historian Hajdu states it¹⁶⁴, but the question of who gave the incentive will have to stay complicated.

The only “truth” we can gather from this complicated source accumulation is that Rohr was made a full (no longer only nominal) general. The fact that Rohr now became a real general was a *novum*, the first of its case. Nominal generals never became “real” ones until now. The “Neue Freie Presse” makes an evidence-based speculation, that this promotion to the full rank and its payment is an expression of a change of mind in the upper hierarchy. A change that firstly manifested itself in the promotion to head of the ministry while still being inspector general, a position in which he often represented the minister of war.¹⁶⁵ We already heard from Hoen that Rohr – through his achievements as inspector general – was able to dodge the bullet of early retirement and was awarded with further promotions.

The choosing of the Hungarian nationality was interesting. We already heard that the two sides of the empire were fighting for dominance but the Hungarian struggle for autonomy could never succeed unless a truly pro-Hungarian monarch ruled the realm. Franz Joseph was at best indifferent, at the start of his reign he battled against the Hungarian Revolution of 1848¹⁶⁶; and Franz Ferdinand was – as we just heard – rather anti-Hungarian.

Next to his military identity, nationality was an important part of Rohr’s personality. To choose the Hungarian nationality in this climate was more likely a decision that came from the heart, a decision filled with passion, passion for one’s nation and homeland. Rohr also could have been a master schemer by choosing Hungary, with his credentials and his nationality he was chosen for many high positions. But there is no evidence that Rohr plotted his rise to the top of the army by way of his Hungarian nationality. It is clear that he played his role as a black and golden Hungarian, but it is unclear to what extent, just to be “whole” in his personality or to advance himself through this role to the highest positions in the army. In addition, the above-

¹⁶³ Arthur von Bolfras, https://austria-forum.org/af/AustriaWiki/Arthur_von_Bolfras, 23.06.2024.

¹⁶⁴ Hajdu, *Alltagsleben*, 114.

¹⁶⁵ Wechsel im Oberkommando der ungarischen Landwehr, in: *Neue Freie Presse* 5. Mai 1913, 5, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nfp&datum=19130505&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 05.01.2024.

¹⁶⁶ Alois Niederstätter, *Geschichte Österreichs*, Stuttgart 2007, 179-182.

mentioned mindsets of Franz Joseph and Franz Ferdinand suggest that being Hungarian was not really the way to reach the top.

We heard of the mindset of the heir to the throne before. To gain insight to the thinking of the emperor we again have to look to field marshal – *Feldmarschall* (FM) – Conrad. Conrad had some romantic complications during the war. The woman he was intent on marrying was divorced, now such a marriage was impossible in catholic Austria. But there was a way, Hungary had different laws. Thus, Conrad's soon-to-be-wife Gina changed her nationality and her religion, she became a Hungarian citizen and converted to Protestantism. Now she was able to marry the chief of staff. But what has that got to do with Rohr? It is important to look at the person who remained Austrian and who did not convert: FM Conrad. Emperor Franz Josef would have never accepted a Hungarian (and Protestant) to be the chief of staff.¹⁶⁷ Rohr thus could have never become chief of staff, some high positions within the army were unattainable for him, because of his nationality. The choice to become Hungarian thus was a decision of the heart, not a decision of a schemer; the little speculation just above thus falls apart. Still, it is interesting to think about Rohr's choice. He chose to be part of the empire that was looked down upon, that was only in the second place; it was Austria-Hungary not Hungary-Austria. Rohr was a man of emotions, he was wrathful and loving, kind to his men and beloved by them; the love for Hungary was also an important emotion and thus part of Rohr's identity.

Before closing this chapter, (again) a look at nationality, a nationality that is not at all mentioned in the thinking of the Rohrs: The Slavic people of the empire. Franz Ferdinand was pro-Slavic and even thought of a Triple-Monarchy, Conrad was quite anti-Slavic and advocated for a pre-emptive war against Serbia (and Italy).¹⁶⁸ In Marie's writing there is never any mention of the Slavs, of course she wrote about the declaration of war against Serbia in the summer of 1914 but she never talked about her or Franz's attitude towards the Slavs of the empire. The nationality of the other subjects of the empire seemed to have been of no concern to the Rohrs, only their own nationality was important, Franz actively chose Hungary and acted Hungarian. Marie never talked about "the Austrians" "the Slavs" or "the Italians" in any way that would indicate that the nationality of the "others" was important to her. Marie and Franz seemed to have been quite neutral in their view on nationality, they certainly had no "missionary"

¹⁶⁷ Gina Gräfin Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Mein Leben mit Conrad von Hötzendorf. Sein geistiges Vermächtnis*, Leipzig 1935, 38.

¹⁶⁸ Sondhaus, Conrad, 243.

tendencies. We recall Franz's "journey through the psychology of the nations of Austria-Hungary" and the understanding of the workings of the Empire he gained through this journey.

At the end of this chapter, we come back to Rohr's adversary Bolfras; and with him we can gain some insight into Rohr's intimate personality. As established, there were some difficulties and obstacles in Rohr's career, such hindrances come "naturally" when trying to obtain a higher position, such hindrances come "naturally" in many interhuman interactions. Sometimes these manmade difficulties are reinforced by aspects of one's personality; but before this cryptic statement is made easier to understand by an example let us firstly focus on the rivalry. The origin of dislike between Rohr and Bolfras is hard to find. The latter was born in 1838 and studied at the military academy at the time Rohr was born, so they were no classroom-enemies, their other uses in the army also do not add up. Bolfras was an infantry man, whereas Rohr was a cavalry man. Arthur von Bolfras was never Rohr's direct superior, so their rivalry must come from the time Bolfras was the emperor's highest military advisor (for almost 30 years). Newspaper author, major general and *k.u.k.* army insider Ernst Dominig attests to the power Bolfras held, who would not crawl in the dust before him, "*Wer von seiten der Generalität vor Bolfras nicht im Staube lag, ...*"¹⁶⁹, would hardly get the position he wanted. As stated in this article Rohr and Bolfras did not get along, also another General Moritz Auffenberg von Komarów (as well as heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand) had difficulties with this powerful military bureaucrat; he was most trusted and liked by the emperor and to fight against such a coupling or to be on the opposing side was detrimental to any career.¹⁷⁰ But when going through Rohr's "*curriculum vitae*" these difficulties are hardly noticeable, Rohr also had benefactors uncle-in-law, minister of war and trusted and liked advisor to the emperor Edmund von Krieghammer and long serving chief of staff Friedrich von Beck-Rzikowsky were on Rohr's side¹⁷¹ and seem to have balanced out the adversity, otherwise the rise to the rank of field marshal would not have been possible.

So, there were hindrances and adversities, Rohr had to fight against early retirement but he managed to prevail. When reading of such acts one would think a person who had to face these obstacles would brush these problems aside and would not get bested by them. But Rohr, this big and tall warrior, this (visual) stereotype of Austro-Hungarian militaristic masculinity seems to have been an overthinker, a man plagued by thoughts. Marie only mentions this important character trait of her beloved husband in passing. During a diary entry on November 11th 1945,

¹⁶⁹ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷¹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 129.

while depicting the hardships after the end of World War II, Marie reflects, that her beloved Feri would hardly withstand the deprivations of 1945, the tyranny of national socialism, another war and bombs striking their home. She compares Franz's (fictitious) reaction to this destitution with their daughter Christine's attitude, "*Mein lieber Feri hätte es nicht ertragen u. die arme Christl hat leider viel von seiner Natur, alles noch schwerer zu nehmen als es ohnehin schon ist.*"¹⁷² and at another occasion, this time in 1952: "*Wenn meine gute Christl nur eine glückliche Natur hätte. Immer macht sie sich Sorgen u. hat dadurch so wenige frohe Stunden. Ich räume ihr nach Möglichkeit alles Unangenehme aus dem Weg u. immer findet sie etwas, über das sie sich ärgert u. ist grantig u. schwer zu behandeln.*"¹⁷³

Christine must have "inherited" her pessimism and worrying nature from her father, the witnessing of world wars certainly does not improve one's optimism but it seems like Franz always had a rather pessimistic world view, or perhaps it evolved once he became part of the Austro-Hungarian military elite. Within the army there were many intrigues¹⁷⁴ and thus one had to be weary, Rohr rose high, but he also could have fallen low. Not being on good terms with one of the most powerful men in the military apparatus was stress inducing, a worrying nature and nervous conditions are no surprises then.

Despite his stature Franz was a sickly man, and he also might have been a sickly boy. As did his brother Karl, Franz also had problems with his lungs, coughing was an unwelcomed company throughout his whole life. In 1893 the coughing got so bad that he had to take three months vocational recovery in Lussinpiccolo (now Mali Lošinj, Croatia).¹⁷⁵ The fresh sea air of the Adriatic, away from the smoggy city was a common curing method in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹⁷⁶ In connection with the coughing, Marie also mentions a nervous stomach problem. Both of these sicknesses got substantially better during their stay in the Adriatic.¹⁷⁷ An easy to overlook detail is the "nervous" part. Franz seems to have been a quite anxious person. Despite his militaristic appearance and his stature, he seems to have been "soft" in character. Stress and anxiety could have manifested in his coughing. A further confirmation of this speculation can be seen in the fact that none of the consulted doctors or specialists could diagnose him. The only diagnose he was given was "sensitivity of the vocal cords". Marie

¹⁷² Rohr, Tagebuch IV, 11.11.1945.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, 1.8.1952.

¹⁷⁴ Gina Conrad, *Mein Leben*, 65-66.

¹⁷⁵ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 116.

¹⁷⁶ Wie verbrachte man in der Habsburgermonarchie die Sommerfrische?, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/news/wie-verbrachte-man-in-der-habsburgermonarchie-die-sommerfrische/>, 10.09.2024.

¹⁷⁷ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 116.

mentions that, “*Mein armer Feri hustete, trotz seines guten Aussehens sein ganzes Leben.*”¹⁷⁸ His “good looks” not only refer to his “beauty” but to his physique. Being big and tall would “normally” mean that one is quite healthy. But Franz’s “lack of health” had most likely a “mental” origin. In 1894 he even resigned as teacher at the staff officer course, because of the cough.¹⁷⁹ Franz was a passionate teacher and quitting his teaching position was surely not an easy decision. But this decision underlines the severity of the cough, it also underlines the severity of the anxiety/nervousness. A nervousness that was surely connected to his career.

Coming back again to the newspaper article by Ernst Dominig and Marie’s memories: In the diaries there is mention of a kind of paranoia by Franz, connected to his career. He feared to have been left out or to have been passed over or ignored.¹⁸⁰ Without Marie’s mention, part of the article would be just another footnote: Bolfras and Rohr did not like each other. But with the insight gained from Marie’s writing a different side of Franz comes to light. He felt treated unfairly in many cases, he thought of himself to have had more potential, which he could not display; all this in spite of him achieving some of the highest positions within the Habsburg army. The next passage in the interview by Dominig revolves around the war. Rohr states that the fact that he had no army command at the start of the war was awkward and even after he was given an army his part of the front was “*leider*” – sadly – without much action. He says himself that he gave no quarter to the attacking enemy forces but there remained a bitter aftertaste, he wishes to have achieved more. To act like a “real” general, to attack, to capture, to lead the troops, the nation to eternal glory. Once there was movement in the south, he was already called to the east to defend Transylvania and to push back the Romanian forces.¹⁸¹

Despite his success (some describe him as never defeated¹⁸²), his rise to the highest position in the army, there remained a bitter aftertaste for Rohr, he wanted more, he thought he could have achieved more, he thought there were limitations (Bolfras or perhaps even his chosen nationality) to his career. These worries, these thoughts, this overthinking must have been increased after the war. Not only the army lost, the empire was destroyed, this focus point of the Rohrs, their identity ceased to exist. He was an officer of an army, of an empire that simply was no more. The worries must have been overwhelming in late 1918. It is unsurprising that Marie found her Feri once with tears in his eyes, “... [mit] *Tränen in den Augen...*”¹⁸³, utter

¹⁷⁸ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 118.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 118.

¹⁸⁰ Rohr, *Tagebuch* IV, 11.11.1945. and Rohr, *Tagebuch* IV, 1.8.1952.

¹⁸¹ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

¹⁸² Seeliger, *Feldmarschall*, 4.

¹⁸³ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* III, 26-27.

defeat, militarily and personally. Earlier we heard of the attributes an officer was required to have, he had to be the pinnacle of masculinity in this military-focussed society. Now Rohr this pinnacle of the Austro-Hungarian soldier, he a field marshal, was crying.

Even if the Austro-Hungarian society saw crying as childish, over-emotional or non-masculine – as many cultures do¹⁸⁴ – this now was the time for tears. All the harboured worries, all the anxieties, all feelings of being left out now came together, in addition to this defeat the early days of November 1918 were a terrible time for the Rohr family – and the field marshal in particular.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Dixon, *The History of Emotions. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2023, 35.

Chapter 2: Personal love – Love includes, excludes and changes

Love is a very interesting thing, since humans were capable of thinking there must have been love. Ideally love drives us (and not other emotions). Love defies time and space; love can be felt towards someone we have never met or someone we see every day. Love is a driving force of human life; thus, it became an analytical category in this paper. Love is not only linked to beauty and connection but also to loss. Marie writes down her memoirs because she lost her beloved husband and by writing down her memories, she remembers him and relives the beautiful moments she spent with him; a time of bliss and happiness – not only because the past is always marked by nostalgia but also because Marie found no happiness in the current time of the 1940s. Because there is no happiness in the present, she tends to exclude trauma and sadness from her memories, she wants to remember bliss; through this mode of memory Marie chooses how her memories and herself should be seen by her readers. Marie writes out of love; as we will soon see through the following examples, love became the vehicle for her memory. Writing is thus a powerful tool, especially when dealing with emotions.¹⁸⁵

Love is important and universal, but it is also subject to historical change and construction (more on that below). Thus, love is interesting for historical questions; to understand the times Franz and Marie lived in, we have to understand their use of love, how they described, constructed and above all remembered it. Love and emotions not only change but are subject to historical development, love of the 14th century is different from the love of the 20th century; a look at this historicized love will help to understand mentalities of the past.

Franz remains again a cypher in this chapter, his love – the thing Marie deemed the most important part of him – remains almost unseen by the observer, but if we look closely at his way of expressing and at her memories, we will find his way of love. Marie's love is visible in almost every paragraph of her memories, when writing about her late husband she always attaches an adjective of affection: "*Mein lieber Feri*"¹⁸⁶, "... *mein Lieber, guter Feri ...*"¹⁸⁷, "... *mein mir unvergesslicher Feri ...*"¹⁸⁸. His love is only visible when looking at the bigger picture, when combining all of Marie's thoughts. By simply looking at one example we would not gain insight, if we look at the whole of Marie's writing we do. Thus, her whole "*oeuvre*" is in focus

¹⁸⁵ Olivier Allard, *Anthropology of Emotion*, Oxford Bibliographies, 8.

¹⁸⁶ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen III*, 20.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 51.

here, next to that, direct examples will be Marie and Franz's first meeting in Krakow and the following connection, as well as Marie's love for people besides her husband.

Although love defies time and space, love changes historically. These changes will accompany us through the following pages. The love people felt in the past is quite different from the love we feel today.¹⁸⁹ Ida Pfeiffer for example, a well-travelled Viennese lady of the 1840s, experienced love quite differently from today's fast love, her experience is even different from the love the Rohrs felt. At a young age Ida's teacher confessed his love for her, an exciting event for the young lady but not at all exciting for Ida's mother, she quickly shut down any of the teacher's attempts and expelled him from her household. The teacher was so in love with Ida that he promised never to marry anyone else.¹⁹⁰ If the teacher held true to his word is not important here, what is important here is the understanding and use of love. Love is something important, something reserved for someone special; it is of such great importance that the teacher vowed never to marry. Ida's teacher stopped his love-life just for her; if we are to believe this story he remained (more or less) celibate for the rest of his life, a big sacrifice. If he really upheld his promise is not important, the thought behind it and the self-imposed social expectations are the important parts, the thought alone to never marry because of a lost love is a huge commitment. The text that gives some insight into Pfeiffer's life certainly does not think this behaviour strange; the teacher is not a hopeless romantic nor a poor lover losing the battle against the strict mother.¹⁹¹ If these ideas of love really were "common" the Rohrs certainly knew of them.

But before we try to understand the love between Franz and Marie Rohr, we will look at another contemporary example: The love-life of field marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf. While the aftermath of the love at the turn of the century was long and consistent, its beginning often was hectic and perhaps a bit overhasty; Ida's teacher must have known that his chances of marrying a lady of high social status were rather slim. *FM* Conrad's start to loving his second wife Gina was also quite impulsive and startled the future wife of the chief of staff.¹⁹² The situation Conrad was in was not much better than that of Ida's teacher, Gina was married. But love in those days was consistent, not to say dogged. Conrad courted and waited for eight years to finally marry his Gina.¹⁹³ Conrad's love-life is evidence that people in the early 20th century really took this

¹⁸⁹ J.M. Morris, Review of Boddice, Rob. A history of feelings, in: CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries, 57/3, 2019, 358-359.

¹⁹⁰ Ida Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land. Konstantinopel, Palästina, Ägypten*, 2018, 178.

¹⁹¹ Pfeiffer, *Reise*, 178.

¹⁹² Gina Conrad, *Mein Leben*, 12.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, 36.

long love seriously and by that the long courting process. Earlier we only speculated that the teacher never married, but through Conrad's example we can see that (some) people really lived by these ideas and ideals; the ideals of a slow yet hectic, chivalrous yet dogged, hopeless yet hopeful love.

Ten years before Conrad would meet his Gina for the first time in Trieste in 1900¹⁹⁴ Franz Rohr, by then a captain, was transferred to Krakow to become part of the general staff of the 2nd corps. The commanding general of Krakow and of the 2nd corps was the aptly named Edmund von Krieghammer. Before, Krieghammer was the wing adjutant (*Flügeladjutant*) of emperor Franz Joseph¹⁹⁵; he would also become minister of war (*Kriegsminister*) in 1893.¹⁹⁶ Krakow would prove to be a very important stop in the life of Franz Rohr.

We are lucky to have a rich source about the social life of Krakow in the early 1890s. Marie Szilva von Szilvás, the niece of Edmund von Krieghammer, wrote down many interesting stories about the life in the Krakow garrison. Young Marie was sent by her mother to her legal guardian uncle Edmund (Marie's father, an officer in the elite guard, had died when she was young) because of romantical complications. Marie had an admirer, a man many years her senior and of unfitting social standing. Marie's mother, Olga Szilva von Szilvás, née von Krieghammer, was appalled that a school headmaster was courting her daughter; a school headmaster without any noble blood in his veins, he was too old and added to all of this he was a widower. Marie was excited about her admirer but soon forgot about him once she came to Krakow. It is an interesting parallel that Marie Szilva von Szilvás and Ida Pfeiffer were both courted by teachers who were many years their senior and of whom their mothers did not approve of.¹⁹⁷

As the niece of the commanding general, Marie's life was colourful and she soon forgot her aged admirer because of the many social events, dinners, balls, ice skating and – very high class – the noble polish society of Krakow only spoke French. Marie was a passionate dancer and soon found new admirers among the young staff officers of the 2nd corps.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Gina Conrad, *Mein Leben*, 9.

¹⁹⁵ Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, Band 4, Vienna 1969, 271-272.

¹⁹⁶ Krieghammer, Edmund Freiherr (seit 1899) von, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd136534406.html#ndbcontent>, 06.01.2024.

¹⁹⁷ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 97-98.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 98-100.

Staff and cavalry officers were the most envied men of the army, added, the cavalry was the most prestigious branch of the imperial-royal army¹⁹⁹, and in Marie's descriptions of life in Krakow this is confirmed. Marie's cousin only chose to dance with cavalry or general staff officers at the ball on November 25th, men of the infantry were of no interest. Marie also liked the general staff, but her particular reason was captain Franz Rohr. Who could blame her? Franz was a promising staff officer and a cavalry man at the same time, he was tall and handsome and looked dashing in his dark green general staff uniform.

Franz and his brother Karl were both stationed in the city and here they got nicknames, Franz became "*das Rohr*", he was tall and strong, and Karl became "*das Röhr*", he was smaller and slenderer.²⁰⁰ Both brothers admired the niece of their commanding officer, *Feldmarschallleutnant* and soon to be *General der Kavallerie* Edmund von Krieghammer. This admiration was a daring project, to flirt with the niece of the former adjutant of the emperor could end badly if managed incorrectly, this project was not for those faint of heart. Both Franz and Karl proved their poise, their self-consciousness and most of all their attributes as gentlemen officers in their pursuit of Marie Szilva von Szilvás. We can assume that Franz and Karl were not the only ones that admired her, she was a great "catch" after all; beautiful and gracious, of noble birth, not particularly unwealthy, from an officer-family and with connections to the elite.

We recall the attributes an officer had to have: Dashing, daring, level-headed, knightly and like a true gentleman; he had to live like a prince at the salary of a commoner, he had to act in the name of the whole army and behave like he had the prowess of all the army's officers combined. Daring and gallant yet gentleman-like behaviour was required on the martial as well as on the civil battlefield; a ballroom would have been a civil battlefield. Most of these requirements for officers were connected to mindsets, some written down, some only in the minds. That an officer should court the niece of his commanding officer was certainly not on any regulatory sheet; that he had to be polite and charming towards her, perhaps even dance with her once was part of the mindset, but to really pursue her was a dangerous affair. If he went too far, he would not only offend the lady but also his commanding officer, an uneventful career devoid of promotions could very well have been the reward of such a pursuit. With the example of the inferno at the *Ringtheater*, we saw that Rohr was (possibly) a gallant and daring officer; this image is strengthened by his acts in the name of love. Be the obstacles a raging inferno or a

¹⁹⁹ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 117-118. and Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 77.

²⁰⁰ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 100.

high-ranking general, Rohr seems to have acted accordingly in both cases. During the fire he (possibly) acted gallantly, like it was expected of him and now in this new yet not less dangerous situation he also acted accordingly. Here he showed his knightly attributes, he was courteous, careful, yet determined and most likely romantic. The praises he got by the higher ups in his qualification sheets were true²⁰¹, he was an officer in the truest, Austro-Hungarian, form; be the adversaries fire or the complications when falling in love, Rohr seems to have mastered both perils.

So, Marie ultimately made her choice, her heart belonged to the general staff, “*Mein Herz neigte dem Generalstab zu ...*”, the lucky man was captain Franz Rohr.²⁰² But Marie was a bit cruel towards Franz. During a dinner party on New Year’s Day in 1891 Franz could not secure a place at the table next to his beloved. To add injury to insult Marie told him at the welcoming, that she wanted to spend the *Fasching*- and ball-season in Vienna, not in boring Krakow and would leave for Vienna on the same day along with uncle Edmund. Marie soon felt bad for Franz, his saddened face spoke volumes, “... *mir [wurde] ganz weh ums Herz u. ich fühlte ganz deutlich, der oder keiner.*”; it became clear to her that day: Him or no one. At the end of the event Marie had to tell him, it was all a crude jape, light came back into Franz’s eyes and the two danced for the rest of the event. In the next few days, they met regularly, for walks, to skate on the ice, to talk. Marie concludes her first description of Franz very heart-warmingly: “... *[wir] sahen uns bei den Jours, auf dem Eise u. fühlten immer mehr, dass wir einander sehr, sehr liebten.*”²⁰³

It is fascinating to see this strong connection between Marie and Franz, if we are to believe Marie’s descriptions verbatim, the time in Krakow must have been like a fairy-tale. Marie’s vivid, colourful and throughout happy description strengthens the argument, that their connection must have really been a special one from the very start. Starting with her retelling of Krakow, Marie’s focus in the memoirs shifts. Her descriptions before were more or less anecdotes of her youth and childhood, funny little adventures and fond memories. Now the main focus of the memoirs shifts towards Franz, towards love. The love for Franz and the time she spent with him become the main focus, the memoirs are “split” into three little booklets. The first half of booklet one focusses on the aforementioned youth, the rest of the memoirs – two and a half booklets – focus on the time she spent with Franz.

²⁰¹ AT-OeSTAKA Pers Quall HR 2792, 177 63/97 k.u.k. Generalstabs-Corps Franz Rohr.

²⁰² Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 100.

²⁰³ *ibid.*, 101.

Even without analysing the text we can see that he became the centre of her thinking. She wrote her memoirs after his death and thus most of her thinking was dedicated towards Franz and the love for him. During Franz's life Marie certainly also felt love for him but when he was alive there was more to do and think about. The monarchy was in its full glory (if not in reality at least in Marie's understanding and memory) the children were young, the family moved a lot, life was exciting. During the 1930s/40s when Marie wrote down her memories of the past, this past was gone; now the only thing that remained was the love she felt for Franz, the only thing that remained from that golden age was the memory of love. She wrote her booklets for him, about him, he was her anchor, her safe haven. She wrote in the bleak and grey 1930s/40s, because of this, it is clear that she mainly focussed on memories that are connected to joy and happiness and that episodes of anger or sadness she felt during her time with Franz are not remembered that vividly. Love was the driving factor of Marie's being, three memory-books and four diary-books are more than enough to prove that love was the defining emotion in Marie's life, it certainly was the defining emotion in her memoirs.

Coming back to the origin of love, Krakow: Marie and Franz met in late 1890 and already on January 21st 1891 Franz had an important appointment with the corps commander. It was a busy day but Franz stood out in his full parade uniform among the other visitors in the waiting hall of the commander's appartements. Once the meeting was over, the captain stepped into the *salon*, smiling from ear to ear, Marie too smiled from ear to ear. They did not care about the curious ladies also present, they had each other.²⁰⁴ Franz had successfully asked (uncle Edmund) for Marie's hand.

Love is ever-present but it is subject to historical changes, as we have established in the first few sentences of this chapter; nonetheless these changes happen slowly. Around the 18th and 19th centuries a rather significant change occurred in the upper social spheres, marriage and connection no longer only came from familial or economic thinking, it started to come from love. Young men and women were getting encouraged – or encouraged themselves – to choose love as the defining factor when looking for a partner.²⁰⁵ This bourgeois model of relationship and love soon became a society-encompassing norm²⁰⁶, but that there was no absolute switch from arranged or semi-arranged marriages to marriages solely chosen by bride and groom is evidenced quite nicely by our Krakow couple. As the source tells us, Marie and Franz fell in love on their own terms, they met by chance at a ball; but to “secure” this relationship Franz

²⁰⁴ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 101.

²⁰⁵ The History of Romance, <https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/history-romance>, 20.06.2024.

²⁰⁶ Bauer, Hämmerle, *Paarbeziehungen*, 75.

had to make an appointment with commander Krieghammer and then with his resolute sister Olga Szilva von Szilvás (Marie's mother).

The meeting with the commander went well, nevertheless the love between Franz and Marie was very different from the examples of love we heard of at the beginning of the chapter, no drama, no long waiting, no doggedness, no real complications. Their love was rather fast and spontaneous, but it worked out. From a ball night in Krakow to a marriage filled with love and devotion towards each other.

Marie's memoirs are our only source of the happenings in Krakow, this following passage should not be an attempt to falsify her memories or to prove that in "reality" it happened differently. The following passage will focus again on her love, her memory, her retrospective arrangement of it, as well as a look into the love of Franz. The memoirs are full of love, she writes them because of the feelings she had for the people she remembers. Most of Marie's love is connected to memory, all of the loved ones she grew up with had passed by the time she started recording her memoirs, her parents, her siblings, her best friend Paula, uncle Edmund and his family, her beloved Feri and all of his relatives. Only Marie's own children and grandchildren and some nieces were alive in the 1930s and 1940s. The people she loved most during the majority of her life were now only in her memories. Marie is reconstructing her life by writing it down, she puts the focus on love, not on loss or war but on the beautiful times she had with her Feri. This is what she wants to be remembered for and how she wants the future generations to remember her and her Feri. This reconstruction is not a reconstruction that would qualify for historical falsification, as far as the merging of sources and literature is concerned there are no inconsistencies. If she had lied and tried to convince the world of something that was not real, she would have had to have published her works in great numbers to convince everyone, but she did not. Her memory-booklets remained in the family only to be occasionally consulted.

Nevertheless, Marie focusses on love to show her readers that love was the defining aspect of her life as she wants to remember it. She cultivated her love story because love was the defining emotion for her. By shifting the focus of her memories to the happy anecdotes and not to the many tragedies, she created the discourse connected to her works. With her own measurement and nostalgic reconstruction, she formed the past. Even though love is in the centre of this past, loss still remains an important factor. Love cannot exist without loss and thus Marie's memories cannot exist without the tragic events.

One of the reasons why Marie choses to put such a great focus on (her) love might be because Franz's love is calm and hard to notice. We heard of his gallant and knightly attributes in the courtship of the young lady von Szilvás and of other little loving character traits, the stories with little Christine or the snoring in the opera come to mind. But we never really see his emotions and his personality, he remains a cypher. Marie is very much convinced that Franz was a loving man, so are the military observers of the time and the newspaper authors after the war, they see in Rohr a loving (yet strict) general, a true Austro-Hungarian in both looks and qualities, a true *Soldatenvater*.

Thus, Franz must have been a loving man, all source-groups attest to this; but his love was different from Marie's and this might be the reason she chose to focus her memories on love, to "balance out" his calm and reserved/modest love with her more emotional love. Their shared love for stenography, their daily letters, the fact that Marie stayed as close to the army's headquarters as she could during the war²⁰⁷ show that their connection must have really been a special one. A little musical story of Marie's memoirs paints a wholesome picture, that underlines the arguments of the last few sentences: Franz was not very musically talented but loved to listen to music, especially music performed by his wife. Marie herself was not the most talented musician either but Franz celebrated everything she did: "*Und wie freute sich mein guter Feri! Da konnte er auch eine Stunde sitzen u. mir zuhören, fand alles gut u. schön ...*"²⁰⁸. Marie is "loud", she sings, she professes her love in (written) words; Franz is "quiet", he listens, he sits calmy beside his wife and is very much content, he likes everything she does and is happy to be in her presence, this is his way to profess his love.

This calm and content love is hard to notice at first glance, some might see the field marshal just sitting there listening to his wife's singing without much emotion, but exactly this was his form of love. Marie knew that, now it was time to let her readers know about the love in the marriage of the Rohrs. Since the memoirs are written from Marie's perspective it comes as no surprise that the love found within the retelling is hers. Franz's love is only seen in some of the anecdotes and between the lines, but mostly his love can be observed through her love. If we view Marie's professing of love as the love both of them felt, her memories and her feelings become the vehicles to understand the feelings and emotions of the field marshal.

Marie's descriptions of Krakow are clearly very closely connected to love and with this beginning of love comes great joy: On the 13th of February 1891, Olga, Marie's mother, arrived

²⁰⁷ Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 28-29.

²⁰⁸ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 136.

from Vienna. Now Franz could complete the “official” part of the engagement and would also ask Olga Szilva von Szilvás for Marie’s hand; Marie became a “lucky bride”, “... *ich war glückliche Braut.*”²⁰⁹ Now the most important part of an engagement could start: Wedding preparations. Marie and Olga would soon depart for Vienna to start organising the “big day”. The new bride would often reflect on her happy time in Krakow, she always had the fondest memories of this Polish city, where she found the luck and love of her life, “... *weil ich dort mein Lebensglück gefunden habe ...*”.²¹⁰ Marie had to make many visits in Vienna, tell all her friends about the captain in Krakow. Many of her friends and relatives would ask about the age of her fiancé, who was on the brink of being made major. Many imagined this captain/major as an old and disgruntled man, a fact that amused Marie, she viewed and described Franz as a “*selten schöner u. fescher Mensch*”, uncommonly beautiful and dashing. During Easter the captain would come to visit and Marie was overjoyed to be able to take walks with him, arm in arm to show him off to the whole world.²¹¹ Marie and Franz spent as much time as they could together, but the major soon had to leave for a mapping exercise with the War School, where he now taught. During those days where they could not talk in person, they wrote letters, letters written in shorthand; they were the “stenographical couple” after all.²¹²

Marie’s love was not only reserved for one member of the Rohr family, Franz’s father and brother were subject to much love and thus to much memory. There certainly is a correlation between love, memory and the number of times Marie mentions a person in her writing. Marie’s memory and her love are twofold. Some loved ones are connected to explicit love, for example brother-in-law Karl and father-in-law Josef. Josef receives a loving description: “*Mein Schwiegervater gefiel mir vom ersten Augenblick an, er war ein ganz reizender u. sehr gescheiter, lieber Mensch.*”²¹³ The other group of loved ones is not explicitly connected to love, there is no Josef-like-summary about Franz or the children. The love Marie felt for Franz and the children was another type of love. Father-in-law Josef only came to visit occasionally, Franz and the children were there (almost) every day, the love she felt for them was strong, but it was a love she felt every day. The love for Josef came once he visited or when Marie remembers him when writing down her memoirs. The love for Franz and the children is always present, in every word and every letter of her memoirs. The life she had with Franz and the children is the main topic of her memories of the past, the love for them is always in the back of Marie’s mind.

²⁰⁹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 102.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, 103.

²¹¹ *ibid.*, 104.

²¹² *ibid.*, 105.

²¹³ *ibid.*, 105-106.

This twofold love is also most likely connected to Marie's preface, here she addresses the readers of her memories: The future generations. Because Josef and Karl died before there were any future generations, she makes an even greater effort to underline their importance. The love for Franz still lives in Marie and like a river, her memories of him flow from the first drop of ink on the first page to the last period at the end of the third memory booklet. The memories about him are still alive in her and in the children to be passed on to the next generations, but she still makes a huge effort to preserve the strong love they felt for each other. This river has a strong current but sometimes it flows underground, not every description Marie gives of her past life with her beloved Feri is as adjective-heavy as the summary of Josef at the start of the paragraph. We do not need to count the uses of love-related words to come to the conclusion that she loved her husband and her children, it is the detail and number of stories in which she remembers the times with them, even if some moves from one garrison to another are repetitive and more or less the same, she still remembers them, she still remembers this golden time of her life.

Next to beloved Josef and Franz there was second born Rohr son Karl, who would develop into a slender young man, compared to his bigger and older brother Franz. Franz and Karl seem to have gotten along quite well, they chose the same career and the same branch in the military, they both chose to become cavalry officers, they even managed to be stationed together in Krakow in 1890. Here the two brothers attended social gatherings together and each brother got a nickname connected to his stature and their last name, we recall: "*das Rohr*" and "*das Röhr*".²¹⁴ This little attack the *Röhr*'s (Karl's) physique did not seem to bother him, also the (failed) courting of Marie Szilva von Szilvás did not seem to have bothered him. Once Franz was married and stationed in Vienna, Karl was luckily transferred to the capital as well, where the bachelor officer spent much time with his brother and his new sister-in-law. Also, the children of Franz and Marie were very fond of their uncle Karl.²¹⁵

Every Sunday Karl would come to visit his brother's family, but these visits were not all fun and games, because Karl was sick. Marie tells us of a (not further explained) heart condition which resulted in severe coughing and pain. But Karl would not let this sickness get the best of him and continued life like a true cavalry officer gentleman. Riding seems to have been his passion, a passion he shared with his brother Franz, but this passion would lead to tragedy.

²¹⁴ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 100.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, 125-126.

Love thus is always connected to loss, the blooming love of Krakow, the fatherly love of Josef, the joyful love of Karl, Marie's and Franz's love eventually ceased to exist, like all things do. But something remains of these strong connections, their memory, written down in blue ink on light-blue lined sheets of paper from the last century, these monuments of feeling, these testaments of love remain until today to be felt again and to be passed on to the next generations, on and on until time itself will cease to exist.

In the summer of 1892 Karl would partake in a riding event, which led from Vienna to Berlin. He took part in this race unprepared and his condition worsened. Marie tells of many heart related incidents, "*böse Herzanfälle*" of which Karl would never really recover. His condition worsened dramatically in 1898 and he had to take leave from the army to travel to Arco for his recovery. On December 15th 1898 he would die there, at the age of 42. Marie writes of a very dark Christmas season 1898, the family would live in seclusion and mourning for the next months.²¹⁶ Franz and Marie lost a brother and a dear friend, but kept charming and happy Karl in their memory. During the war on the Italian front Marie came to visit Karl's grave in Arco, unbothered by the fighting nearby, Marie said a prayer for her brother-in-law at a place which the other family members would only visit by chance, as she put it.²¹⁷

The female members of Franz's family are not remembered so lovingly by Marie Rohr, in the memoirs Rosa, Franz's sister, is only mentioned once in regards to her character. She came along father Josef to visit Franz and Marie. This was Josef's first visit (besides the wedding) and he and Marie got along very well. Marie loved her father-in-law and he seems to have been a friendly old man. He had a physical resemblance with the emperor, both had the same beard style. Marie would develop a loving relationship towards her father-in-law; perhaps an important detail here is that Marie's own father died when she was still young.

In the context of this loving relation and remembrance of her brother- and father-in-law, the lack of mention and remembrance of her sisters- and mother-in-law is surprising and very interesting. Rosa came to visit many times but Marie uses a general description for their relationship, "*auch mit ihr verstand ich mich immer gut.*"²¹⁸ A boring and unemotional description, Josef is described with adjectives that are connected to love. With Rosa there was only a "good understanding", a type of description one would give about a friend of a friend or an annoying co-worker. It is telling that the other sisters as well as the mother are never really

²¹⁶ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 133-134.

²¹⁷ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen II*, 87-89.

²¹⁸ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 149.

mentioned. Josef on the other hand is mentioned constantly, he is even given a loving nickname, “*Após*”. *Após* in Hungarian means father-in-law, Marie writes in German, she herself was technically Hungarian (as we heard before) but “*Após*” was not, he was of Bohemian/German origin. Marie could as well have used the stern sounding German *Schwiegervater* instead of the shorter and friendlier Hungarian *após*. In this particular case “*Após*” seems to be more closely related to the Hungarian word for dad/daddy: *apa*, *apu*, *apuka*, *apus*, not to the Hungarian word for father: *édesapa*. Karl and Josef seem to have been the friendly members of the Rohr family in Marie’s eyes. Josef also got along with his grandchildren splendidly, they were in awe once he told them the “family secret”: “*Merkt euch, ein Rohr lässt sich biegen, aber nie brechen.*”²¹⁹ – a Rohr can be bent but never broken. A clever word-play in German, *Rohr* could be translated to cane, reed, pipe or tube.

As we heard before, Marie was sent to Krakow to forget – or get away from – the school headmaster Bayer, who fell in love with her. This “love” was doomed from the start, not only because Marie’s mother Olga rejected the headmaster vigorously, but also because Marie herself was quite unsure if this really was love. The headmaster was too old, “... *ein für mich viel zu alter Herr ...*”, but he flattered her.²²⁰ This type of “love” seems very strange in today’s standards, an old man courting a 21-year-old woman by sneaking around. Marie remembers that he crept around their holiday-apartment in Fieberbrunn, strangely this slithering around impressed her somehow, but she was not quite sure if it was love. Nevertheless, she told her best friend Paula about the upcoming engagement. Once back home in Vienna, the headmaster came to finalize the engagement but resolute Olga Szilva von Szilvás rejected him and chased him off. At first Marie was sad, her (most likely) first encounter with love ended abruptly. Marie remembers her sadness but adds with hindsight that it was a life-changing decision.²²¹ That headmaster Bayer was chased away by her mother was the prelude to one of the most important chapters of Marie’s life.

Marie’s second admirer – within a few months – was also significantly older than her. Franz was 15 years her senior. Big age gaps were nothing special at the time, Marie’s parents were 18 years apart, Franz and Marie’s son Rudolf was 13 years older than his wife, so age gaps were not seen as “problematic” in the Rohr/Szilva family; but we can deduce that the headmaster must have been significantly older than Marie, he must have been more than 15 years older than her. Added to his age, the headmaster was a widower and “just” a headmaster. It might have

²¹⁹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 38.

²²⁰ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 97.

²²¹ *ibid.*, 97-98.

been a high position but it still was a bourgeois position – we have to keep in mind that Marie was of noble birth and so was her mother, for whom this nobility was a very significant part of one's person/personality. Franz also was of “normal” birth but he was a promising officer and he had the “support” of uncle Edmund – the patriarch by circumstance. After Marie's marriage she lost her nobility, she would gain a higher rank of nobility than she ever had through Franz at the end of the war, but their barony would only last for a few years. With the end of the monarchy, nobility was outlawed and Franz and Marie became “normal” citizens again. Olga was against both admirers, but the second one proved his worth.

Marie was sure of his worth, maybe even from the first time she saw him. In her written memories both Rohr and Bayer are connected to love. Bayer was very much in love with Marie but she was quite unsure about her feelings towards him. In the first mention of Rohr in Krakow, Marie's heart tends towards him, she was not indifferent towards him, as she put it.²²² The descriptions of Bayer are reserved, it was an interesting episode for Marie but never anything more, thus there are not many memories of Bayer. The first memories about Rohr are at first sight also quite reserved but are more loving at second glance. Marie mentions her heart, and that she was not indifferent toward him, a playful yet reserved description. This would develop into the love of her life, it evolved into something very significant. While comparing these two first impressions one can clearly see, that Rohr was more interesting to Marie but the love of her life aspect cannot be deduced from these few words. This aspect is only visible when reading the whole of her memoirs. Marie starts and ends her memoirs with Franz. After her introduction into why she is writing down her life's memories, she signs “*Marie Rohr von Denta Witwe nach Feldmarschall Franz Rohr von Denta*”.²²³ She just could have signed with her name, such as “*Mamá*” for example and thus could have given a reference to the “recipients” – the following generations. But she chose to use her full name and she chose to reference her late husband. She writes her memories of him, she writes for him (and the following generations), she writes with him. In writing she relives her blissful memories with her husband – she again can spend time with him. If the love of her life aspect needs some interpretations in the intro to her memoirs, it needs no interpretations at the end. Marie's diaries start in World War I and continue until 1954; Marie's memoirs, on the other hand, were written in the late 1930s and start with her earliest memories, some stories about her ancestors but the retelling of her memories stops

²²² Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 100.

²²³ *ibid.*, 1.

in 1927. In 1927 Franz died, at this point she stopped her memories; among her last words are: “*Mein Glück ging mit ihm ...*”²²⁴; her luck, better: Her happiness went with him.

²²⁴ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* III, 52.

Chapter 3: Social identity – How we act, what we pass on

In the previous chapters we heard of personal identity which came to us in the form of nationality and military, mixed with character traits; from there we focussed on love, now we somewhat combine these aspects and look at social identity. Here personal love and military/nation are merged and combined with the love for the state which was a big part of the social life of the Rohrs. Love also plays a role in family, for the Rohrs and for many others, family was the most important social connection.²²⁵ Especially in the 19th and 20th centuries familial bonds were seen as immensely important and strengthening one's family was an important task.²²⁶ The meaning of the family will be the focus of this chapter and with it the descriptions of the children and their education. Through the education of the children a clearer picture of the self-perception of the Rohrs and their (self-perceived) social standing will emerge and we will come to understand the social views of the Rohrs. With examples of an Austro-Hungarian liberal mindset; values; the wedding; with the love for the state and an aversion for everything non-state-sanctioned; with the fascination for the military as well as for the wonders of the natural world a complex and individual picture of identity, of social identity will emerge.

Weddings are sometimes described as the most important day in one's life. In the times before the world wars, marriage was an important part of personal and social life, this ritual was the basis of social order.²²⁷ Through these matrimonial events a new entity was created – as we heard before – in the time of the Rohrs increasingly out of love and not just because of financial decisions. Marriage became part of self-fulfilment, part of a striving towards happiness²²⁸, a new family was created by the changing of rings, the “old” family, the families of bride and groom were (mostly) left behind to focus on love and on a personal independent life.²²⁹ Matrimony, in the past, was the mode to start a family, to start a household. This was the sanctioned way for physical connection and thus the sanctioned way to further one's family tree.²³⁰ Even though love and individuality, also outside of marriage became part of everyday

²²⁵ Gundula Walterskirchen, *Mein Vaterland zertrümmert. 1918 – Kriegsende und Neuanfang in Briefen, Tagebüchern und Erinnerungen*, Salzburg/Vienna 2018, 30.

²²⁶ Christine Fertig, *Verwandte Paten und wohlhabende Freunde. Soziale Netzwerke im ländlichen Westfalen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, in: Christine Fertig, Margareth Lanzinger (ed.), *Beziehungen Vernetzungen Konflikte. Perspektiven Historischer Verwandtschaftsforschung*, Cologne/Vienna/Weimar 2016, 202-208.

²²⁷ Katie Barclay, Jeffrey Meek, Andrea Thomson, *Marriage and emotion in historical context*, in: Katie Barclay, Jeffrey Meek, Andrea Thomson (ed.), *Courtship, Marriage and Marriage Breakdown. Approaches from the History of Emotion*, New York 2020, 8.

²²⁸ Barclay, Meek, Thompson, *Marriage*, 5.

²²⁹ *ibid.*, 4.

²³⁰ *ibid.*, 2.

life, Franz and Marie still chose a “traditional” household, while the start of their connection came from individuality.

Franz and Marie’s “big day” was scheduled for the 11th of August 1891, and for the location the little church in Rodaun was selected. Rodaun was a little village outside of Vienna and had the perfect distance from the capital to classify for a place where one could spend one’s holiday, away from the hot and stuffy city, airy Rodaun was the perfect place to go on *Sommerfrische*. It was also chosen because the Szilva family had a summer home there. With its spacious garden it was the perfect basecamp for the wedding guests before their ascend to the hill – the church was built on a little mountain.

The first days of August were marked by many exciting arrivals of friends and family. The Rohrs arrived from Prague, Josef and his children, as well as a son-in-law; Franz’s mother is interestingly not mentioned to have attended the wedding.²³¹ We already heard about the connection between Marie and the members of the Rohr family. Marie describes her three sisters-in-law as “a bit too sweet” and “too provincial”, “... *ein bisschen zu süß u. zu provinzierisch* ...”, but all three were very pretty, “*Alle Drei waren sehr hübsch.*”²³² “A bit too sweet” might be a deserved criticism, but “too provincial” is quite harsh. The Rohrs were not of noble birth and they never really lived in the capital, compared to the noble and well-educated Marie, they paled. But this lack of “civilization” is hardly their own fault. As we heard before, Josef really cared for his children and supported them, especially the boys who made and would make remarkable careers.

The family of the bride attended in bigger numbers and they were more glamorous. Before focussing on said glamour, it is important to contextualise the glamour and nobility of Marie and her family. The family was noble, no doubt, but they were part of the lower noble ranks. Szilva von Szilvás and von Krieghammer might sound pompous but they had no noble title such as baron, count or prince. Edmund von Krieghammer would be given his barony in 1899, but he was a noble before.²³³ Marie’s father Franz Szilva was appointed the noble suffix von Szilvás in 1848 for his services to the monarchy.²³⁴ There were important family members, uncle Edmund first and foremost and the other wedding guest were of not much smaller calibres, as we will soon hear. So, compared to the most important families of the empire, to

²³¹ Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 22-24.

²³² Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 109.

²³³ Krieghammer, Edmund Frh. von (1832-1906), Feldmarschallleutnant, https://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1/oeb1_K/Krieghammer_Edmund_1832_1906.xml, 11.01.2024.

²³⁴ Adelsbrief Franz Szilva von Szilvás, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

the princes and to the countesses, the Krieghammer-Szilva clan would be mentioned – if at all – in a footnote when talking about Austro-Hungarian nobility. Compared to the Rohrs, on the other hand the Krieghammer/Szilva family must have looked like high nobility.

Nobility, even if it was without princely titles, was important. Before, we heard of Marie's mother, Olga Szilva von Szilvás, and her aversion against her daughter's first admirer, headmaster Bayer. The second admirer also was not to her taste initially. Olga was a true lady, well dressed, very self-assured, perhaps at times a bit too self-assured and conceited, but these were the weapons one had to wield when protecting one's (noble) status. Marie certainly was influenced by her mother's social understandings, Marie was always dressed like a lady and acted like one: Her handwriting is pure and easy to decipher (a godsend for every historian), she studied French²³⁵ and learned how to dance²³⁶, her upbringing was strict²³⁷ but she never lost her fun-loving adventurous side and her independence. She was educated at a time when education for girls was lacking, most only got a basic school education and thus few female authors were born²³⁸, but the creator of our main source was one of them.

Marie kept her ladylike attributes but she chose her own personality, we already heard of her love for stenography, a hobby that certainly was not part of the social understanding of a lady. Marie thus lived between the borders of the social world; she was a noble-born lady with an upbringing according to her class but she chose to leave her class, out of love. Because Marie married Franz, she lost her nobility. Her nobility was not important to her, but she kept her social (noble) behaviour, her own freedom induced noble lifestyle. A lifestyle she was able to live, firstly because she was the youngest of her siblings and because Franz too was liberal in his societal views. As we heard in chapter one, he did not really care about his barony, it was an important accomplishment but there were bigger things in life. Marie's and Franz's understanding of society and their place within can be best understood through the education of their children. Parents pass their social roles and views on to their "heirs". But before we focus on the children, we still have to finish the examination of the wedding and its guests; as we heard before, weddings were the traditional mode to "acquire" offspring and to this social norm Franz and Marie subscribed.

Next to the corps commander of Krakow, the most glamorous wedding guests where the witnesses of the bride: Károly Kamermayer, a relative and the first mayor of Budapest (the

²³⁵ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 47.

²³⁶ *ibid.*, 88.

²³⁷ *ibid.*, 33-34.

²³⁸ Bauer, *Hämmerle, Paarbeziehungen*, 66.

cities of Buda, Óbuda and Pest were merged into Budapest in 1873²³⁹) and Lajos Bogisich, also a relative and the president of the supreme court of justice in Budapest. The wedding ceremony was led by Mihály Bogisich²⁴⁰, who would become a bishop and was a renowned singer, awarded even by the empress Elisabeth.²⁴¹ The little baroque church was full of guests that day and the wedding couple strode to the altar, accompanied by the wedding march from Lohengrin. The church was decorated not only by flowers, but also by colourful uniforms and dresses, the dashing nature of the Habsburg army came into its fullest. After the ceremony the wedding guests went for a little walk through the woods to the nearby restaurant and hotel, where a *diner* was held, a military band played and everybody danced. Marie wrote her memoirs in the late 1930s, once she would recall this day to which she had so many fond memories, she somewhat disappointedly adds that she is (now) very sad that no pictures or films were/could be taken on this day in 1891.²⁴²

The wedding seemed to have been rather traditional, church rituals and a social gathering afterwards. The millennia old connection between nobility and church was upheld, even now at the brink of a new century. Faith was not a given at the time, before we heard of *FM* Conrad, who had rather atheistic tendencies in the still very much catholic-dominated Austria-Hungary.

Marie revisits her past life in the late 1930s/early 1940s and cannot help but make a little comment on wedding practices of the “present”: “*Wenn ich von den Hochzeiten von heutzutage höre (1941), die sich auf dem Standesamt abspielen, kann ich mir absolut nicht vorstellen, daß dieselben feierlich sein können.*”²⁴³ Marie’s focus is not the waning faith within society – even though church and faith were important companions, especially in later life – her issue is with the lack of ceremony. For her the ceremony and its festivities afterwards somewhat legitimize the whole procedure. Rituals form reality²⁴⁴, and for Marie these church rituals form her reality, marriages that are held before a clerk at the registry office do not hold reality and meaning. Perhaps also the lack of representation is concerning to her, big dresses and uniforms hung full with orders and decorations are surely not the attire chosen by the attendees at the registry office. This importance of representation, of standing and of representing one’s social standing

²³⁹ Kamermayer Károly, <https://www.vanderkrogt.net/statues/object.php?webpage=ST&record=hubp040>, 12.07.2024.

²⁴⁰ Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 22.

²⁴¹ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 24.

²⁴² *ibid.*, 109.

²⁴³ *ibid.*, 109.

²⁴⁴ though a medieval example: Klaus Oschema, Falsches Spiel mit wahren Körpern. Freundschaftsgesten und die Politik der Authentizität im franko-burgundischen Spätmittelalter, in: Historische Zeitschrift, 293/1, 2011, 40-67.

comes from Marie's social (noble) thinking, a thinking that was on a steady decline at the change of the century and was almost completely lost in the late 1930s.

The second biggest institution present on the wedding day, next to religion, was the army. The guests dressed in their most flashing gala-uniforms, hoping to catch a beam of sunlight in order to reflect it with their chest full of medals and decorations. A military band played and most wedding guests were officers; the groom and his witnesses (both were captains²⁴⁵), uncle(-in-law) Edmund, father(-in-law) Josef and his son Karl, as well as a colonel and a first lieutenant as guests.²⁴⁶ The Army was a huge part of the social life within Austria-Hungary, we heard of the importance of the officer-corps and its social standing. Also, here at the wedding of Franz and Marie this important social role the military played becomes apparent. What also becomes apparent is that this significance is part of the family's social understanding and identity.

The newlyweds formed now a new entity and really self-actualized, they did not move in with the family, they moved into their own apartment in Vienna's Resselgasse. Marie now took charge of the new household, she was the commanding officer, Franz was glad to have Marie in charge, "*Mein guter Feri war ja so genügsam, redete mir in nichts hinein u. ließ mich schalten u. walten.*"²⁴⁷ Earlier we heard that officers were supposed to focus only on one thing: The army. Being in charge of a household would therefore often be the task of an officer's wife. Marie would also be in charge of the finances of the household, also in later years Franz would only occasionally dabble in "finances", when going out Marie would usually pay the bill and keep an eye on the financial side of things. A family anecdote tells of the often-used phrase "*Mitzchen, mach du!*" on such occasions. Another anecdote connected to this "behaviour" of Franz tells of a doctor's visit: The doctor would ask the old field marshal "*Your excellency, how are you today?*" to which his excellency would reply: "*I don't know, please ask my wife about that!*"²⁴⁸ Whether or not these stories are true does not matter, the underlying narrative is what is important here, Franz did not really care about life outside of the military. The only thing he really cared about, beside the army, was his wife Marie.

Franz and Marie also formed a "typical" complementary relationship, if one believes in the historic perception of the "typical" characteristics of men and women. Some emotions were seen as female whereas others were seen as male, thinking and feeling were thus seen as dichotomous. Men were perceived as rational; women were seen as emotional. That such clear

²⁴⁵ Rohr, Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen, 22-24.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 22-24.

²⁴⁷ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 110.

²⁴⁸ Family Anecdotes, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

distinctions and norms are far from scientific showed “nicely” in the aftermath of the First World War, women and men were affected by the terrors of mechanized war and showed extreme emotions of panic and nervousness.²⁴⁹ Even if such clear distinctions in emotional behaviour are over-simplified, they show some similarities in Franz and Marie, perhaps coincidentally.

Marie was sociable and more loving, as we heard in the chapter about love, she was “loud” she professed her love; one could say she was emotional. Franz was calm and tactical, he was “quiet”; one could say he was rational. But – and thus the simple explanation is destroyed – both of them loved, both of them were emotional. Franz loved in his own way and Marie loved in her own way; both were separate individuals and both had emotions, to think that emotions of individuals could be categorized in to simple columns like rational/emotional is wrong. Reality is nuanced and so are feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, this branched world view held steady for most of history and was part of the life and times of the Rohrs. If they themselves believed in this separation of emotions is unclear. If they would have had to play along in this perception, their performance must have been convincing, Marie was “emotional” and Franz was “rational”. These traits must have really been part of their personality (which was formed by the surrounding social world), it would make little sense to play the role of emotional/rational so convincingly in public and then just to shed this farce once the apartment doors closed behind them.

Franz and Marie followed the strict separation of life-tasks men and women (of their social class) had. Men worked and women were in charge of the household. Their days in Vienna after the wedding were thus quite “typical”, Marie managed the household and Franz taught at the War School. The evenings were spent with walks together and afterwards Franz would read through the homework of his students, while Marie practised her stenographical skills. They were happy, “... *wir wünschten uns nichts anderes, waren glücklich u. zufrieden.*”.²⁵⁰ “Normal” life made them happy, they subscribed to the traditional family values and in the summer of 1892 the importance of family is underlined even stronger with the birth of their first child, daughter Christine. It was a difficult birth, a forceps delivery. But in the end, all went well and little Christine was baptized on September 4th, her godmother was supposed to be Franz’s mother, but she could not attend, so Franz’s sister Rosa was chosen to represent her. Ultimately Christine’s second name became Rosa, a compromise because the short version of mother

²⁴⁹ Dixon, History of Emotions, 15-17.

²⁵⁰ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 111.

Rosalia's name would have been also Rosa. In addition, Christine was named Olga and Marie, Marie's mother's name and her own, a version of Maria/Mary, the name of the Virgin Mary.²⁵¹ The names of their daughter again reflect traditional thinking, the little child was named after both its grandmothers and the Virgin Mary, more traditionalism is hard to find. One might assume that second-born Rudolf was named after the crown prince, Rohr himself was named Franz Josef, so this Rudolf would have fitted quite well. But little Rudolf was named after Marie's grandfather, Rudolf Edler von Krieghammer.²⁵² There are sadly no direct mentions why their third child was named Stephan, but we might assume that his name was inspired by his uncle, Marie's brother Stephan Szilva von Szilvás; or by the first king of Hungary (Saint) Stephen I. – Stephan in German and István in Hungarian. The boys also were named traditionally. Thus, the most important values Franz and Marie had can be deduced from the names of the children: Family, faith and ancestors; perhaps also a connection to the state, that the son of the emperor was also named Rudolf certainly did not hinder anyone from naming the boy Rudolf and it also was a traditional Habsburg name; as with almost every decision, Hungarian national thinking also has its fingers – or better its influencing thoughts – in play.

The education of the children now became a very important aspect of the life in the Rohr household, Rudolf and Stephan were born a few years after Christine in 1895 and 1896 respectively.²⁵³ In 1898 Marie hired a nanny, but her choice was poor, this nanny was unpopular among the children, because she beat them. Marie nevertheless kept her for another year because – as she puts it – the nanny begged her not to be fired. A very strange episode, but it tells us that the education and upbringing by Franz and Marie seems not to have been very strict, they seem not to have approved of physical violence.²⁵⁴ Their education was however focussed on the military, that their sons would once become officers was an absolute. Franz most likely wanted that his sons take the same career path as father and grandfather before them and become cavalry officers, therefore all three children got hobby horses, which they raced through the rooms of the corps command, where they lived at the time. The boys also had a literal army of tin soldiers. As stressed many times in this paper, militarism was one of the main ideologies and ways of thinking of the Austro-Hungarian society at that time and the boys were encouraged from all sides to become soldiers.²⁵⁵ Once young Stephan was asked by the wife of chief of the general staff Beck, if he also wanted to become a soldier, he avidly replied that he wanted to

²⁵¹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 112-113.

²⁵² *ibid.*, 122.

²⁵³ Rohr, *Verschiedene Aufzeichnungen*, 18-19.

²⁵⁴ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 132.

²⁵⁵ Deák, *k.(u.)k. Offizier*, 20.

become an officer, not a soldier! Little Rudolf proudly spoke of the war and how gallantly he will shoot at the enemy, once he was told that the enemy would shoot back, some of his courage to go to war left him.²⁵⁶

The militaristic education of the Rohr children (and countless other children at the time) proved to be a fateful decision, along with the rampant hunger for battle in the years leading up to 1914, this thinking not only led to the disastrous First World War but ultimately to the even more horrific Second World War. Decisions that were unforeseeable in the late 1890s but the terrors of wars past were as clear as day to everyone at that time, few chose to see them. These terrors were too far removed from the peaceful yet war-craving society at the turn of the century. If only people then kept the words that little Rudolf heard about the enemy shooting back in their minds, much catastrophe could have been averted; much catastrophe could still be averted nowadays if humankind would reflect on the horrors of history.

Christine's upbringing was "naturally" different from the boys'. She was a girl and the social norms we heard of before, husband/man at work (or war) and wife/woman at home, were followed by the Rohrs' parenting – but not entirely and strictly. Christine's education shows the liberal side of the thinking of Franz and Marie, her education was free and open to the world and its wonders – the boys certainly also got a taste of this open world but their paths were more or less set, Christine could choose. Marie and Franz seem to have worked a lot with childlike wonder and love for adventure, as well as the inherent interest in the natural world at the turn of the century when choosing the education for their children.

The last quarter of the 19th century was a fast-moving time, a time of big ideas and concepts. Overall fascination with the natural world was commonplace and Darwin's ideas were still present and topical, thus the Austro-Hungarian natural history museum which opened its gates in 1889 had close ties to evolutionary theories and even sported a frieze of "evolving" monkeys²⁵⁷; popular tries to explain the world were *en mode*, one such explanation of the world would be the "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation" by Robert Chambers, who had his adversaries.²⁵⁸ All the mentioned thinkers had their adversaries, evidence that the topics they focussed on were of big social and public importance, things that are fought over so passionately tend to have a prominent position within a society.

²⁵⁶ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 138-139.

²⁵⁷ Bezüge zu Charles Darwin am NHM Wien, https://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/museum/geschichte_architektur/darwin, 03.07.2024.

²⁵⁸ Robert Chambers, Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation and Other Evolutionary Writings. Edited with a new Introduction by James A. Secord, Chicago/London 1994.

Coming back to the children's upbringing: Since nature and its understanding were of such great importance for society, it does not surprise that it too was a part of the childhood of Christine, Rudolf and Stephan. Before, we established, that the family-style of the Rohrs was traditional, that the church and the army were important, but now we enter into the liberal world of Franz and Marie. As we heard earlier, beating their children was not an option in their education. Not beating your kids nowadays might sound like the bare minimum of a good upbringing but we have to keep in mind, that physical violence was part of the Austrian educational system well until the 1960s.²⁵⁹ In the 19th century violence-free education was almost unheard of and was seen as soft or weak.²⁶⁰ In schools as well as homes of the 19th century physical violence was seen as normal and every-day, violence in schools had its origin in household violence, this parental (mostly paternal) right to use violence against one's own child remained unquestioned up until the 19th century.²⁶¹ If the Rohr household was completely violence free (apart from the nanny) is hard to tell. What the sources do tell us is, that there was certainly an aversion against violence against children. Thus, this part of their parenting seems not very traditional.

Some natural sciences and evolutionary theory especially do not fit into the church's traditional explanation of our world. Church and faith were important to Marie, and especially its rituals. But church and faith do not exclude other worldviews in the believe system of the Rohrs. One of Christine's favourite books was an animal-lexicon, filled with all the animals of our planet and included among even the most exotic species were "*vorsintflutliche*", antediluvian, animals.²⁶² While tigers, lions or southern cassowaries might fuel a child's imagination, pictures of animals long extinct must have been electrifying. It is no wonder, that those were among Christine's favourites. When uncle Karl (Franz's brother) came to visit, Christine would proudly present him her book and her animal friends. In true uncle-fashion Karl would mix up the names and drawings of said animals, all while Christine's strict gaze was upon her uncle, she knew her antediluvian fauna well and there were no jokes to be made with such serious topics!²⁶³ This antediluvian anecdote shows us the liberal open-worldly side of Franz and Marie,

²⁵⁹ Jutta Ehrengut-Lange, Pflege und Betreuung des gesunden Kleinkindes, in: Handbuch der Kinderheilkunde, 3. Band, Berlin-Heidelberg 1966, 438, in: Günter Pernhaupt, Hans Czermak, Die gesunde Ohrfeige macht krank. Über die alltägliche Gewalt im Umgang mit Kindern, Vienna 1980.

²⁶⁰ Carola Kuhlmann, Erziehung und Bildung. Einführung in die Geschichte und Aktualität pädagogischer Theorien, Wiesbaden 2013, 83.

²⁶¹ Andreas Deutsch, Prügelstrafe, 2-3, in: Albrecht Cordes (ed.), Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte. HRG Berlin 1958, <https://www-hrgdigital-de.uaccess.univie.ac.at/id/pruegelstrafe/stichwort.html>, 03.07.2024.

²⁶² Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 125-126.

²⁶³ *ibid.*, 125-126.

if they would have been staunch conservative Catholics, they would have never bought their daughter a book which came into conflict with the church's traditional story of creation. The family was catholic and close to the church, faith and going to church were normal, something one did not have to underline while writing down the memories of the past. In Marie's diary entries during World War II, there are more references to faith and God, especially during the many air raids at the end of the war and when she writes about her son Stephan, who was a P.O.W. in Japanese occupied Indonesia. But just as normal as going to church on Sundays and faith was, so normal were the "antediluvian" animals; even the term "antediluvian" animals links both church and natural science together. Marie does not make an effort to underline how special these books were and how unusual it would be for a young child to know these prehistoric animals in the 1890s. The upbringing of the children was "normal" for Marie, there never was an occasion where she would have to justify or explain her parenting. She also never compared the upbringing of her children to her own or that of other families she knew.

During one of their walks through Vienna, Marie and Christine encountered a man walking an anteater, a sight that bewildered all pedestrians in a 100m radius. Little Coco (Coco and Christl were Christine's nicknames) was not very surprised by this animal, she knew everything about exotic and non-exotic animals. She simply slid past the amazed onlookers and could not understand their astonishment, it was just an anteater, nothing special.²⁶⁴ In Christine's fascination with the natural world we might see her parents' fascination with the natural world, parents tend to imprint their hobbies and interests into their children. The boys "inherited" their father's militaristic interests and Christine "inherited" the love for the natural world. This love for adventure and nature can be seen in Marie's character but also in Franz's love for animals – he was a cavalry man after all – and in his knowledge and erudition that was mentioned in the biographical chapter. These "inheritances" are not exclusive, certainly Rudolf and Stephan also were fascinated by animals as well as nature and Christine inherited some of her resolute personality from her father's militarism.

Militarism and fascination for nature, these two defining aspects of the late 19th century, can be seen as "personality traits" of Franz and Marie as well as "traits" of their children. These interests became part of their social identity, many members of the Austro-Hungarian society certainly identified themselves with these two essential characteristics at the turn of the century, because they were such huge "movements".

²⁶⁴ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* I, 126.

Christine was fearless, her upbringing close to natural fascinations made her adventurous, her upbringing close to the military made her courageous and determined. On a Sunday in Pozsony (now Bratislava) a dozen young lieutenants, brigade students of Franz, made their visit to Marie. Little Christine also made her appearance and “talked” happily with the lieutenants. Christine soon brought all of her stuffed animals (again animals!) and each officer was given one, she also introduced the cavalry men to her own steed, her rocking horse, a “*Forellenschimmel*” (a specific type of white horse). The young hussars were very impressed but one of them made a huge mistake, he did not know what a *Forellenschimmel* was, as a cavalry man one would have expected he knew this type of horse. Christine certainly expected as much of him and soon berated him for his ignorance. The other young lieutenants busted into laughter and the poor young count was from now on well-known for his ignorance about the *Forellenschimmel*. In the meantime, the commanding officer of the young cavalry men, lieutenant colonel Rohr came home and was utterly delighted to see his men, each holding a plush-animal, being entertained by his three-year-old daughter.²⁶⁵ Christine not only embarrassed this young count but also a colonel: The man mistook Christine’s babbling for beautifully pronounced English and was surely mortified once Marie told him her daughter was speaking German.²⁶⁶

These little anecdotes show how free and quite uninhibited the upbringing of little “Coco” was, some parents certainly would have pushed her aside when visitors came – Marie remembers that in her childhood, she was pushed aside once the door rang and the guests arrived, but does not contrast this fact with her own educational methods.²⁶⁷ It shows how reflected and empathetic she was. Some parents might be embarrassed by their lively child and its very straightforward attitude but Franz and Marie were delighted by their bright and inquisitive daughter. Through education we can gain insight into the social understandings of the Rohrs. Daughters at that time mostly were educated to become wives; they were supposed to focus on childbearing, their caretaking and a well-kept household²⁶⁸; women were the emotional part of humankind, soft and sensitive beings that should be kept well away of the world’s dangers. Many subscribed to this world view, particularly in the upper class; these views come from the wartime letters of a “colleague” of field marshal Rohr, Alois Fürst von Schönburg-Hartenstein. This comparison is only a rough one, Rohr and Schönburg-Hartenstein both were officers but the latter was “only” a major general and the former was “only” a baron whereas the latter was

²⁶⁵ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 119-121.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 121.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 33-34.

²⁶⁸ Walterskirchen, *Vaterland*, 17.

a prince. But the Rohrs and the Schönbürg-Hartensteins both lived in the same society and witnessed the same discourses. Ladies at that time were supposed to be/to become good wives, we might assume that the Schönbürg-Hartensteins certainly viewed dancing lessons as part of a good education and that the participation in a dancing class was mandatory. Dancing was also part of the Rohr household; Marie was a passionate dancer as befitted her station²⁶⁹, she danced with great enthusiasm, but she danced without her Feri. Franz was rather temperate during balls, but he was happy to see his wife enjoying herself, “*Ich tanzte immer [...] so gerne u. mein guter Feri hatte nichts dagegen.*”²⁷⁰ Also the children were supposed to take dancing classes but Christine was unhappy with these classes and begged her mother not to be sent there anymore and thus ended the waltz-education.²⁷¹ That Christine even was “allowed” to veto such an integral part of a lady’s education is an interesting aspect; we again can take a look at Schönbürg-Hartenstein and his astonishment, that a female war reporter wore pants while at the front²⁷², we might speculate that he would not let his daughter veto her (dancing) education.

More evidence that the Rohrs did not follow the traditional societal gender roles is Christine’s further education and life. The educational paths of all the Rohr children were very representable, Stephan became a cadet at the naval academy in 1911²⁷³ and Rudolf too passed his entry exam in Pola.²⁷⁴ That the two boys would become (naval and not cavalry this time) officers, was more or less a given development, as we heard before, the sons of officers also mostly became officers.²⁷⁵ Their educational path was nothing special for a military family; Christine’s path on the other hand was a very extraordinary one: She enrolled in the University of Vienna. Women were allowed to attend the university from 1897 on, naturally very few really made the choice to attend – or had the capabilities and the standing to attend.²⁷⁶ Christine was among those who could afford – in this case socially – to attend the University of Vienna, the daughter of one of the most important generals of the empire was certainly a fitting candidate for the faculty of philosophy. Nevertheless, there was much scepticism towards women at the university – despite their few numbers. Among the 9.205 students of the summer

²⁶⁹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen I*, 91.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 114.

²⁷¹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen II*, 32.

²⁷² Walterskirchen, *Vaterland*, 28.

²⁷³ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen II*, 52.

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 62.

²⁷⁵ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 20.

²⁷⁶ Entwicklung der Studierendenfrequenz im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/de/themen/entwicklung-der-studierendenfrequenz-im-19-und-20-jahrhundert>, 28.02.2024.

semester 1913/14 only 7% were women – among them Christine Rohr.²⁷⁷ At the time Christine would attain her doctorate – in march 1918²⁷⁸ – women made up 15% of the 10.554 students of the winter semester 1918/19.²⁷⁹ Although the sight of women at the university was nothing “new”, in 1913 Christine’s student “identity card” – rather a booklet – still only had the pre-printed “*Hörer*” or “*des Studierenden*”, these two pre-prints remained unchanged in her booklet, only the pre-printed “*Herr*” was corrected with the fitting “*Frl.*” for *Fräulein* in handwritten ink.²⁸⁰ Once she graduated from university, Christine would become the first women in an academic position at the Austrian National Library, here again her position was “*Staatsbibliothekar*”, not “*Staatsbibliothekarin*”.²⁸¹ These ungendered descriptions of Christine show that the path she took was a new one, the bureaucratic system was not yet prepared for women in universities or in the civil service.

Christine studied philology at the university, one of her professors was Elise Richter – the first woman at the university of Vienna with a habilitation and the first to receive the title of (extraordinary – *außerordentliche(r)*) professor in 1921.²⁸² Rohr and Richter developed a professional and personal connection; it was Christine who saved the estate of Elise Richter and her sister²⁸³ once they were arrested and brought to the concentration camp Theresienstadt where they were killed in 1943.²⁸⁴

The choice and Christine’s ability to study at the university once again is a testament to the liberal and open-minded mindset in the household of the Rohrs. A liberal mindset that continued through time and can be seen again in the defiance and rejection to national socialism – a liberal mindset that is connected to Austria and the Habsburgs. Christine and Marie rejected the Nazi system because of its hate – both Marie’s best friend Paula²⁸⁵ and Christine’s mentor Elise Richter were Jewish²⁸⁶ – but also because the Nazi system was German, anti-Habsburg and more or less anti-Catholic. The mindsets and lives of the Rohrs were very connected to these core values of Austria-Hungary: Habsburg loyalty, Austro-Hungarian patriotism and

²⁷⁷ Entwicklung der Studierendenfrequenz, <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/de/themen/entwicklung-der-studierendenfrequenz-im-19-und-20-jahrhundert>, 28.02.2024.

²⁷⁸ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen III, 2.

²⁷⁹ Entwicklung der Studierendenfrequenz, <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/de/themen/entwicklung-der-studierendenfrequenz-im-19-und-20-jahrhundert>, 28.02.2024.

²⁸⁰ Copy Legitimation Christine Rohr, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

²⁸¹ Rohr Christine Rosa Olga Marie Baronin von Denta; Bibliothekarin, <http://biografia.sabiado.at/rohr-christine-rosa-olga-marie/>, 05.07.2024.

²⁸² Elise Richter, tit. ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. phil., <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/de/personen/elise-richter>, 28.02.2024.

²⁸³ Rohr Christine, <http://biografia.sabiado.at/rohr-christine-rosa-olga-marie/>, 05.07.2024.

²⁸⁴ Elise Richter, <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/de/personen/elise-richter>, 28.02.2024.

²⁸⁵ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen III, 18. and Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 91-92.

²⁸⁶ Elise Richter, <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/de/personen/elise-richter>, 28.02.2024.

Catholicism; but at the same time, they lived freely, guided by a liberal mindset and they took the opportunities their – very much privileged – lives made possible for them. Another interesting detail is, that Marie remembers the start of her daughter's university career without much special attention²⁸⁷, that her daughter enrolled was something “normal”, not a single word that such a path was special or a comparison to other young women; it was Christine's choice to go to university and with that it was “normal”. Franz too was very happy with his daughter's choice and her doctorate in 1918, he wrote her – stenographically – in March of 1918: “*Meine liebe Koko! Zu deiner Prüfung und bevorstehender Promovierung gratuliere ich dir aufs Herzlichste. Du kannst stolz sein auf alle deine Erfolge; ich bin es nicht minder; hoffentlich wird es mir vergönnt sein, dass ich am 21.03. in Wien, in der Universität bin!*”²⁸⁸ Words of a proud father, who fully supported his daughter's untypical path.

The concept of the “good housewife” was truly missing from the upbringing of Christine, she herself never became a “good housewife”, she focussed on her career at the national library and spent her free time in the Rodaun garden²⁸⁹ and with her dog breeding.²⁹⁰

Franz wrote to Christine in shorthand; even the children were taught stenography, second-born son Stephan wrote to his parents about his studies at the naval academy stenographically.²⁹¹ A little outlook on Stephan and stenography: When Stephan joined the “counterrevolution” in post-WW1 Hungary, there were investigations (“*Nachfragen*”) about him. Marie wrote about these “*Nachfragen*” in shorthand.²⁹² This stenographical entry is one of only two shorthand passages in the diaries. The second passage is in Marie's second to last diary entry in 1953, where she writes about some works being done on the house²⁹³, why she chose to write in shorthand here is unclear. Her first use of shorthand in December 1919²⁹⁴ could be explained a bit easier. These questions must have been a shock, perhaps embarrassing. The family never came into contact with “crime” or actions that were not sanctioned by the state, certainly no coup or strongman involvements in politics. All political and military actions the family engaged in were state sanctioned.

²⁸⁷ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 63.

²⁸⁸ Stenographical letter from Franz to Christine Rohr, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

²⁸⁹ Rohr, *Tagebuch* II, 10.5.1940.

²⁹⁰ Rohr, *Tagebuch* I, 16.5.1936.

²⁹¹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 53.

²⁹² Rohr, *Tagebuch* I, 29.12.1919 and 6.3.1920 and 29.3.1920.

²⁹³ Rohr, *Tagebuch* IV, 21.7.1953.

²⁹⁴ Rohr, *Tagebuch* I, 29.12.1919.

This dislike of non-state-sanctioned or anti-state and therefore anti-Habsburg activities are inherent in Marie and Franz's thinking and in their social identity (a thinking that would result in great personal crisis at the end of the war). This thinking is best demonstrated by Marie's disdain of national socialism. During Franz's position as chief of staff of the 2nd corps in Vienna, there were some student "revolts". The apartment of the Rohrs was on Liebiggasse, quite close to the university. Marie thus became witness to these demonstrations and remembers them with disapproval. The chants of the students "*Hoch Schönerer!*" (Georg von Schönerer was the trailblazer for German nationalism in Austria²⁹⁵) are still ringing in her ears, for her they were the harbinger of national socialism. "Law and order" were only reinstated once the military moved in and the students were dispersed.²⁹⁶ Marie fails to connect this memory to a specific date but it must have been around 1899. Her mention of the military intervention also bears the question if Franz was involved in silencing this "revolt". What is for certain is the aversion of the Rohrs towards any anti-Habsburg activities. Since there are no later connections between Rohr and the protests it is rather unlikely, if he was active in silencing the revolts, it must have been in the background without any official and public statements that connected his name to the intervention. Such an intervention against the public would have been quite unpopular. We might take a little look at Marie's uncle Edmund Krieghammer, whose actions against workers in Krakow were not very good for his image.²⁹⁷ Rohr is remembered as a good and friendly chief of staff of the 2nd corps, he has created an image of trust and love among the citizens of Vienna because of his services²⁹⁸, brutally crushing a student protest most certainly would have tainted such an image.

Stephan's post-WWI activities were not state-sanctioned, he joined the anti-communist movement in Hungary. It certainly was not ideology that was the problem here, the family was and remained set against communism²⁹⁹; it was the "investigations" that must have been the problem. To even imagine someone would investigate a family member was unheard of, a family of such standing should not be questioned. If there would have been a bigger investigation the standing of the family could have taken damage.

²⁹⁵ Schönerer, Georg von (österreichischer Ritter 1860, 1888 aberkannt, 1917 wiederverliehen), <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz109947.html>, 10.02.2024.

²⁹⁶ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 141-142.

²⁹⁷ Krieghammer, Edmund Freiherr (seit 1899) von, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz46056.html>, 10.02.2024.

²⁹⁸ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1. and G.d.K. Franz Rohr, in: Freie Stimmen 28.04.1916, 1-2, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=fst&datum=19160428&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 09.09.2024.

²⁹⁹ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen III, 14.

This whole affair certainly was mysterious. It is unclear who came and asked questions. Marie writes, that Rudolf later went to the police, the result was rather “boring”; this affair seems to have revolved around that Stephan left a place in Hungary. Since Rudolf went to the police, this could imply that the police were not leading this “investigation”, perhaps it was the secret police, Hungarian intelligence services, communist agents or perhaps someone completely different. The situation would soon normalize, because the next time such questions were made, Marie noted them in her diary in normal writing, not in shorthand. Perhaps Marie wanted to hide this first entry in December 1919, hiding it certainly would fit the “theme” of this episode; Stephan even made a visit to his parents in secret in March 1920, “*Stefi ist heimlich bei uns gewesen.*”.³⁰⁰ By using stenography she hid this first entry from the world, the other entries were not hidden, even though they might have been worth hiding. Stephan even came to Vienna in secret (why and how is sadly unknown), such a fact would certainly need more hiding than the first “investigation”. But perhaps his involvement in post-war Hungary had become “normal” in March 1920 and it was something “unnatural” in December 1919. The times were strange and moving fast, new challenges, dangers and opportunities arose, Stephan used these times. Perhaps he used these times as a way to experience an adventure. This adventure is not remembered by Marie, she remembers that Stephan joined the Hungarian army after the war, but she does not write about his involvement in Admiral Miklós Horthy’s rise to power. Perhaps it was something not worth remembering or she chose not to include it in her memoirs. The “whites” were certainly not much kinder than the “reds” in this back and forth of violence in post-war Hungary. Stephan’s involvement is hard to trace, some clues lead to one quite notorious paramilitary commander and his officer corps³⁰¹ other clues show that Stephan was sent to investigate a plundering and corrupt “white” commander.³⁰² Stephan’s connection to the Horthyist/whites was not much talked about in the family; the adventurous activities of his brother Rudolf were also never talked about, Marie does not even mention them in passing. At roughly the same time as Stephan was in Hungary, Rudolf was at the southern border of Austria defending Styria against troops from the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In a somewhat poetic way he mimicked his father, who defended Carinthia during the war. Rudolf’s involvement in this conflict is only evidenced by a document awarding him a medal for participating in this fight.³⁰³ It is interesting that Marie does not – or chooses not to –

³⁰⁰ Rohr, Tagebuch I, 29.3.1920.

³⁰¹ Béla Bodó, The White Terror in Hungary, 1919–1921: The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups, in: Austrian History Yearbook 42, 2011, 133–163.

³⁰² Béla Bodó, The White Terror. Antisemitic and Political Violence in Hungary, 1919–1921, London/New York 2019, 159 (Stephan was at Királyhida, the place of the plundering).

³⁰³ Verleihungsurkunde Steiermärkische Erinnerungsmedaille, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

remember the post-war activities of her sons. Perhaps because in both cases the violence was not really state sanctioned, Marie and Franz were very much in favour of state (Habsburg) control – acts that differed from Habsburg rule, be they “red” or “white”, Austrian or Slavic, certainly were strange and unnatural to them. But perhaps she did not mention these adventurous activities, because they were dangerous and the two boys (they were in their early 20s) were her sons.

During the First World War Marie writes in her diaries about and remembers in her memoirs the fear she had for her boys. In her memoirs she recounts the prayer she spoke every day, in which she begged the Almighty to bring her sons back safely. Rudolf and Stephan served in the navy³⁰⁴, positions they chose themselves. They as well could have asked their father for a comfortable and cosy staff position, perhaps somewhere in the capital, far away from the front. But the boys wanted to see action. Stephan and Rudolf would both serve on several warships, one time they even served on the same ship. Stephan was also stationed on *S.M.S. Novara*, here he met the ship’s captain, Miklós Horthy, the later regent of Hungary.³⁰⁵ After that the younger Rohr brother would join the U-boat-detachment of the navy, a source for much anxiety for his mother.³⁰⁶ That the sons of generals would serve at the front was somewhat required, it certainly would have seemed strange if they would not serve. Most of these sons were very eager to go to the front, the militaristic mindset of the time surely spurred them on. We heard of the boys’ interest for everything military in their childhood. Their upbringing as well as the upbringing of millions of other boys made sure that the frontlines – as well as the hospitals and mass graves – had no demand for men. The Rohr family was lucky, both sons survived the war, other field marshal’s families were not so lucky. Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf would lose two sons during the war, son Herbert was killed in action in September 1914³⁰⁷ and son Kurt died in January 1918 due to a lung ailment.³⁰⁸ Hermann Kövess von Kövessháza’s son Béla was killed in action in August/September 1914.³⁰⁹ The early deaths of Herbert Conrad von Hötzendorf and Béla Kövess von Kövessháza are telling examples of the many (well trained) officers of the Austro-Hungarian army who fell in the first months of the war – a fact that often has been cited as the reason why the imperial and royal army performed so mediocrely in the field.³¹⁰

³⁰⁴ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 69-70.

³⁰⁵ Qualifikationsgrundbuchsheft über Stephan, Franz, Josef Freiherr Rohr von Denta k.u.k. Seeaspirant, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

³⁰⁶ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 69-70.

³⁰⁷ Sondhaus, Conrad, 156.

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 207.

³⁰⁹ Reichlin-Meldegg, Prinz Eugen, 85.

³¹⁰ Deák, k.(u.)k. Offizier, 233.

So, the social identity of Franz and Marie was something special, something they themselves created. They chose from traditional, new and liberal world views; their family concept was clearly traditional and the church played a big role here; their children's upbringing was twofold: Traditional and yet open-minded, the boys were "pushed" to become officers and Christine was able to choose her own life-path. The identities they projected to the outside and held within their thinking were connected to the state and the military, both Franz and Marie were born and grew up in a state that supported their lifestyles, that they chose to support this state and frowned upon everything that turned against said state or was non-state-sanctioned is unsurprising. Nevertheless, the social identity of the Rohrs is one of self-choice, they did not follow a clear line, they were neither absolutely conservative nor absolutely liberal, as with everything (from life itself to the composition of the Austro-Hungarian empire) their social identity was complex.

This complexity and the possibility of choice will be underlined by a last example, that connects to aspects we heard of many times: Nationality, identity, languages and names. When Marie went to register her eldest son Rudolf at the Piarist high school in Budapest in 1904, she encountered some resistance. The principal must have been a proud Magyar, for he sternly replied to Marie's (German) request with: "*Tessék, csak magyarul!*" – "Only in Hungarian, please!". Marie thought that such a learned man would be able to speak German, he certainly did but he did not want to, he was a proud Hungarian and spoke Hungarian. Marie now listened carefully to the requirements the principal listed (in Hungarian) and found out that he indeed was quite versed in German. At the end of this strenuous conversation, Marie had to give the name and occupation of the father of the future pupil and the principle shrunk to a subdued and apologetic figure – he just (politely) insulted the wife of the inspector general of the *Honvéd* cavalry. He wanted to resolve this embarrassing inconvenience, but Marie told him that she did not wish for a special treatment of herself or her son. The principal now suddenly praised Marie's perfect skills of the Hungarian language and fled every time when the wife of the major general came to pick her son up from school.³¹¹ Marie remembers this episode fondly; it had a very comedic character. She explicitly mentioned that she often retold this anecdote and that she from then on always remembered the Hungarian word for request, *folyamodvány*.³¹²

Again, the paradoxes with names and languages: Marie had a Hungarian last name but only learned Hungarian in her adult life; Franz had a German/Austrian last name but learned

³¹¹ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 27-28.

³¹² *ibid.*, 28.

Hungarian since childhood, was born in Hungary and most importantly of all he identified himself as Hungarian – a “personality trait” that was “criticised” by some but was at the same time seen as one of his biggest strengths.³¹³ The principal was not prepared that a woman named Marie Rohr, to whom Hungarian was not her first language would be the wife of one of the most important Hungarian generals. Marie was able to choose her social identity, she acted as a Hungarian mother, but she as well could have acted as the wife of the inspector general. She chose to speak Hungarian, just as the principal chose not to understand German. What is important here is the possibility to choose, Marie was able to choose who she was going to “play”. As with their whole lives, the Rohrs were able to choose, to choose a mixture of traditional and liberal lifestyles, to choose which language they spoke and by which titles and positions they introduced themselves. All these choices and the option to make them came from an upper social background; this possibility of choice defined their social identity as much as complexity.

³¹³ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1.

Chapter 4: War – War changes us

An investigation into the past is always accompanied by violence and it is here too. When writing about a soldier it is almost certain that at least once in a (near) biographical dealing one will encounter war. In our case the war, that is to encounter was one of the most gruesome and horrific, only to be surpassed just 25 years later. This paper thus far has focused very little on actual militaristic details, Rohr's command over countless military units, his exercises with the War School, the manoeuvres he was on or his overall advance within the military hierarchy have – at best – been only alluded to. This practice will continue in the following chapter, we will focus again on the “personal” side of the war. How the Rohrs saw and interpreted this conflict and how they lived during it, during this heightened state; and again, how memory shapes the past. Before, we often heard of the highly militaristic and war-craving nature of the Habsburg society at the turn of the century and the connected cheerfulness, once the war actually started; aspects that thus far were accompanying but not defining factors of the analysis, now they become significant. These important societal developments and mindsets will be the pillars which the following observations will be leaned against. In order to gain a better and wider understanding of the mindsets of the Rohrs at the start and during the war, this chapter will draw comparisons with other high-ranking generals of the imperial-royal army during these four determinative years to highlight the specific case at hand. Marie's writing thus far has only included happy and fond memories, but as will be shown in the following chapter, the war was not just an adventure, it was something terrible, this will be established by the stark contrast between Marie's ways of remembering pre-war- and war-times.

The Great War is described by some as one of the – perhaps even the – most senseless wars.³¹⁴ Adam Hochschild underlines in a recent article this senselessness, despite the rivalries in Europe there were tying bonds, emperor Wilhelm II., tsar Nicholas II. and king George V. not only were cousins, they just met for a “family” event and a couple months later they were at war. The article's author calls the events after the assassination of archduke Franz Ferdinand an “*epic chain of blunders, accusations, and ultimatums*”, that set the continent ablaze.³¹⁵ The treaties of Versailles (first and foremost), St. Germain, Trianon, Sèvres and Neuilly-sur-Seine were more surrenders than armistices, thus the first treaty lead to much discontent and

³¹⁴ Adam Hochschild, A Hundred Years After the Armistice. If you think the First World War began senselessly, consider how it ended, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/11/05/a-hundred-years-after-the-armistice>, 18.07.2024.

³¹⁵ Hochschild, Armistice, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/11/05/a-hundred-years-after-the-armistice>, 18.07.2024.

ultimately towards a fanaticized political climate in Germany in the 1930s.³¹⁶ The war began senselessly and it ended senselessly; if one would want to summarize the Great War very polemically, saying that the Central Powers are to blame for the start of the war and the Entente is to blame for its end and aftermath would not be very far off.

1913 is often described as the summer of the century³¹⁷, for the Rohrs this summer went on until the actual summer of 1914. On June 28th Marie sat in the sun on the balcony of their apartment in Budapest, she felt content “... *fühlte mich so glücklich u. zufrieden* ...”, just in the other room her Feri took a nap after lunch, he just came back from a long inspection voyage.³¹⁸ The summer of 1914 was planned nicely and it looked to be a fine one, the weather was great and Marie and Franz looked forward to their vacation in Abbazia and Lovrana, which was scheduled for the next days. Perhaps Marie wanted to pack her bags that day, but she was interrupted, someone was at the door. It was Marie’s brother-in-law, the husband of one of her sisters, who was on a business trip in Budapest. It was him, who brought the harrowing news: The heir to the throne and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo. The commotion woke Franz and the three discussed the events, greatly agitated by the news from the south, “*Wir waren alle drei davon entsetzt u. kamen immer wieder darauf zu sprechen. An die wahrscheinlichen Folgen dieser ganz schrecklichen Tat dachte man auch gleich u. lebte fortan in steter Aufregung.*”³¹⁹ The panic and confusion that arose from the reports that came from Sarajevo are understandable, the empire was stable just a few moments ago, now it not only lost its heir but with him its stability. A new heir had to be found, and most important for many, the people responsible for the murder had to be punished.

Marie’s reaction is an interesting one, fear and uncertainty are evident, but what is not evident is clear (reprojected) foresight. Let us look again at her recollection of that day: “*An die wahrscheinlichen Folgen dieser ganz schrecklichen Tat dachte man auch gleich u. lebte fortan in steter Aufregung.*”³²⁰ Marie does not elaborate the consequences of the assassination further, that there would be some was clear to everyone at the time, that this would lead to the biggest armed conflict up until that time was surely not evident for the contemporaries. With the knowledge she had from talks with Franz, it must have been clear to her, that a militaristic response would be highly possible. But even if she had such thoughts back then, she does not

³¹⁶ Hochschild, Armistice, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/11/05/a-hundred-years-after-the-armistice>, 18.07.2024.

³¹⁷ Florian Illes, 1913. Der Sommer des Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt am Main ⁸2022, 4.

³¹⁸ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen II, 65.

³¹⁹ *ibid.*, 66.

³²⁰ *ibid.*, 66.

include them in her recollection of the past. Big events such as a world war could easily have been used in a memoir written well after the event to underline one's knowledge and intellect, "I knew it from the start", "I knew immediately who was responsible", such lines can be easily added to a revisit of important world events. Marie focuses on the impact on herself, she was in constant, worried excitement. She certainly knew that armed conflict was not impossible and since her two sons recently became navy officers and her husband was a general, she certainly had dark expectations that, if it came to war, the majority of her family would be at the front.

Gina Conrad von Hötzendorf, also much affected by the assassination, tells of an interesting anecdote and used her hindsight to interpret the events and her own position within them. Her by then not-yet-husband Franz Conrad had a sleepless night on July 26th, he had an eerie feeling, about something terrible.³²¹ Even though Gina does not equip her husband with the capabilities of foresight, the premonitions remains, he could feel something terrible, he is aware of it, he knew it all along. Perhaps Conrad had fortune teller skills or perhaps this story should portray Conrad in a better light. Gina's work is apologetic, her husband was the most well-known Austro-Hungarian general during the Great War and thus had many critics, if these criticisms are substantiated is not part of our examination but it is apparent that Gina writes about her husband in a flattering way. Added to this flattery, her works were published, she wanted to achieve something with the publishing of her book, she wanted to create a better image of the former chief of staff of the empire's army. With this approach Gina not only elevated her husband, she also elevated herself. Marie Rohr on the other hand did not publish her memoirs, there is no "Mein Leben mit Rohr von Denta". In her memoirs Marie saw no reason to underline her own or her husband's accurate and quick understanding of the fast-moving world. There were no readers or customers to be impressed or educated, Marie dedicated her work to the future generations of her family, she had less to prove.

Marie also describes no happiness or enthusiasm about the upcoming war. It is understandable that she now, more than twenty years after the war, does not write about her joyousness at the start of the fighting. But coming back to her readers, she certainly would not have faced as much backlash for possible past enthusiasm, because she did not put her book on the market.

Marie and Gina are not quite on the nose with their observations of the past, another memoirist, of whom and of whose firm attitude we heard before – Alois Fürst Schönburg-Hartenstein –

³²¹ Gina Conrad, *Mein Leben*, 111.

knew from the start what was going to happen. Once the telegram with the news from Sarajevo came, he was certain: “*Wir ahnten: Das ist der Krieg!*”³²²

The memoirists wrote once the war was over, in Schönburg-Hartenstein’s account after and in his letters during the war, he is determined: The war has to be fought, no matter what. In his “*Wir ahnten: Das ist der Krieg!*” some enthusiasm is noticeable and in a letter from 1917 he writes: “*Auch mir fällt es nicht ein, den Krieg als solchen zu lieben wie etwa in den ersten Jahren desselben.*”³²³ At the start of the war he was excited to fight. The awaited war was here, even if wars were horrible, they had to be fought, victory was more important than suffering. This determination, that the war was a necessary thing, Schönburg-Hartenstein shared with the Conrads, Franz Conrad wrote to his wife in the wake of the slaying of the archduke, that it was going to be a hopeless yet essential fight, the old monarchy cannot go without a fight.³²⁴ The person in charge of everything, emperor Franz Joseph himself shared this sentiment, in almost the same words as in Conrad’s letter to his wife, the old emperor – as told by Gina – speaks of the necessity of war. If the empire should perish, it should perish decently and respectably.³²⁵

Marie does not reminisce on the importance of the war or the war itself. She remembers her own feelings and thoughts. Her memoirs are thusly named “*Meine Aufzeichnungen*”, “My notes/records”, the “my” is strongly underlined. She does not write about the greater world and the importance or non-importance of the fighting or if it was proper and necessary for Austria-Hungary to engage in this fight, she focusses on her own understanding and her own life. From the moment she received the news, she lived in constant negative excitement, “... *lebte fortan in steter Aufregung.*”³²⁶

Franz Rohr, Franz Conrad and Alois Schönburg-Hartenstein were generals, they were educated and trained to go to war. Conrad and Hartenstein saw the war as necessary and inevitable, likely they went into it with enthusiasm. If Rohr too was eager to lead an army is hard to tell, but very likely. The interview he gave in 1925, shows that he wanted to see more action during the Great War, he believed he had not shown his full potential in only defensive leadership.³²⁷ It is very plausible that Rohr too was enthusiastic at first. Marie – as she tells us through her recollection – was rather held back.

³²² Walterskirchen, Vaterland, 13.

³²³ *ibid.*, 31.

³²⁴ Gina Conrad, *Mein Leben*, 114.

³²⁵ *ibid.*, 118.

³²⁶ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen II*, 66.

³²⁷ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

Franz and Marie had planned their holiday for the end of June 1914 and despite the dark clouds forming over Europe, they travelled to the Adriatic. Marie speaks of “*Trübe Ahnungen*”, “bleak premonitions” at their departure and once they received the news, that the ultimatum was declined: “*Jetzt war kein Zweifel, der Krieg war unabwendbar.*”, there was no more doubt, the war was inevitable. She was not enthusiastic about the start of the war, she was sad about the end of her vacation, about the end of peace “*Unser Aufenthalt in Abbazia, der so schön hätte sein können war zu Ende u. wir fuhren sofort nach Hause*”. Budapest, the city they left during peacetime, had changed drastically, “*Budapest war schon ganz verändert.*”, “... u. alles sprach, begreiflicherweise, nur vom Krieg.”³²⁸ Marie remains impartial during her revisit to the past, no false foresight, but also no correction of a perhaps initial enthusiastic reaction. She writes her memories many years after the events of the Great War, since then a lot of time had passed, a lot of time to think. Now in the late 1930s/early 1940s, Marie’s writing is rather anti-war, she encounters the enthusiasm of the past with apathy, “*Wenn wir im Auto durch die Stadt fuhren brachte man Feri stürmische Ovationen dar. Alles war in begeisterter Stimmung.*”³²⁹ While the citizens of Budapest of the past, gripped by fervour and passion, cheer and salute G.d.K. Rohr when they see him, the storyteller remains impartial, not to say indifferent. Such ovations must have been a thrilling experience, perhaps Marie deliberately chose not to include her or Franz’s reactions at the start of the war, because she now feels ashamed to perhaps have been also in the grips of the society-sweeping eagerness to march to the front. All feelings Marie really delivers are those of fear, from the first moment on, once she heard the news on the balcony on June 28th, fear is the most important and first feeling she describes when revisiting the war. Both Stephan and Rudolf were on educational navy missions in the Adriatic at the time the demands of the ultimatum were turned down by Serbia. The fear for the safety of the boys now becomes one of the main foci, “*Wie zitterte ich um die Beiden. Jeden Abend weinte ich mich in den Schlaf u. mein guter Feri hatte so viel Geduld mit mir u. tröstete mich so lieb.*”³³⁰ At the time Marie sat down to write her memoirs, war and fear became part of daily life once again. The second major war Marie witnessed, proved to be even more horrific than the first one. The fears of the present certainly must have strengthened the memories of the fears she felt in the past. Marie’s present fears were made even worse, now that she lost contact to Stephan; who

³²⁸ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 66-67.

³²⁹ *ibid.*, 66-67.

³³⁰ *ibid.*, 69-70.

became a P.O.W. in Japanese occupied Indonesia.³³¹ If there ever was any enthusiasm Marie felt at the start of the Great War, by the start of the Second World War it all had vanished.

The fears for Stephan and Rudolf in early summer 1914 were elevated by Italian neutrality. The Austro-Hungarian military elite, chief among them Conrad, opted even before 1914 for pre-emptive military strikes against the empire's main enemies, among them Italy. The statement of neutrality coming from south of the alps held little for the war planners in Vienna and thus Franz Rohr was charged with organizing the defence of the southern border.³³² The beginning of Rohr's career as defender of the south was shrouded in (open) secrecy, his official job description remained deputy-minister of war.³³³ Marie most likely knew of Franz's real task and with that the fear for her boys, who then also would fight against Italy, rose. Italy was the "sole" reason for Marie's fear, it is surprising that she does not view Italy or its people as "the other" or as an explicit enemy in her memoirs; no derogatory terms, no curses, no wishes for swift defeat of the treacherous neighbour. The most hostile comment Marie makes, is again connected to her fears, "*So sorgten wir uns um Beide, da sich mittlerweile Italien von uns abgewendet hatte.*"³³⁴ "They" have turned away from "us". Marie tells of the past, without mixed in knowledge she has now, no woe of the lost war and of their lost identity and wealth, only acceptance with one's fate. The people reading her memoirs would know what had happened in the war and how it affected the family, Marie did not think it necessary to stress it again in her recollection, she only included her (personal) emotional experience.

Other observers and memoirists of the Great War included more or had more (political) emotions about their past. Gina Conrad includes a letter of her husband, which certainly does not go against her own views, in which he underlines the Serbian handwriting in the assassination and that a preventive strike against the south Slavic foe would have prevented much hardship.³³⁵ Alois Schönburg-Hartenstein not only conveys direct and clear dislike for the Italian enemy in one of his 1917 letters by using the derogatory term "*Katzelmacher*"³³⁶, he also has an aversion against nations that fought on his side. In letters from 1914³³⁷ and 1917³³⁸

³³¹ Rohr, Tagebuch II, 18.2.1943.

³³² Rauchensteiner, Weltkrieg, 405.

³³³ Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen II, 70.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, 67.

³³⁵ Gina Conrad, Mein Leben, 113.

³³⁶ Walterskirchen, Vaterland, 26.

³³⁷ *ibid.*, 20.

³³⁸ *ibid.*, 32.

he lays blame for the start of the war and its political and overall gloomy conditions on Ruthenian and Czech peoples, amongst others.

Othring was and still is the most important mental part of warfare, if the group one fights against is not “the other” fighting and killing them becomes – morally – impossible. *G.d.K.* Rohr, in charge of repelling Italian assaults in southern Austria used othering, like Schönburg-Hartenstein, Conrad and many other decision-makers on all sides of the conflict, to encourage his men in this fight. In 1915 he addressed his men in a speech shortly after Italy’s entry into the war. He speaks of the great but difficult task the men had to deal with now, the always-treacherous Italians finally removed their false mask of friendliness and show their true intentions, “... *die trügerische Maske abgeworfen*.” Emboldened by the victories of the past, the defence of the homeland will be successful. With God and the emperor on “our” side, victory will soon come.³³⁹ The words Rohr uses are clearly propagandistic and patriotic, “*Uns schwach vermeinend will der alte Feind uns heimtückisch und hinterlistig anfahren*.”³⁴⁰ and reflect the sentiments of treason most Austro-Hungarians felt in May of 1915. None of the words surprise, it is going to be a hard fight but it is necessary because the empire was wronged by Italy, though the past has shown many victories against “... *die Welschen* ...”³⁴¹ (an old catchall term for Romance countries, that also can have a derogatory undertone³⁴²). God, the emperor and patriotic hero field marshal Radetzky are mentioned to inspire the troops. Honour is an important attribute in the speech: The enemy is honourless “... *die Treulosen* ...”³⁴³; “we” and “our” allies are honourable, knightly and soon will be victorious.

The sentiments and mindset of the speech come into stark contrast with the observations of chapter one, in which Marie and Franz were proud of their (Hungarian/Austro-Hungarian) nationality but they had no visible tendencies of putting their own identity over other identities. Perhaps this othering is only connected to the war and Rohr plays the role of righteous warrior who punishes the treacherous enemy or Marie’s portrayal fails to include this part of his identity or perhaps a complex mix that depends on the surrounding circumstances is closest to the truth.

³³⁹ Seine Exzellenz, General der Kavallerie, Armeekommandant Franz Rohr: Aufruf unmittelbar nach der italienischen Kriegserklärung gerichtet an die an der Südwestfront befindlichen Truppen, <https://www.mediathek.at/katalogsuche/suche/detail/?pool=BWEB&uid=021795D3-0AB-00112-000009F8-0216A689&cHash=a9e7baf16084133e4dfd2d1569737430>, 29.07.2024.

³⁴⁰ Kriegserklärung, <https://www.mediathek.at/katalogsuche/suche/detail/?pool=BWEB&uid=021795D3-0AB-00112-000009F8-0216A689&cHash=a9e7baf16084133e4dfd2d1569737430>, 29.07.2024.

³⁴¹ *ibid.*

³⁴² welsch, <https://brockhaus-de.uaccess.univie.ac.at/ecs/enzy/article/welsch?isSearchResult=true>, 29.07.2024.

³⁴³ Kriegserklärung, <https://www.mediathek.at/katalogsuche/suche/detail/?pool=BWEB&uid=021795D3-0AB-00112-000009F8-0216A689&cHash=a9e7baf16084133e4dfd2d1569737430>, 29.07.2024.

At the start of the war not many felt immediate fear, millions were engulfed in a martial frenzy, fuelled by the war-craving attitudes of the young century. This terrible frenzy is nowhere better visible than in Erich Maria Remarque's "Im Westen nichts Neues". Through the eyes of the young protagonist the reader gains insight into the belief systems at the start of the war and the over-boarding enthusiasm in the summer of 1914. Because of the teacher Kantorek – who is frenzy personified – the young boys are driven *en masse* to enlist and *en masse* to the mass graves.³⁴⁴ The war was perceived as an adventure, especially in the younger generations. Before, we heard of Stephan's and Rudolf's adventurous activities after the war and during the war they also yearned for adventure. Rudolf for example was unhappy with one of his positions in the navy, because he viewed it as boring, Stephan in the meantime transferred to the U-boat force of the *k.u.k. Kriegsmarine*.³⁴⁵ Franz Rohr certainly was also gripped by the societal alertness, as a general and patriot it is hard to imagine that he harboured pacifistic tendencies at the start of the conflict, once Italy joined, he underlined the necessity to fight in his speech. He too spoke of "boredom" at his positions, and that he wanted to take more action, to be remembered as a true (offensive) commander.³⁴⁶ Marie's views at the start of the war have been established above, she was afraid of the war and its horrors. But then, her descriptions of the fears are somewhat "empty", as far as the sources tell us, she never really saw the horrific front and its death. Marie gifted cigarettes and little treats to soldiers and Christine helped at a hospital in Vienna³⁴⁷, but the true hell of the front remained unseen by them. Nevertheless, Marie was aware of the death and destruction that reigned there, she must have had some information to be that afraid for her sons. This "emptiness" of the terrors can also be found in Remarque's writing, but for him the "emptiness" did not come from a lack of knowledge, it came from an overflow of knowledge. While Marie's fears start "strong" in 1914, Remarque's inclusion of fear happens slowly and gradually – if at all. Through his description the terrible events in the trenches quickly become "normal" and "mundane", the front quickly becomes "quiet" and its horrors become unimportant. Remarque's protagonist gets acclimated with the trench-life and the home-life becomes strange; bloody charges and creeping barrages become normal reality, whereas life at home becomes abnormal. Through Remarque's new normality comes "emptiness", "Im Westen nichts Neues" – nothing new in the west. Marie never witnessed the new normality and thus does not adapt to it, her fears remain, the heightened state influences

³⁴⁴ Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Berlin 1929, 16.

³⁴⁵ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen II*, 94.

³⁴⁶ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

³⁴⁷ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen II*, 70-71.

her throughout the four years of war. Marie keeps her fear because of abnormality, “Remarque” loses his fear because of normality, his protagonist feels “at home” at the nightmarish front.

Yet Marie’s memories of the four years of fighting are not only connected to fear, they are also connected to adventure and happiness. The fear she felt often was intercepted by proudness; for example, when one of the boys received a medal for bravery.³⁴⁸ Her views and recollections are thus a little bit paradox.

Marie, because of her societal position as the wife of a high-ranking commander, was able to accompany Franz at his commands. She always was very close to his army’s headquarters and thus was able to spend much time with her husband.³⁴⁹ A fact that again underlines their connection. Because Marie held such a high social position, her life during the war was rather pleasant. Franz’s first assignments brought him to southern/western Austria, first to Carinthia then to South Tyrol, beautiful mountainous country Marie used for many walks, with or without Franz. Together they went to the cinema, went swimming or talked on the phone when Franz could not leave the headquarters.³⁵⁰ Life seemed normal, perhaps even a bit freer than back in Vienna or Budapest, so far from the society of the cities and so close to the beauty of the alps. Marie recounts many fond memories, of alpine hunts with the staff officers during sunrise and of one of her walks, where she was mistaken for an Italian spy by one of the sentries, that this young lieutenant suspected Marie, the wife of his highest commanding officer, to be an enemy was quite amusing to her.³⁵¹

It is strange to read of such light-hearted anecdotes, that took place during the most horrific war up until this point. But then we have to remind ourselves of the reason Marie is writing down her memories. As established before, love is the driving emotion. These memories are so important to Marie because she was so close to her Feri, with him she shared these beautiful memories, the hunt during sunrise and the afternoon swimming. Her goal has always been to convey her emotions, to tell her readers about her past, a past she looked upon with fondness. Her memoirs are not written to convey the horrors of the Great War. Before, we found that Marie tended to exclude sad or traumatizing memories from her writing. So, the fear and anxiety she does mention, have to be looked at in another light. Happiness and light-heartedness are the

³⁴⁸ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen II*, 71-72.

³⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 71-73.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 73-75.

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, 85-86.

norms of her memoirs, horrors and death are the absolute exceptions. Their inclusion thus should be weighed more than the happy anecdotes.

When she chooses to speak of her uneasiness about the war raging on, “*Man konnte aber dennoch nicht froh werden, der Krieg wütete weiter, man lebte in steter Angst u. Sorge.*”³⁵²; when she chooses to speak about her accommodation in Trient, where the wardrobes and other parts of the empty house were left in chaos by panicked and fleeing former inhabitants³⁵³; when she chooses to include her Feri’s depressed feelings after he heard of the fall of Gorizia³⁵⁴; when she includes the airplane attacks she witnessed in Trient³⁵⁵, she makes an exception. Her life up until 1914 – and its recollection – are within the norm, filled with rides in the *salon* of the train, beautiful *diners*, walks and overall happiness. Now with the start of the war, ever more sadness and grief are mixed into her memories. What we have to look out for in her descriptions of the war are not so much her little adventures: Them attending emperor/king Karl’s coronation in Budapest³⁵⁶, her Feri’s laughter about a caricature of him³⁵⁷ or the visits of many – to the annoyance of Franz – portrait painters³⁵⁸; what we need to be on the lookout for are the things that Marie mentions “on the side”, that are not her focus, but are all the more important to us.

Her fears about the boys might be the most prominent of these norm-breaking memories, but there are others, that show that Marie’s and Franz’s life was not just anecdotes and happiness: “*Überhaupt waren es schon böse Zeiten, die Lebensmittel wurden knapp. Es tauchten allerhand Gerüchte auf u. man fürchtete sich, was die Zukunft bringen wird.*”³⁵⁹; „*Leider war mein Feri oft sehr verstimmt. Ich bin fest überzeugt davon, dass er so manches ahnte u. nur nicht davon sprechen wollte. Eines Abends war der Arme besonders niedergeschlagen, als man von dem Meutern auf der S.M.S. Szent István hörte.*”³⁶⁰ What started as an adventure for many – perhaps also for both Franz and Marie – soon became a nightmare. The Rohrs were very connected to the ongoings of the war and also its non-militaristic aspects, that Marie speaks of food shortages and fears of the future is uncharacteristic for her style of remembering and thus show how strongly these developments affected them. Perhaps not the food shortages in particular but more the psychological fears that came with such news of defeats, mutinies and the overall poor

³⁵² Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* II, 72.

³⁵³ *ibid.*, 83-84.

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 84.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 85.

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 91.

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 102.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 95-96.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 104.

³⁶⁰ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* III, 5-6.

state of the army must have been devastating for Franz specifically. Marie's memories support this, she speaks of his depressions, ill-temperedness and the dark premonitions he had. Never before did Marie speak of such feelings when it came to Franz, his pessimism, which was covered in an earlier chapter, never makes a full appearance in her writing and was only alluded to lightly in passing in her diaries. That she chooses to show his sad emotions, speaks volumes.

Marie's inclusions of fear, depression and horror of war thus do not represent a *post-factum* addition, to convey to her readers that she had great foresight, they represent the actual hardships that came with the war and were elevated even more, once the war was over. Marie's style of remembering sort of hides these bad/sad memories and thus they might be easily overlooked or seen as strange and out of place. But they are out of place, because Marie mostly remembers the happiness of the past, it is this stark contrast to the normal anecdotes that underlines the impact of the horrors of war and the heightened state they lived in. Just because Franz was a field marshal, and he and Marie were part of the high society does not imply that they were above the suffering and horrors of war, his high position might imply that the suffering and war itself weighed especially heavy on him, because he was one of the few people who could have been able to influence this suffering; here again a reference to his interview, in which he wished for things to have been different. Marie's norm breaking descriptions of the war underline the impact the fighting had on them. Fear and horror were so strong that they broke Marie's form of remembering, a mere four years of their lives changed the tone of her memories from throughout happiness and bliss to evermore present fear and depression. The war, even though Marie never specifically mentions it, changed their lives significantly, wealth, personal and social identity as well as their former ways of living were completely destroyed.

Her – greater or lesser – silence about the horrors continues to the aftermath of the war. She did not dwell often on the tragedies the end of the war brought them, she mentions them, because they have to be mentioned and were part of their lives. The out-of-place-style of remembering now became the norm. After 1918 most of her memories are about hardships, which will be among the foci in the following chapter, the war really was a turning point not just in the “past” of 1914-1918, it was also a turning point in the “present”, a turning point in Marie's *modus operandi* of remembering and writing.

Chapter 5: Memory and legacy – What we leave behind and what others make of it

History and memory go hand in hand, without memory, history is impossible. Remembrance and memory are such important parts of human existence that scientists today still gather information from this urge not to be forgotten. The fight against forgetting can be lead in many ways: Lavish graves, monuments, inscriptions, stories, myths, legends, written down memories and many more. Because of this human urge to secure one's own remembrance or that of others we still have a link to the past. Not a single historical event or figure would be known to us if not for someone who thought it important to keep that memory. Marie was one of these "someones", she felt it was necessary to write down and thus create memories about Franz and about herself. But because we heard so much about Marie's memory and remembrance process already, this chapter will focus more on other writers who shared their memories of and thoughts on Franz Rohr and his character traits. The following section will be a look at their memory processes, will examine their mannerisms, will study how they remember the past and will compare those to Marie's memories, in order to establish similarities and possible differences with her view. Here the theme of the cypher will make its return, the cypher is used to remember the good past. Because Rohr is a "true" Austro-Hungarian, he now shifts from being a cypher to being a personification. Next to the perception of the "external" observers another important aspect of the following examination will be Rohr's legacy and forgetting, better: The fight against forgetting. How did his memory and legacy endure and what did they look like? As established just above Marie's "new" way of remembering the post-war-times, when hardships became the norm, will also be an important part of the following observations.

In the years after the war, once Austria was somewhat stable and people started to think about the past, some articles emerge about Franz Rohr. There are a few which are critical of the war and condemn the positive remembrance of the generals. In Villach, Carinthia there was a notion to erect a monument for Rohr for his successful defence, which was ultimately not realized.³⁶¹ But the majority of the remembrance after the war is positive, while there is not much public remembrance about Rohr. In the newspaper articles his personality is acknowledged (compared to his depictions during the war, which only focus on his career, for propagandistic purposes³⁶²), his emotions and feelings are delivered to the reader, a fuller picture of the person(ality) emerges. The authors of said articles are former "comrades", most prominent among them is

³⁶¹ Villacher Gemeindebericht, in: Arbeiterwille 08.09.1926, 8, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=awi&datum=19260908&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 09.09.2014.

³⁶² e.g.: G.d.K. Franz Rohr, in: Freie Stimmen 28.04.1916, 1-2, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=fst&datum=19160428&query=%22rohr%22&ref=anno-search>, 09.09.2024.

the writer and satirist Alexander Roda Roda.³⁶³ He and his writer colleagues were much younger than Rohr and thus experienced him as a strict but friendly fatherly figure. They all agree that Rohr was human and cared about his troops. Roda Roda's depiction is the most memorable, since he is a writer and satirist, he knows how to portray a character. In his writing style one may find the very specific attitude of an imperial-royal officer, his depictions are heartfelt and friendly, yet polite and courteous. He never uses the first name, only the last name mostly in combination with the military rank. As István Deák tells, officers used the personal/friendly "*Du*" instead of the formal "*Sie*", but they combined it always with the rank of their interlocutor, so it would be for example: "*Du, lieber Herr Major...*". Roda Roda, being part of the officer class, uses this way of interaction in his text, when he recounts a little anecdote of Rohr in which he outlines Rohr's character, and with that remembers the past.

Roda Roda starts his little story with an acknowledgement of Rohr's personality, he combines in himself wrath and kindness, which enabled him to overcome the problems of creating an operational defensive line against the Italian forces. He is duty-bound and kept on fighting despite having no material and manpower at his front. He has created for himself an everlasting memory in the minds of his pupils at the military schools. Roda Roda speaks of "*der alte Rohr*" as a form of adoration and even compares him to the late emperor Franz Josef as being a constitutional ruler (an interesting choice, Franz Josef was not always a constitutional monarch), Rohr always conferred with his chief of staff, but there were some aspects where Rohr accepted no council; perhaps this too was part of the Franz-Josef-allegory Roda Roda used. This brings the old-Austrian satirist to the little anecdote and an important character trait combination: Wrath and compassion. Rohr was keen on hygiene, as Alexander Roda Roda tells us. When Rohr first came to the Romanian front, he went on a little walk through the village of Segesvar, he was greeted by the townspeople but they, as was local custom, threw out their waste buckets into the streets. His Excellency the field marshal was very displeased with this custom and at once called in his chief of staff. With his wrathful booming voice Rohr commanded, that the local chief of police should be removed from office immediately. Chief of staff Barta knew his superior well, did not expel the police chief and waited until the next day, when Rohr called him in again. This time the wrath was gone and the field marshal was full of compassion, he felt sorry for expelling the policeman and wanted to know from Barta if the poor man was frightened by the order. Barta had to lie now; of course: The lazy police man was frightened, he and his wife and their six kids were terribly frightened! But according to the

³⁶³ Roda Roda, Feldmarschall Rohr, 1-3.

marshal's orders the faithful Barta removed this useless man. Now Rohr's compassion grew even stronger, the poor man had six children! He immediately ordered Barta to reinstate the poor man. A week later Rohr again calls on Barta to discuss the case of the chief of police of Segesvar. He asks about the poor wife and children of the man, Barta remorsefully has to tell his superior that the policeman has no children and his wife died years ago. Rohr nevertheless remains compassionate and regretful and hands Barta a little red box, it contains the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph. Rohr made a call to Vienna to ensure the good policeman is awarded for his service and not too distraught about his "removal". Barta again dodges the bullet and convinces Rohr, that he himself should hand out the award. Roda Roda again underlines Rohr's uncertainty in everything not military, when he mentions that Rohr hopes the man will not be mad at him. The story closes with a thought of Barta about the policeman who will be very surprised about this award, knowing nothing about this whole affair.³⁶⁴

It is an amusing and moving story Roda Roda tells here in the papers in 1936, long after the death of Rohr. We can only speculate why this article was published in 1936, there are no clear remembrance dates, Rohr was born in October 1854 and died in December 1927, the article came out in March 1936. There might be a light connection between the world of Rohr and the world of 1936; with the ever more unstable times in inter-war Austria and raising danger from national socialist takeover, the authoritarian Austrian government carefully returned to a Habsburg-friendly thinking.³⁶⁵ Perhaps this article is written/published in this climate and Rohr is used as a figure of authority and stability of a time when everything was "easier". A time that was light-hearted and kind, despite the war and its horrors. In this thinking we certainly see parallels to Marie's *modus operandi* when remembering the past. If the story really happened is hard to verify, but the underlying facts seem true. Rohr is a wrathful general but also compassionate/loving, he is remorseful about his decision which could have harmed a person. An interesting character trait of a field marshal, whose occupation it is to wage war, to order death. The death of his own as well as the death of the enemy's men.

In his meeting with Barta Rohr says, that the shock of the removal should be enough punishment for the policeman, real brutal punishment is something Rohr despises. Rohr was a teacher, he was an educator, he knows fully well that punishment as an educational method is not effective; in the military, as well as in familial education, as we have seen. He has compassion for the

³⁶⁴ Roda Roda, Feldmarschall Rohr, 1-3.

³⁶⁵ Otto und der Austrofaschismus, <https://www1.habsburger.net/de/kapitel/otto-und-der-austrofaschismus>, 09.09.2024.

wife and children of the man, maybe it reminds him of his wife who he loves dearly and who he would not want to see destitute because of a fault of another person.

Alexander Roda Roda's comment on Rohr's constitutional behaviour is amplified in another article by lieutenant colonel Emil Seeliger.³⁶⁶ Seeliger compares Rohr's deliberative nature to other (unnamed) officers without these qualities. Especially the first few months of the conflict are well known for their bloodthirstiness. The troops Rohr educated before the war were led to the slaughter. As in the first article his accomplishments on the southern front are acknowledged because of the hardships faced there. In his third theatre of the war (Romania) Rohr could use the expertise, gained in the south, against the "new" enemy in the east. Seeliger is the first (and thus far only) author who mentions that Rohr was never defeated during the war, a huge (and yet to be verified/falsified) claim. Another aspect important to this article is the "act" of forgetting. Seeliger directly addresses this problem and mentions that Rohr's achievements are unrightfully forgotten, would he have fought on the side of the Entente there would be monuments of "*Erz und Stein*" of him. Only those who knew him, remember him, only in the hearts of those who know him, he erected for himself a monument. The author uses a very unusual but interesting parable, he compares Rohr to (house)wives, the best among them are rarely known, as he puts it.³⁶⁷ In his depiction of Rohr's personality Seeliger continues the trend of Roda Roda, Franz Rohr is unpretentious and friendly toward everyone he meets. After the war he lives secluded and quiet; the war is over, his livelihood as a soldier is gone, without the military he is "nothing". Compassion is also an important factor in this article, Rohr is selfless, he subordinates his own interests, he donated all his allowances during wartime to the Red Cross.³⁶⁸

Another prominent ex-imperial-officer and author is the formerly mentioned Maximilian von Hoen. He writes his text as a homage to the field marshal, as a gift for his 70th birthday.³⁶⁹ His writing style is militaristic, essentially, he recounts Rohr's military life and his achievements, with an important aspect of this career being his national belonging. Being born ("accidentally") in Hungary made him a Hungarian, but his upbringing was Austrian-influenced. He therefore was a black-golden Hungarian (*schwarz-gold* being the colours of the Habsburgs). This fact made him somewhat perfect for some positions especially as *Generalinspektor der Militärerziehungs- und Bildungstätten* or as commander in chief of the Hungarian *Honvéd*. But

³⁶⁶ Seeliger, Feldmarschall, 4.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 4.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 4.

³⁶⁹ Hoen, Baron Rohr, 1.

this “black-goldenness” also led to problems, he often was seen by both sides as only half Hungarian or half Austrian, for some he was too Austrian, for some he was too Hungarian. Hoen speaks of a “dualistic personality”, a personality that is beneficial and detrimental at the same time. Despite only focussing on the military career, the personality traits of Rohr which are mentioned, are similar to those of the other authors. Rohr takes responsibility in his tactical approach, he is benevolent, calm and caring. Hoen who was more of an officer than Roda Roda, who took officer-ship more seriously, does not mention Rohr’s wrath or his compassion. Here only the good and friendly but capable field marshal is portrayed. Little critiques (rather: The truth) are left out, Rohr was wrathful but compassionate at the same time. Another point of critique which is left out by the serious Hoen is the body circumference of Rohr. Roda Roda does not fail to mention the size of *FM* Rohr at the start of the war (which changed during the conflict, mostly due to stress), he uses the word “*wohlbeleibt*”³⁷⁰ – stout – which is the politest way to describe a person of above average size, this description was never meant to be hurtful or mean, it completes the picture of *FM* Rohr: A true Austro-Hungarian officer, a tall, yet big man, full of passion and compassion who cares deeply for his men, who is friendly and caring, but very capable in his tactical decisions, who is somewhat out of his depth, when it comes to the “everyday”.

The last post-war article³⁷¹, which also deals with the personality of *FM* Rohr and his place within the past, is at the same time the most interesting one, because here Rohr himself speaks. Ernst Dominig comes to visit Rohr at his “*Tusculum*” to conduct an interview with the old man in 1925.³⁷² Dominig explains in the first few sentences that Rohr was his superior in Tyrol. As seen in the other articles Rohr really has built for himself a monument in the hearts and minds of those who knew him. Because this interview was conducted in 1925 it is no surprise that Rohr is described as old, but his mind is still sharp. The “*treue[r] Palatin*” lives in seclusion, he has chosen Austria as his place of retirement, not Hungary – we are reminded of Hoen’s comment about the “dualistic” and Hungarian personality. Dominig is welcomed warmly by the field marshal and – we sadly did not hear from her in the last few pages – Marie is mentioned as well. Marie is the loving caretaker of the old general and still looks beautiful, as the charming author tells us. We again encounter the *modus operandi* of the old imperial officers; they are friendly towards one another and receive each other kindly. If Rohr would have been an unpleasant person, it would be questionable if that fact would appear in such an interview, since

³⁷⁰ Roda Roda, Feldmarschall Rohr, 1-3.

³⁷¹ Dominig, Erinnerungen, 8.

³⁷² *ibid.*, 8.

these articles are no hit pieces but rather admiring accounts by fellow officers. If he would have been an unpleasant person the articles would have been written differently; they would have only focussed on the career and not on the friendly personality, somewhat comparable to Hoen's depiction, but Hoen's writing style is more likely due to his military background. There might have been no articles at all if he was an unkind fellow. Rohr's niceness is "used", his niceness is cultivated and elevated through the descriptions. The good old Austro-Hungarians were nice people and Rohr, this still living incarnation of the old empire is the archetype. The golden past is again underlined with his niceness.

Rohr begins to tell Dominig of his failing health and his love of long walks, which he is not capable of undertaking anymore. He gives some insights into his career and some aspects we heard of earlier in this paper: The sometimes-scheming ongoing at court and the military hierarchy with Franz Ferdinand, Franz Josef I. and Arthur von Bolfras, Rohr's adversary. Rohr states that his commands during the war were "*leider*" – sadly – rather "calm". He recounts his wish for things to have gone differently, which has been discussed in chapter one. After that the old field marshal tells the readers about his connections to the imperial family, his indifferent stance towards Franz Joseph I. (most likely because of Bolfras), his good connection to Karl I. and the mention of archduke Joseph brings us back to the article of Max Hoen. Rohr mentions that Joseph too is a Hungarian.³⁷³ Hoen's "critique" of Rohr was that he always underlined and mentioned his Hungarian nationality³⁷⁴, as he does here in connection with archduke Joseph. Rohr ends this interview by saying that these have been his most important memories from the war and that at a later time he will tell of many other stories, whose time has not yet come.³⁷⁵ A somewhat tragic end to the interview, Rohr would die two and a half years later and his stories were never told.

Rohr's personality in this article is comparable to the other articles, he remains the friendly and warm old general, who is kind to his colleagues and caring towards his men. He is very capable militarily but could not show his full potential during the war. What is new here is the fear of being left out, the paranoia, the adversaries in high places who were hindrance to his career. These thoughts and feelings are an important part of Rohr's personality, they might as well be more important than his compassion or his wrath. "He" lost the war, he could not show his full potential during the war, he was a general and his job was to show his full potential but this was not possible. If it was not possible because of circumstance or because of his adversaries is hard

³⁷³ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

³⁷⁴ Hoen, *Baron Rohr*, 1.

³⁷⁵ Dominig, *Erinnerungen*, 8.

to tell, nevertheless, the feeling stays the same, no matter if the disadvantage is real or just imagined. Just because the negative aspects (paranoia, Bolfras, lost war, ...) are mentioned does not mean that these aspects are the sole focus of one's thinking. Negative thoughts or aspects are often easier noticed than positive ones, especially when combined or when they have such a great impact as the lost war, here many things must have come together or were once again remembered.

So, the articles remember Rohr in a similar way as Marie does. The description, that he built a monument for himself in the hearts and minds of the people who knew him, seems to remain true for all the sources in this chapter. This monument brings people back to him, Dominig visits him well after the war and Roda Roda writes in 1936. But their memory is different from that of Marie. She remembers him out of love, the newspaper authors remember him because of respect and kindness. Even though the reasons for memory are different their contents are similar. His love/kindness is remembered, not his pessimism or his feeling of being treated unfairly. Some writers remember these "negative" character traits (Marie and Dominig) but they are not in the focus. The main focus of the post war memory of Franz Rohr – although there is not much – are his seemingly kind personality and his ability to create fond memories in the minds of people he met, memories of the past.

Creating memories is a process that combats forgetting. Marie's biggest battle is this combat, in her short preface she states that she is sad about the fact that she knows little about her ancestors – they have been forgotten. She writes to remember, to build remembrance about herself and Franz first and foremost. But nothing really is evidently underlined, she never states that this or that memory has absolute importance, all her thoughts on the past seem to have the same value. Yet remembrance is the one thing inherent in all of her stories and anecdotes. The memory she creates is her own, designed for the future generations; other modes of remembrance are not important to her, she does not care about how the world remembers her or her Feri. It does not matter to her that Franz never got much recognition for his successful defences of the alpine frontiers or the borders in the east, she remembers him and that is well enough for her. He is the love of her life, not because of his military prowess but because of his character and being.

Other observers, who had a military background, focus more on the prowess than on the character. This, in connection with the lost war creates another form of combat against forgetting. Emil Seeliger whose article was discussed above, mentions Rohr undefeated-ness during the war and the fact that he would have gotten a monument built of ore and stone if he

would have fought for the Entente. Seeliger's observations are correct, there was an idea to erect a statue for Rohr, which was ultimately not realized. The lost war and overall dislike for everything Habsburg in the years following the conflict certainly ended any hopes of a statue of the field marshal.

All the newspaper-observers deal with nostalgia, like Marie, their fondest memories hail from the days of the empire, back then they were something, they were officers and now they can only revisit these golden days when remembering them and Rohr became a vehicle of remembrance, he became a personification of the empire, he had the typical attributes of an Austro-Hungarian, he even was compared to the old emperor by Roda Roda. It might be a coincidence but Roda Roda's style of reviving the days of the monarchy and his depiction of Rohr are very similar to Marie. The days of the monarchy are full of bliss and light-heartedness despite the raging war, challenges or hardships are not mentioned as they are in the other articles; we recall Halbwachs in the introduction and the social origin of memory, as well as the forming and re-forming. A comparison that is thematically quite removed but is quite close in its results is a paper about the re-emerging memory about Masada amongst Palestinian Jews in 1927, here Masada is used as a vehicle to express hopes, dreams and fears.³⁷⁶ Marie and the authors too use a (re-emerging) memory to form the present, to convey hopes and fears, to make the weight of the present-day more bearable. Next to the (re-)formed nature of memory, Halbwachs and the Masada-case underline the social component of collective memory. The process of remembering has a social reason, the authors do not see many positive aspects in their current society and thus, by forming the past, create a sort-of parallel world. A world of the past, where they feel safe and whole, a world they understood, a world they wish would come back.

Like Marie, all the authors find peace and happiness in their remembrance of Rohr, the creation of a monument in the hearts of the people who knew him bore fruit in these cases. But many of these fruits soon withered, the combat against forgetting ended in defeat. Austria-Hungary and Rohr lost the Great War and lost the war for remembrance. Other more important topics and generals became the focus of memory. Rohr who was perhaps too kind and too little of a "real" (offensive) general, he did not lose battles and is thus not remembered for failure and the battles he did win too are not thought of. The Great War in general is not much remembered, if it is, the Western Front is in the focus, the alpine theatre or the fighting in Romania is at best

³⁷⁶ Barry Schwartz, Yael Zerubavel, Bernice Barnett, The recovery of Masada: A study in collective memory, in: *The Sociological Quarterly* 27, 1986, 147–164.

remembered by experts. Rohr, who was a “boring” part of these theatres, he really only generated remembrance from people who knew him.

Some people in Carinthia remembered Rohr in 1967 when the barracks in Villach needed a new name. The post war years did not allow a monument of Rohr, but 50 years later a stone tablet remembers the “*Kommandant der Kärntner Abwehrfront*”.³⁷⁷ That even this rather small piece of remembrance is endangered shows in a plan by an Austrian once-minister-of-defence in 2018, who planned to create new and big, all-encompassing barracks, which in part would be financed by the money attained in the sale of the *Rohrkaserne*.³⁷⁸ Ultimately the commemoration of Rohr won this fight, the *Rohrkaserne* and its stone tablet still stand.

In the wake of all the details and insights this paper has produced, there remains hope, that the monument will remain standing. Even if Rohr and his empire lost the war, even if his remembrance seemed unnecessary to many; some felt it important to remember him, because he has built a monument in their hearts. Rohr, as a memory of a past age and as a monument could be many things: A heart-warming story about love filled with anecdotes; a story of a “typical” imperial-royal officer; a story of a Hungarian Austro-Hungarian; a story about the horrors of war and its impact; a story of remembrance of the blissful past; a story about why even the most insignificant-seeming “tales” are worth telling and why remembrance of even the smallest details is imperative.

To people who have no connection to history and its importance, removing memory seems unproblematic, yet everything we have, everything we build our societies and identities upon are products of history and thus memory. Removing or forgetting even the most “unnecessary” detail of the past is a big mistake. If we do not remember, if we do not know the past, if we do not learn from the past, we are doomed to make (the same) mistakes in the future. Remembrance – even of the smallest details – should be the task of every thinking human being.

When we – as thinking human beings – remember, we not only remember a person we also have their legacy in mind. The military legacy of Rohr, as established above, could have been a big one: (possible) undefeated-ness and liked by his men as well as his companions. But the lost war and history’s craving for “entertaining” topics made a widespread legacy impossible. Rohr’s legacy is limited to those who knew him, chief among them his family. A parent’s legacy

³⁷⁷ Rohr Kaserne, <https://www.denkmal-heer.at/wissenswertes/rohr-kaserne>, 31.07.2024.

³⁷⁸ Politik hält an Großkaserne in Villach fest, <https://kaernten.orf.at/v2/news/stories/2890684/>, 31.07.2024.

is often upheld by their children but in the case of the Rohrs, there seems to be rift between the field marshal and his children.

What is missing from the memories about the upbringing of the children is Franz. He is never really mentioned when it comes to the education of the three kids. He spends time with his children (riding lessons, taking little Christine to the restaurant) and he is happy about their developments and characters (e.g.: Christine and the young officers in Pozsony and her doctorate) but an overly close connection cannot be found in the memoirs. It is very possible that Rohr spent most of his time at work. Another possibility is that he was “too liberal” with his children, he let them educate themselves, he did not interfere too much with their development; in Christine’s upbringing at least, perhaps he was much stricter with the boys, perhaps this uneven strictness created a rift. An additional factor might have been the rather hectic lifestyle during the early lives of the children. For Marie this hectic life was bearable, but we do not hear the thoughts of the children. Perhaps the constant moving from one place to another, from garrison to garrison also created a feeling of distance towards their father.

The aforementioned happy idyllic childhood of the Rohr children and their relations to their father seem to be only superficial. His children seemed not to have cared very much about the memory of their father in later life. The Great War might be a very possible source of the later emotional distance between the children and their father. Perhaps the military man really was too distant from his children. This distance can also be seen in the age gap. Marie and Franz were 15 years apart, he and his children naturally even more. When Christine was born, he was 37, when Rudolf and Stephan were born, he was 41/42. The gap between him and his children is not a natural indication for a worse connection – the age of a father has no direct implication on the relation to his children – but it could explain some reservations.

Nonetheless there are also hints of connection, Rudolf for instance named his second son Franz and little Franz also got the family-nickname of the field marshal “Feri”. Despite this naming, which could be rooted in tradition rather than real connection, there is not much memory-keeping. *FM* Rohr’s memorabilia were kept with lacking care. The big two-pointed general’s hat with green feathers was handed by Rudolf to a grandchild to be used as a bike helmet.³⁷⁹ Coats and other not further identified pieces of uniform of the old imperial army were tailored into children’s clothes and the marshal’s baton is said to have been kept in the umbrella stand. Rudolf’s connection to his family seems to have been quite difficult, an entry in the diaries in

³⁷⁹ Family Anecdotes, Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

1924 tells of an argument between him and his sister on a visit to Rodaun. Marie wrote, that she thinks the old family home is not good enough for him anymore.³⁸⁰ Perhaps it was a rebellious act or perhaps it can be seen as somewhat of an indicator of a not too warm family connection. Rudolf and his sister Christine got along quite badly and often got into arguments. Christine had the same pessimistic outlook as her father³⁸¹, perhaps this was the source of the misunderstanding between the siblings. Perhaps the pessimistic tendencies of Franz were the reason why there seems to be a rather cold connection between him and his children in the later years.

As established before the memoirs were Marie's "safe space", she came back to these memories – mostly about Franz – when there was nothing "perfect" in the present. One very telling example is the comparison she draws between Christmas of 1899 and Christmas of the late 1930ies. In 1899 Marie and Franz decorated, as they did every year, the Christmas Tree; Marie writes the lines "... *was waren das für schöne glückliche Zeiten.*" and immediately contrasts this memory with the situation "today": "*Man spricht vom Weihnachtsmann u. kann nichts schenken, weil nichts zu kaufen ist. Alles geht auf Karten oder Bezugsscheine. Wir leben in einer trostlosen Zeit u. ohne Aussicht, dass es anders wird. Ich schildere lieber weiter, wie schön es damals war. Wie waren wir samt den Kindern am Heiligen Abend glücklich. Wenn wir alles gerichtet hatten läutete Feri u. die Kinder durften ins Zimmer kommen.*"³⁸²

Again, the remembrance shifts to Franz. He rings the Christmas bell – the signal for the kids to come before the tree to unwrap their presents. Before the giving of Christmas presents, in the advent time, Franz wrote the *Christkind*'s response letter to Christine, written in golden ink.³⁸³ Such an occurrence was a huge event: The *Christkind* has received our wish list! He was a loving father; he even went the extra way to use golden ink. With this attention to detail and this love it is now a little bit harder to understand the cool and distant relation between Franz and his children in later years. Even if the field marshal was too distant or too liberal, such a loving act is hard to combine with the coolness. Perhaps the coolness developed during the time when the children became adults, perhaps their distance is linked to their growing-up-process, perhaps it is even linked to the war; or the achievements of their father. It would have been quite hard to even come close to the accomplishments of Franz Rohr, a highly decorated,

³⁸⁰ Rohr, Tagebuch I, 31.1.1924.

³⁸¹ Rohr, Tagebuch IV, 11.11.1945 and 1.8.1952.

³⁸² Rohr, Meine Aufzeichnungen I, 146-147.

³⁸³ *ibid.*, 146.

ennobled field marshal of an empire of 50 Million inhabitants.³⁸⁴ These attributes of Rohr, which were the basis of fond remembrance by the newspaper authors, could be the basis for his children's distant remembrance. The possibilities to attain such a rank, to rise so high, to be so close to court would never come back. Perhaps the war itself changed the view of the three Rohr children, especially the boys. Stephan and Rudolf, despite their early passion for the military, chose peaceful professions. Rudolf became a mine director in Hungary and Stephan a captain of the Dutch merchant navy in the Dutch East Indies/Indonesia. Perhaps the loss of the war created the rift between the children and their father, the family lost most of its influence and most of its wealth and the field marshal was in the centre of it all. Perhaps there was a feeling, that he failed to act, as one of the highest-ranking men in the empire he could have done something to prevent this tragedy. In the interview of 1925, the old marshal himself speaks about being too "inactive" during the war, about that he wanted to do more. Perhaps this thought of could-have-done-more was part of the thinking of the children after the war. Certainly, the boys wanted to create some distance between post-war Austria and themselves, perhaps between the family and themselves, Rudolf left for Hungary and Stephan for the then Dutch East Indies. Perhaps their moves away from the family are connected to their adventurous natures that were discussed earlier; or perhaps it is a coincidence and they never really felt a rift between themselves and their father, they did visit often and wrote regularly, there are certainly no indications by Marie that there were bad feelings involved, but we recall that she tends to exclude bad memories.

The times in which Marie wrote down her memories all this bliss, all this magic of days past had faded, she now lived in a grey world, a world of political upheaval, a world that was uncertain for an aging woman of a lost time. It was a field-grey world, field-grey with white and red accents and in the middle of these accents a black swastika. Marie certainly did not fit in this new – German – world, she escaped this world by writing, writing about the love of her life and about the bliss of the past, the happy past. The love for Franz is not explicitly mentioned once she remembers Krakow and their first meeting, but through her memoirs this love is made clear, with every word and every sentence she makes that clear. All this love ends in the tragic literary climax of her memories of 1927. The last words she writes in her memoirs are of 1927, the last words of her memoirs, are about the death of her love.

³⁸⁴ 31. Dezember 1910 – Stichtag für die letzte Volkszählung der Monarchie, https://web.archive.org/web/20140714155209/http://oesta.gv.at/site/cob_41477/5164/default.aspx, 06.02.2024.

“*Mein Glück ging mit ihm ...*”³⁸⁵, my luck/happiness went with him. The memoirs end abruptly, with his passing. The phrase “*Mein Glück ging mit ihm ...*”, so simply written, yet so devastating. While the last entries of the memoirs still retain lightly-happy melancholy (she again writes of her Feri’s love of her singing in the days in which his health started to fail³⁸⁶) that shifts to devastation once her luck went with him; the diaries are much bleaker. Beginning in April 1927 every entry (not every day has an entry) up until December 9th Marie gave constant updates on her Feri’s health, since a fit of Angina Pectoris struck him. There are many ups and downs in her descriptions but they are written rather cold, no real emotions, just descriptions on his condition. The emotions that make the memoirs so intriguing are missing from this part of her diaries. The bleakness and devastation of those days reflect in Marie’s expression, even her earlier beautiful handwriting becomes shaky and uneven.³⁸⁷

“*Mein Glück ging mit ihm ...*” bares similarity to Theodore Roosevelt’s feelings, who wrote “*The light has gone out of my life.*” on February 14th 1884, when both his wife and mother died, just a few hours apart.³⁸⁸ February 14th was Roosevelt’s darkest day, but he persevered, he continued on. February 14th was one of Marie’s brightest days, it was the day of her engagement to her Feri, but she also persevered, she continued, even without her Feri. Her love continued, his legacy endured, it remained in her heart, he became her eternal companion in memory. The love she had for him and the love he gave her, shaped Marie’s being, shaped her memory of the past, the blissful past Marie and Feri had. Rohr, who became a personification of Austria-Hungary influenced Marie’s, Roda Roda’s, Dominig’s and others’ memories of the days gone. He was a figure of authority, like the old emperor he was identified with the past and thusly remembered, remembered as one of the last remnants of this golden past.

Commemoration is thus not only a way to understand the past but also a way to form the past and in some ways the present as well as the future. This forming is possibly dangerous for historical research, it has potential to alter the way in which we observe the past. But these dangers can be defused by examining diverse and varying sources, as has been done in this case. On the other hand, this process of moulding the past can deliver great insights about the people who do the moulding and those who are “moulded”. Because of this process the highly

³⁸⁵ Rohr, *Meine Aufzeichnungen* III, 52.

³⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 45-46.

³⁸⁷ Rohr, *Tagebuch* I, 22.4.1927-26.5.1928.

³⁸⁸ New Online: Theodore Roosevelt Papers, <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2018/10/new-online-theodore-roosevelt-papers/>, 01.08.2024.

interesting “function” of Rohr as a cypher was established and examined, and with that the investments and motivations of the authors.

Conclusion – The cypher remains

The fear/prediction at the start of the paper has come true, Rohr remains a cypher and an unknown. But with every historical approach there remains an unknown. Even the people that are in the focus of the most historical analyses can never fully be understood, because we do not have absolute insight into their minds. Nonetheless, the goal of this paper never was to establish an absolute and clear picture of Rohr, it did aim at starting to understand the unknown field marshal and a starting understanding has been created.

Rohr's personal identity was characterized by his Hungarian nationality and his devotion to the army. His choice to identify as a Hungarian was an interesting one, with the examples of the ruling elite it has been established that Hungary only played second fiddle in the orchestra that was the Habsburg monarchy. But even though it was only in second place and there were many who did not support the Hungarian cause, Rohr managed to excel in his career especially because there were tensions between Austria and Hungary. He was a black and golden Hungarian and was thus chosen to become inspector general of the military educational sites and commander of the *Honvéd*; because he had a dualistic personality, he became a needed fit for these positions. It will remain unclear to what extent Rohr "played" his role as a Hungarian but it nevertheless brought him success. The military was the other big part of Rohr's personality to the outside. With the example of the fire, the mindset of the waning monarchy was established as was its love for the military. A love Rohr and many others felt and that would ultimately lead to the Great War. In Rohr's particular case this love for army and state is exemplified in his promotion to field marshal and his depression once army and state had fallen.

Rohr's second big love, which was perhaps in first place, was the love for his wife. This love can only be seen through her description. He was "quiet", his love was "quiet" and Marie's love was "loud"; but as evidenced by the examples of Marie's singing, his love was passionate, just because he professed his love not loudly does not mean it was not real. As chapter two showed, his love, that is strangely paralleled by his motto "*Acta Non Verba*", is only visible when looking at the whole picture, when stepping back to examine Marie's writing as a whole and not episode-wise. The first words of her memoirs and the last ones refer to her husband and the time she spent with him. Love became the driving force to remember, she remembered out of love but she also only remembered love. Death, loss and sadness do not feature prominently in her writing, these themes only surface at the end of the memoirs and in connection with the war, as presented in chapter four. But, as also established in chapter two Marie did not love everyone, in contrast to her loving description of her husband, father- and brother-in-law, her

descriptions of the female members of Franz's family strangely do not get the same loving coverage; the reason for this can only be speculated on.

Chapter three has put the Rohrs within the Austro-Hungarian society. Through the upbringing of Christine, Rudolf and Stephan it became clear that the Rohrs were influenced by some of the reigning mindsets of the time: Militarism and interest for natural science, but they also were traditional when it came to names and the connection to the church. As examined, their social identities were complex, they were militarists and "injected" this thinking into their sons but they also were liberal in their worldview, evidenced by the freedom granted to Christine and her life-decisions, if the boys also had this opportunity of freedom is hard to tell. Hand in hand with the fascination for the military came the love for the state, that again created much sorrow and grief once the war was over. As the last sentences of chapter three concluded, their social identity was quite multifaceted: Catholic, traditional, Hungarian, Austro-Hungarian, militaristic, liberal, free and fascinated by natural science. Their lives were complex, just as the empire they lived in, but their lives were able to be intricate because of the social position they were in. If Marie would not have been a noble woman from a wealthy family and if Franz would not have had a steep career, it is questionable if the two and their children would have had the same freedoms that made their lives complex.

Chapter four was just mentioned above as was the rampant militarism of the late Habsburg monarchy. At the start of the war the unknown makes its comeback. Marie is held back about the enthusiasm shown by the majority of the population, we speculated that she (and Franz) perhaps was enthusiastic then but once reality caught up with her and the Second World War started all this enthusiasm left her. It is also possible that she never was enthusiastic. Her sons and her husband were in immediate danger once the war started and with her being so close to the military her fears are understandable. But the most important part of chapter four is not fear, it is the shift in Marie's writing. Before, her memoirs are beautiful and colourful descriptions of the past, full of anecdotes and bliss but now there are things that are out of place, the aerial attacks, the destroyed homes and most telling Franz's depressions show how strongly these "mere four years" have impacted their lives. Arguments and thoughts that the elite was better off at the end of the war are put to question when examining Marie's tonal shift.

Rohr still remains a cypher in chapter five, perhaps this part of his person/of how his person was perceived is a defining factor of him. He never published his thoughts on the war and never tried to tell the world who he truly was. With this approach he left this task to others. Through their descriptions and their uses of his character traits he became a personification. By most he

was used as a personification of the golden past, he became an embodiment of the fallen Austro-Hungarian empire, he became the archetype of the old imperial-royal general. But while his most prominent “outside” feature was his military rank, most observers and authors tended to focus their descriptions and comments on Rohr’s personality. Roda Roda mentioned his wrath and compassion, Dominig his kindness and Marie remembered her husband because of his love. It is interesting to see that this high-ranking general is remembered mostly because of his personality, perhaps because of the fact that his career during the war was rather “boring”. As established in the introduction, the literature does not include many accounts about Rohr, because other parts of the war seem more interesting and dramatic. So, this lack of “action” during the war became helpful in this analysis of the person, not of the rank. Rohr never got a monument of ore and stone, but he got monuments of ink and paper that came from the hearts of the people he met. Marie’s devotion to him does not have to be underlined again and it speaks volumes that the ex-officers Roda Roda, Dominig and Seeliger remembered mostly his kindness rather than his victories and medals. As did chapter four question an argument of chapter one, so does chapter five question the whole of chapter three, when asking about legacy. As chapter five progresses one might ask what happened between chapters three and five between Franz and his children. Perhaps the war created a rift, or the growing up process created a “natural” rift between parents and children, or perhaps this rift is an overinterpretation. For Marie her Feri’s legacy was clear: He was her eternal companion in reality and in memory. He was her safe haven, her “happy place” to which she could return to, once the world became bleak, grey and cold. Her (as well as the other authors’) return to him made the sadness of the present disappear and the golden blissful past of memory came back once Marie sat down to write her little orange booklets. Her memoirs became again part of the present and shaped the present, when she remembered the delightful past with her Feri.

Through all chapters and through all analyses of the little anecdotes and stories that exist about Rohr we gained some insight and got familiar with some defining moments and personality traits: Love for the military and the state; the fire; the fear of being treated unfairly; a violence-free upbringing of the children that not only comes into “conflict” with the contemporary educational system but also with the overall martial nature of the military; an interest in the natural sciences; traditional values; kindness; love; devastation after the war. The combination and analyses of these aspects and events created a clearer picture, the field marshal is now a little less unknown. Not only did the stories and examinations help to better explain Rohr himself, the conclusions drawn also help us to better understand Marie, Christine, Rudolf and Stephan as well as other people who lived in a similar social environment in the last years of

the old Habsburg monarchy. Nevertheless, Rohr still remains a cypher, because he was a man who was “rational”, as established in chapter three. But he at least became a little known because of a woman, because of his wife, who was “emotional” and wrote about her emotions and her life with her empathetic husband. He is also a cypher as established in chapter five, a cypher that allows others to remember and again feel the past; and a cypher in its truest form of the word: A riddle. Rohr remains a riddle, even though there are many stories and descriptions of him, he still is and will always remain unknown, as all historical figures must, because a complete understanding of a person – be they alive or dead – can never fully be achieved.

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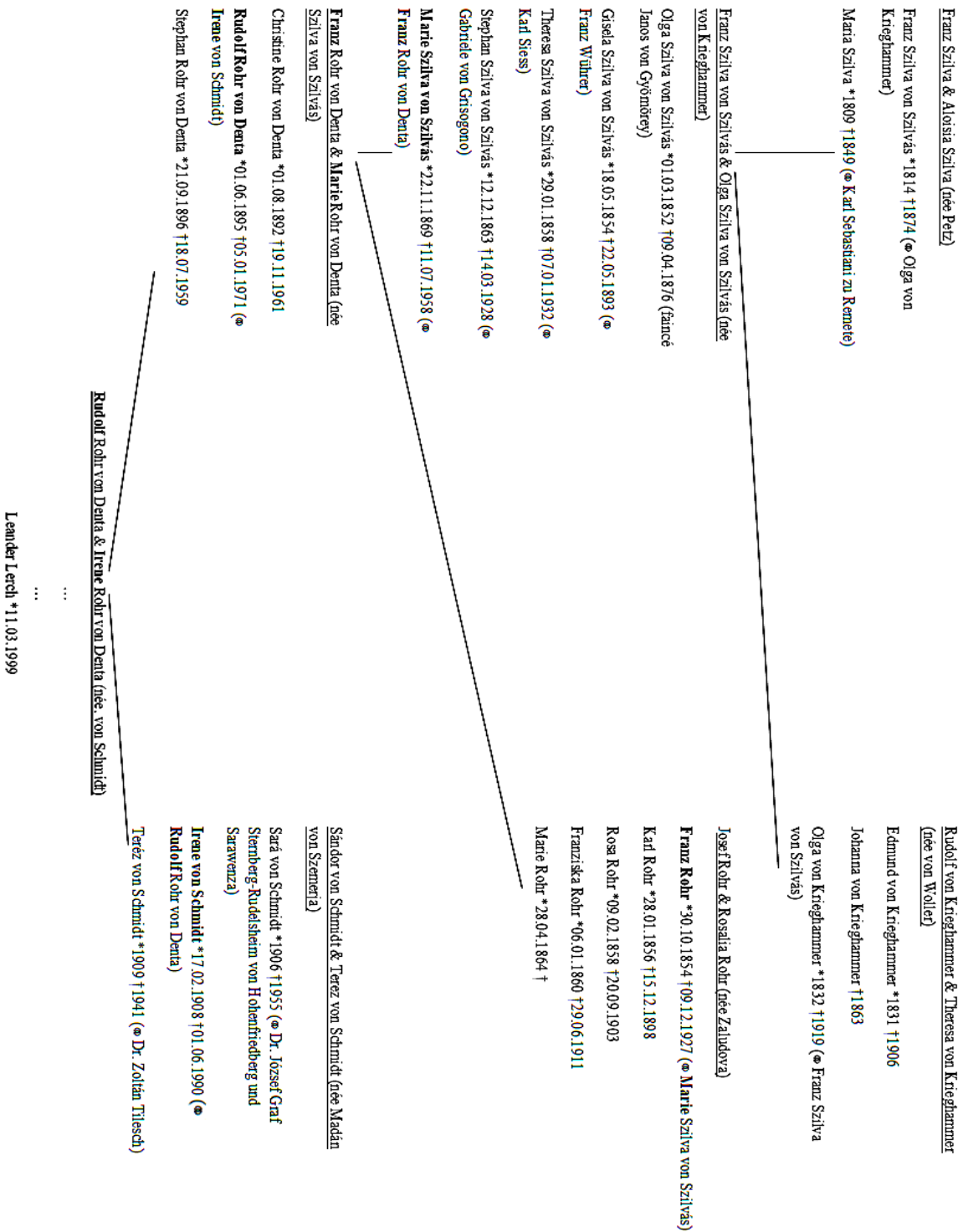
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Appendix



Appendix 1: Rohr family tree.



Appendix 2: Marie and Franz Rohr; 1891, most likely shortly after their engagement; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.



Appendix 3: Marie, Stephan, Franz, Rudolf and Christine Rohr; ca. 1911; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.



Appendix 4: Stephan, Rudolf, Christine, Franz, Marie, Irene and Rudolf Jr. Rohr; 1926; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.



Appendix 5: Franz Rohr in the uniform of a field marshal with the field marshal's baton; copy of an oil painting; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.



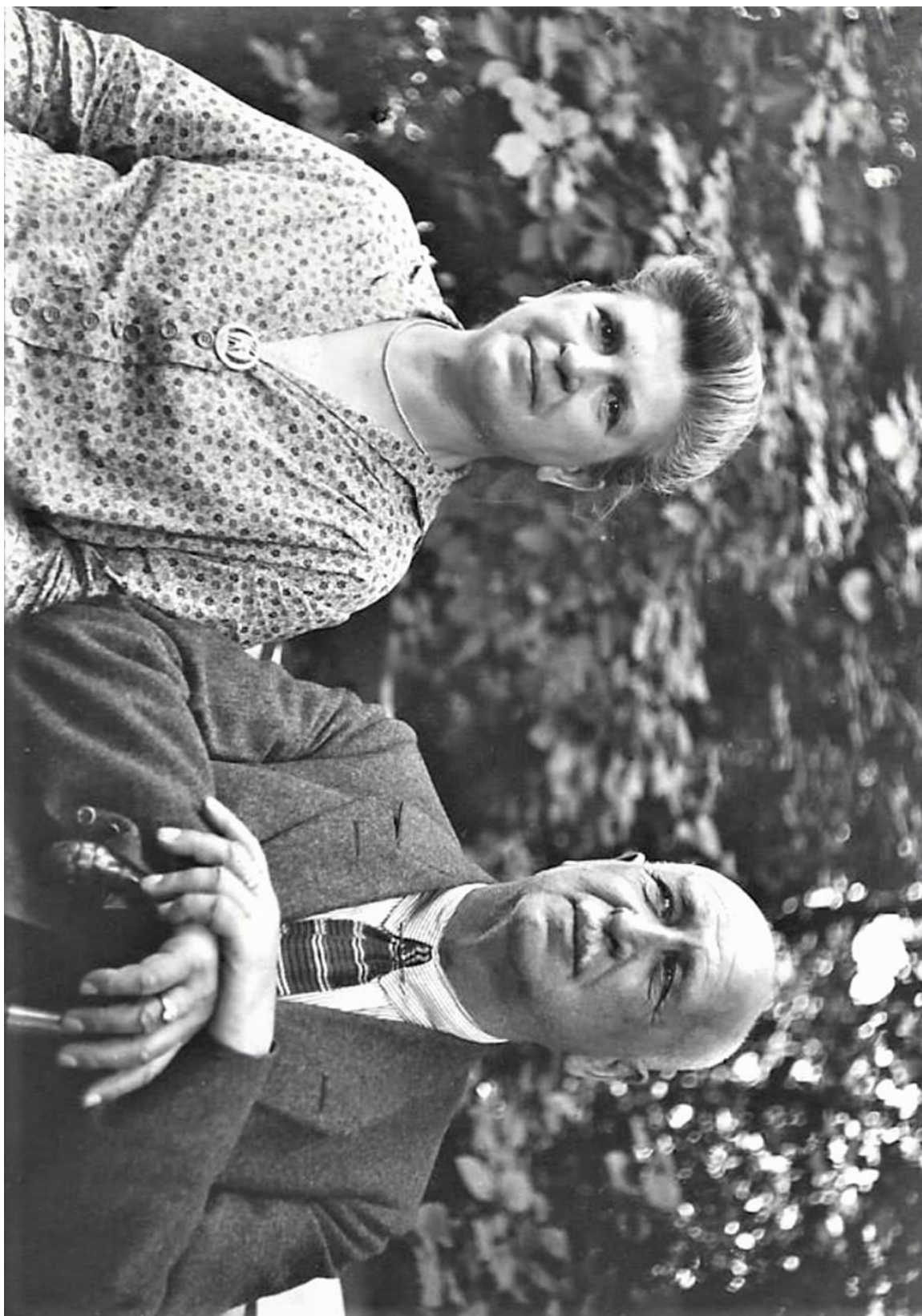
Appendix 6: Marie Rohr; 1926; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.



Appendix 7: Franz Rohr in the field; 1918; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.



Appendix 8: Marie and Franz Rohr, holding hands; 1926; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.



Appendix 9: Marie and Franz Rohr; 1926; Private Collection Barbara Rohr-György.

Alltagsschnellschrift.

(Rasch erlernbare, sehr flüchtige Verkehrsschrift.)

Von

F. von Rohr.

Wien. 1919.

Einleitung.

Gelernte, Schriftsteller, Studierende, Kaufleute, Offiziere, Beamte u. s. w. em-
pfehlen im praktischen Leben häufig den Wunsch, schneller schreiben zu können,
als dies mit der gewöhnlichen (deutschen oder lateinischen) Kurrentschrift möglich ist.

Es unterliegt keinem Zweifel, daß dieses Bedürfnis durch die Stenographie,
namentlich durch das System Gabelsberger oder Stölze-Schrey am besten befriedigt
werden kann. Das Erlernen eines jeden stenographischen Systems erfordert aber
viel Zeit, in der Regel mehrere Monate; auch große Mühe und eiserne Ausdauer
sind zur vollen Beherrschung der Stenographie notwendig. Die Folge ist, daß die
Stenographie von verhältnismäßig wenig Persönlichkeiten wirklich beherrscht wird,
daß sie ein alltägliches Verkehrsmittel nicht geworden ist, und — wie die
bisherige Erfahrung lehrt — es leider auch nicht werden wird, ja nicht werden
kann. Ein Wandel in dieser Beziehung ist zweifellos nur dadurch zu erhoffen,
daß der Allgemeinheit eine leicht zu schreibende, leicht zu lesende und
leicht zu erlernende Schnellschrift zu Gebote steht.

Im vorliegenden Hefte findet der Leser die neue „Alltagsschnellschrift“,
das heißt ein System, das sozusagen den „goldenen Mittelweg“ zwischen der
Stenographie und der bisherigen Verkehrsschrift darstellt. Die neue Schnellschrift
will — es sei dies nachdrücklich hervorgehoben — nicht ein neues Stenographie-
system, sondern nur eine flüchtigere Kurrentschrift, beziehungsweise eine
allgemeine Gebrauch(s)Verkehrsschrift sein.

Dieses neue System kann jedermann ohne Schwierigkeit und — was sehr in
die Waagschale fällt — binnen kurzer Zeit sich aneignen. Letzteres gilt besonders
von der ersten Stufe der „Alltagsschnellschrift“, von ihrer „Vollschrift“.

Im Vergleich mit den in gewöhnlicher Kurrentschrift wiedergegebenen Texten
ist die Zahl der Schriftzüge in diesem Systeme durchschnittlich um 70 bis 80 Prozent
geringer, ihre Schreibgeschwindigkeit daher rund viermal größer. Die Alltagsschnell-
schrift kann zweifellos sämtlichen Forderungen des Handels-, Bureau- oder Studium-
lebens genügen.

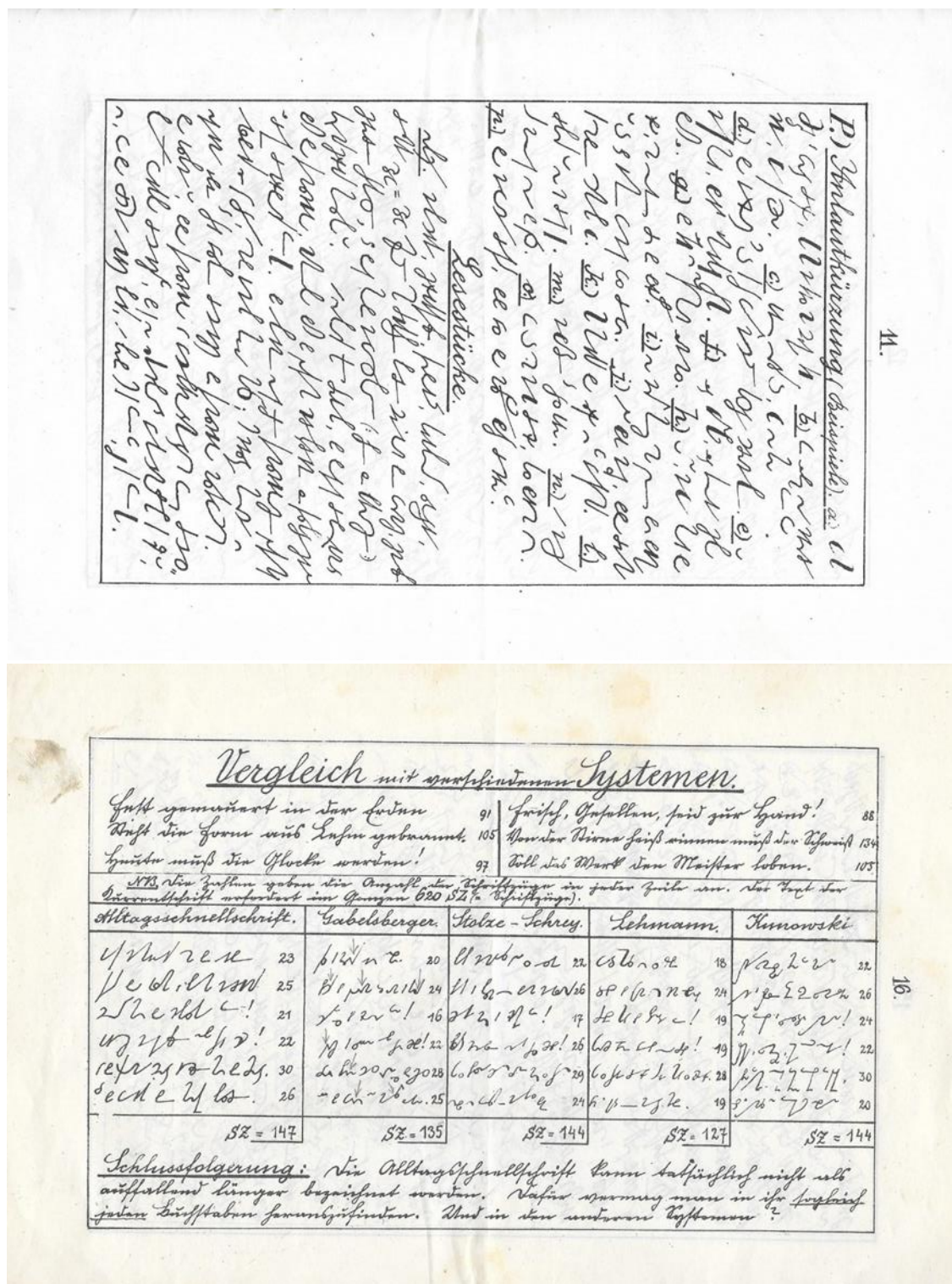
Alphabet.

Alle Schriftzeichen besitzen eine überaus einfache Gestalt; sie sind dem litho-
graphierten Absatz A) entnommen.

Eine Zertasierung des Schnellschriftalphabets ergibt (lithographierter
Absatz B):

a) Die einzelnen Buchstaben sind unlangbar einfach, schreibflüchtig, verbindungs-
fähig und von einander leicht zu unterscheiden, das heißt gut lesbar.

b) Die Vokale, dann die Diphthonge werden durch kleine Zeichen ausgedrückt,
während zur Bezeichnung der Konsonanten mittlere und große (lange) Zeichen
dienen. Durch eine solche Buchstabenwahl wird die Lesbarkeit stark gefördert.



Appendix 10: Rohr's fast writing system, Alltagsschnellschrift 1919; cover, introduction, examples and comparison with other fast writing systems.

Im Ullar, wenn man einen zuhause wohnt,
so, wendet man sich mit ihm so großem
Interesse der Vergangenheit zu.

Ich merke das deutlich von mir u. haben
meine Verwandten, von meinen Großeltern u.
Urgroßeltern fast nichts zu wissen. Sollte ich
meine lieben Kinder, Enkel u. Urenkel nicht
so alt werden wie ich, so ist es vielleicht
nicht das Ansehen von einem Großvater
nicht zu wissen u. so will ich von meiner
Kunstkunst u. dem was ich erlebt habe, für
zu zu Papier bringen.

Und also mußte ich schreiben! Ich werde
mir deshalb nicht ein, ein schriftliches
Heft zu geben u. schreiben aber so gut ich
kann.

Marie Rohr von Denta

Nicht nur selbstmässig Franz Rohr
von Denta

Koblenz im April 1938

ist von, nicht mehr von dem selbstlichen Geist.
Direktor zu danken, mein Herz neigte
dem Generalstab zu und Jungfrauen
jung Rohr war mir nicht gleichgültig.
Zurück Wahn u. Ulysses singen mich zu
umkehr von u. Jungfrau mich: "Nimm
Mitzi, was wird das Übernünftliche sein.
das Rohr oder das Röhr?" Ein Rohrs
sowohl mündlich in dazugelassener Uebersetzung
in Krakau und meistens mir beide
von Joh. Jung Rohr, groß u. künstlich
wird das "Rohr" genannt u. sein
Leiter Rohr war kleiner, aber schmäler
sich, daser das "Röhr".

Am Freitag den 18. 9. 1891 fand ich mir das
Rohr ganz künstlich zum Leben. Es
^{war zum ersten Mal} ~~war zum ersten Mal~~ ^{war zum ersten Mal} ~~war zum ersten Mal~~ ^{war zum ersten Mal}
dort, nicht den Platz neben mir u.
gleich bei der Lagerung, anzusehen ist
ihm, dass es von Anfang an das Leben
im Sinn vorbringen will u. was
früher mit Rohr schmeint, das dienst
hief im Sinn zu sein fort, nach Jung
fassen. Es war sehr süßlich von mir

so das Lang zuwarten. Der Dr. sollte nicht
für mich Zugelassen und seiner Befehle
befolgen. Ich habe nicht gekollert. Die Zugelassen
nicht aber leider nicht mehr, die Blutige,
Küchlein nur zu flach, die Züge sind den
Mall, die Züge aber nicht in füllten den
Willen Gottes. Nun nicht in füllten,
falsch ist, dass das Leben meines neuen
Zug zu füllten ging. Der Dr. 12^{te} Minute
den Züge befanden sich ~~der Dr. 12^{te} Minute~~
mein angestellter Zug 10 Minuten
1^{te} sein nicht Leben nicht. Mein Glück
ging mit ihm nicht in durch den lieben
Gott, dass er nicht leben ließ, der Dr.
verfiel mir, er war befiel für 1^{te} D.
war seinen Zug nicht bei sich. Dieser
sollte er über Gottesgedanken, in nicht sein
ihm aber immer zu schreiben nicht. so fand
ihn. so ging nur nicht über nicht zu wissen.

Appendix 13: Marie's final entry in her memoirs, "Mein Glück ging mit ihm..."; Meine Aufzeichnungen III, 52.

Abstract

English

This paper is a starting point into understanding the person and personality of field marshal Franz Rohr von Denta (1854-1927). Through a biographical approach and chosen examples from his life, a clearer understanding of the person behind the rank is established. The main foci of this paper are analyses of self-perception, emotions, personality and memory. Because the main sources of this paper are the writings of Rohr's wife Marie, the importance of emotions within and their influence on memory is integral, as well as Marie's view on and role in her husband's life. Separated into chapters some of the most important aspects of Rohr are examined with the help of anecdotes and retellings about his life. It comes as no surprise that the military played an important role in the life of the marshal, especially not when looking at the highly militaristic Austro-Hungarian society in the early 20th century. But next to the military Rohr's personal and emotional life also had high importance, the love he felt for his wife might have been even stronger than the love he felt for his army. In contrast to the militaristic tendencies of the times, the Rohrs were a rather liberal family, liberal in the context of the Austro-Hungarian empire and in connection with their privileged status. Thus – like all human beings – Rohr was complex, many different aspects came together to form this individual. Rohr himself never thought it necessary to explain his own complexity, which makes an analysis rather difficult. Because of that, throughout the paper Rohr remains a cypher, not only for the analysis at hand – he can never be fully understood – but also for his contemporaries who then used this cypher to remember the past. Rohr, because he was complex and unknown, became a vehicle for remembrance, a vehicle of memory, influenced by the emotions of the people who wrote about him.

German

Diese Arbeit markiert den Beginn eines besseren Verständnisses der Person und Persönlichkeit von Feldmarschall Franz Rohr von Denta (1854-1927). Mit einer biographischen Herangehensweise und ausgewählten Beispielen seines Lebens wird ein klareres Bild der Person hinter dem militärischen Rang erstellt. Die Hauptpunkte dieser Arbeit sind Analysen des Selbstverständnisses, der Emotionen, der Persönlichkeit und des Erinnerns. Da die Hauptquellen die Schriften von Rohrs Frau Marie sind, ist die Gewichtung von Emotionen in Verbindung mit und Einfluss auf das Erinnern bedeutend, genauso wie Maries Sicht auf das und ihre Rolle im Leben ihres Mannes. Aufgeteilt in Kapitel werden einige der wichtigsten Aspekte der Person Rohrs durch eine Beschau von Anekdoten und Erinnerungen erforscht. Es ist wenig überraschend, dass das Militär eine bedeutende Rolle im Leben des Feldmarschalls gespielt hat, vor allem nicht im Lichte des überbordenden Militarismus der Gesellschaft der Donaumonarchie im frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Doch auch das Persönliche und Emotionale hatte eine bedeutende Stellung in Rohrs Leben. Die Liebe, die er für seine Frau verspürt hat, könnte durchaus stärker gewesen sein, als die Liebe für seine Armee. Dem Militarismus stehen die liberalen Einstellungen der Rohrs gegenüber, diese Einstellungen stehen im Kontext Österreich-Ungarns und in Verbindung mit der privilegierten Stellung der Familie. Rohr ist also – so wie alle Menschen – komplex, viele verschiedene Faktoren schließen sich zu einem Individuum zusammen. Rohr selbst hat seine eigene Komplexität nie erklärt, was eine Analyse der Person umso schwerer macht. Aus diesem Grund verbleibt Rohr eine Chiffre, nicht nur für die vorliegende Arbeit – ihn absolut zu verstehen, wird nie möglich sein – sondern auch für seine Zeitgenossinnen und Zeitgenossen, die diese Chiffre nutzten um sich zu erinnern. Rohr, komplex und „geheimnisvoll“, wurde zu einem Vehikel für Erinnerung, zu einem Vehikel des Erinnerns, beeinflusst von den Emotionen derer, die über ihn geschrieben haben.