

The Austro-Hungarian War Surveillance Office and the question of peace in World War I

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The threat of war during and after the Balkan wars and the hot spots within the empire motivated the higher military and civil institutions of Austria-Hungary to develop more specific plans for how to proceed in the event of conflicts and wars. There were concerns not only that individual nationalities would evade mobilisation, but that social democracy might play a leading role, including in the calling of strikes. The movement's international involvement, i.e. its contact to potential enemy states, was also regarded as a threat.

This planning resulted in derogations which were to be centrally organised by the War Surveillance Office (*Kriegsüberwachungsamt*, KÜA). These dealt a number of blows to worker representation activities, curtailing as they did civil rights such as freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. In the event, however, the Austro-Hungarian social democracy did not react as feared to the beginning of the war. It initially opposed the International and expressed its solidarity with the state.

The paper discusses the relationship of the KÜA to social democracy during the war as illustrated by the debate on the 'question of peace'. In conclusion, it asks whether the peace issue became one piece of the puzzle which ensured that social democracy rose to become the major force to be reckoned with after the war.