

FOLLY AND MALICE

The Habsburg Empire,
the Balkans and the
Start of World War One

John Zametica



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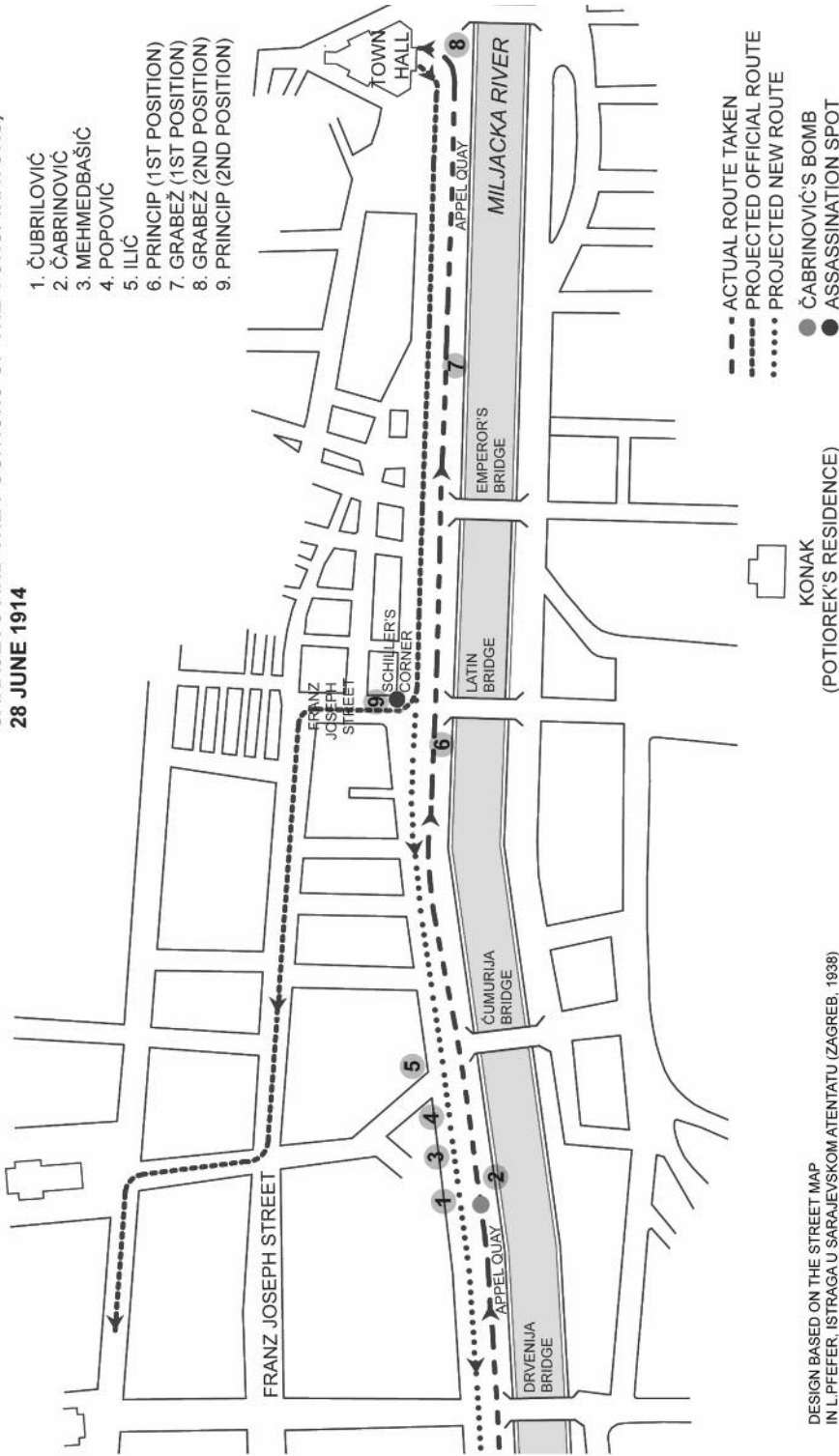
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ROMAN CATHOLIC
CATHEDRAL

**THE MOVEMENT OF THE ARCHDUCAL MOTORCADE THROUGH
SARAJEVO AND THE POSITIONS OF THE CONSPIRATORS,
28 JUNE 1914**

1. ČUBRILLOVIĆ
2. ČABRINOVIĆ
3. MEHMEĐBAŠIĆ
4. POPOVIĆ
5. ILIĆ
6. PRINCIP (1ST POSITION)
7. GRABEŽ (1ST POSITION)
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DESIGN BASED ON THE STREET MAP
IN L. PFEFFER, ISTRAGA U SARAJEVSKOM ATENTATU (ZAGREB, 1938)

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Preface and Acknowledgements

THIS BOOK explores the Habsburg Empire's entanglement in the Balkans and its interaction with South Slav nationalism during the period leading up to the outbreak of the First World War. As one might expect, different aspects of the rather large subject in question have been much discussed over the years given that the European conflagration of 1914 was occasioned by unresolved problems affecting the Austro-Hungarian state and its relations with Balkan neighbours, primarily Serbia. Even before the Sarajevo assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, major diplomatic crises emanating from the Balkans threatened to disturb the peace of Europe. The Sarajevo assassination has of course generated a massive body of literature, but the Bosnian annexation crisis, 1908-1909, and the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, have also received very considerable attention. Scholarly and popular interest in these themes was renewed in the wake of Yugoslavia's bloody collapse in the 1990s.

In many important respects, however, the story of the clash between Habsburg imperial strategies and South Slav aspirations has been, and continues to be, misunderstood or misinterpreted. Quite a few of the works published in connection with the recent centenary of the outbreak of the First World War betray either startling ignorance of the paramount issues or, in some cases, adjust historical facts to fit a desired narrative. But this book was not conceived as a response to recent interpretations. Ever since the view was established, for example, that Gavrilo Princip, Franz Ferdinand's assassin, was a 'Serb nationalist', or that the Archduke was a peace-loving, reform-minded friend of the South Slavs, or that the so-called Black Hand secret organization of Serbian officers had arranged his killing, the whole subject has, it seems to me, been crying out for revision. The need to revisit it, indeed, is the only apology I offer, if one is required, for writing this book. Perhaps I might add that I have a personal interest and curiosity with regard to the geographic area under consideration and its very complicated political history. All my grandparents were born in the realm of the Habsburgs. For most of my life I have lived and moved in various parts of Central Europe and the Balkans, from Slovenia to Bosnia, from Vojvodina to Montenegro, and from Belgrade to Vienna.

I owe my greatest debt of gratitude for completing this work to Marko Gasic, first and foremost my friend, but also a fellow historian and my

Prologue:

Sick Man on the Danube

The Austro-Hungarian 'Anomaly'

AN 'EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY for the end of the world', was the notorious description of Austria coined by Karl Kraus, Viennese journalist, satirist and culture critic, in his celebrated obituary of Franz Ferdinand, the ill-fated Heir to the Throne. 'A brash messenger' who represented 'old Austria' was how Kraus described the Archduke in his piece for *Die Fackel* on 10 July 1914. Franz Ferdinand was someone who 'wanted to awaken an age that was sick, so that the age would not sleep through its own death. The age is now sleeping through his death'. Clearly, not even Kraus could see that the apocalypse which he so distinctly linked with his country was just around the corner: less than a month later the world was plunged into the unprecedented bloodletting of the Great War. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June provided the immediate background.

What Kraus was lamenting was not an Austrian archduke, albeit one who was meant to reform and rejuvenate the Empire, but Austria itself, in which in his view the general human misery took on 'the hideous visage of a cosy wasting disease'.¹ In the unique intellectual atmosphere of *fin de siècle* Vienna, such gloomy sentiments were commonplace in the fields of philosophy, literature and aesthetics – but also in the field of everyday political discourse. Kraus was merely one of many at the time drawing attention to the looming death of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And after the war of 1914-1918 other leading personalities who had previously kept faith now saw things in a very different light. Thus the former Austro-Hungarian General Josef Stürgkh reflected with sadness in his memoirs on the institutions to which he had dedicated his life's work and which were no more: the House of Habsburg, its Empire and the Army. 'Like so many of my comrades', he wrote, 'I too came to the bitter realization that we had throughout our lives served a lost cause.'²

The belief, within Austria-Hungary itself, that the Empire was a lost cause had begun to circulate well before the 1914-1918 cataclysm. Ironically

perhaps, it was to prove a main trigger for the war. The mood of despondency and fatalism prior to 1914 was summed up in the view: 'Better a terrible end than terror without end.'³ Soon after the outbreak of the war the Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza admitted that 'for twenty bitter years' he had considered the Monarchy to have been condemned to doom.⁴ Ottokar Czernin, who belonged to the circle around Franz Ferdinand, and who rose to become the Foreign Minister during the war, recalled in 1919 that the Archduke's assassination in Sarajevo had been widely perceived as heralding the end of the Empire. Czernin observed, famously: 'Time had run out for Austria-Hungary ... We had to die. We could choose the manner of death, and we chose the most terrible.'⁵

The anticipation of the end was indeed widespread and the malaise was noticeable especially among the elites in the Habsburg state.⁶ In the nineteenth century the declining Ottoman Empire had been saddled with the sobriquet 'sick man on the Bosphorus'. By the end of the century, this was being reproduced with regard to the Habsburg state: 'sick man on the Danube'. It was not just the enemies of the Monarchy who used this catchphrase. The 'sick man' analogy was originally expressed by the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Gyula Andrassy in 1876 when he fearfully considered the prospect of Turkey's disappearance from Europe: for then the Balkan nationalisms would turn against Vienna. By the end of 1912, with this nightmare about an Ottoman collapse becoming a reality in the wake of the First Balkan War, the Austrian statesman Ernest von Koerber echoed Andrassy, despairing that the future was 'hopeless' and that Austria was 'the second Turkey'.⁷

What, then, was so unhealthy about this seemingly thriving empire, containing fabulous cities, making some of the most stunning cultural and scientific advances in the world, boasting a first-class army and building a substantial navy? Vienna alone, in the view of one historian, was the place where 'most of the twentieth-century intellectual world was invented'.⁸ Koerber's reference to Turkey meant, of course, that Austria-Hungary's difficulties abroad reflected problems of nationalities at home – for just like Turkey, Austria-Hungary was a polyglot empire. And just like Turkey before 1912, it was a Balkan power. There the parallels ended, but those two states were on the wrong side of history at the turn of the century. By then nationalism had long been the key political gospel in Europe. A few decades earlier Germany and Italy had become shining examples of the struggle for national unification, whereas the Habsburg and Ottoman states, based on dynastic power and bureaucratic-military structures, were medieval creations whose territorial expansion was never guided by any ethnic-national criteria. Lewis Namier noted with regard to the Habsburgs that 'they had a territorial base, but no nationality ... Their instincts were purely proprietary, the one meaning of the Austrian State to them was that

they possessed it'. A.J.P. Taylor, similarly, maintained that the Habsburgs were landlords rather than rulers.⁹

Austria-Hungary's nationalities problem appeared in fact more serious than any Turkey had ever had to face. The revolutionary tumult of 1848-49 had already seen Hungarian nationalism come close to destroying the Habsburg Empire. A total of eleven nations lived in the Monarchy (not counting ambiguous groups such as Muslim Slavs, Vlachs, Gypsies and Jews). The Italians, Romanians and Serbs of the Monarchy could all look to adjoining territories in which their co-nationals had independent states. The Italians were the most Empire-hostile. The Polish elites in Galicia, forming the third most privileged group in the Empire after the German Austrians and the Hungarians, were perhaps the most loyal, but nevertheless dreamt of and worked for an independent Great Poland. The Czechs, the Slovaks, the Slovenes and the Croats did not have brothers across frontiers (except when the Croats and the Slovenes saw themselves as being members, with the Serbs, of the same South Slav family), and they all pressed for internal reform. The great mass of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina saw themselves as 'Turks', while their intelligentsia could not decide, with some exceptions, whether they were Serbs or Croats. In any case, their emotional connection was with Istanbul, certainly not with Vienna. The Ukrainians, also known as the 'Ruthenians', were split into Russophiles and nationalists. The latter, although wary of Russia, were increasingly frustrated by Polish hegemony in Galicia. After 1871, when Bismarck founded the Hohenzollern Empire, a considerable number of German Austrians wanted their lands to be joined to the powerful German Reich in the north. The Hungarian ruling classes, wielding disproportionate power after the 1867 settlement made the Monarchy 'dual', were the most comfortable with the state in which they lived – but this did not stop them from provoking serious crises in relations with Vienna in attempts to improve the status of Hungary still further.

Because of its squabbling nations, the Dual Monarchy was also known as the 'Dual Anarchy'.¹⁰ The pre-war pessimism about the prospects of the Habsburg state did in retrospect prove to be well founded given its complete ruination in 1918, the year when the many different nations of which the Monarchy had been composed left to follow their own ways. It was precisely the multi-national structure of the Empire – in the age of nationalism and nation-states – which had widely been seen as the cause of its doom. Towards the end of his life the Emperor Franz Joseph himself remarked that 'anything' was likely to happen in his empire. He explained: 'I have been aware for decades just what an anomaly we are in today's world.'¹¹ Franz Joseph should certainly have known, not least because he and his state had paid a heavy bill for the Italian and German unifications.

The view that an Austria-Hungary, comprised of so many nations, was an anomaly condemned to death by the progress of history has not, however, gone unchallenged amongst historians contemplating its 1918 collapse. Drawing his sword against such 'misplaced determinism', one historian has argued that had the Central Powers emerged victorious from the war, the Habsburg Monarchy would have remained intact and almost certainly expanded. Another historian put it bluntly: 'What killed the monarchy was the war and the policies ... that led up to it. Why complicate the obvious?' A similar view was held by Hans Kohn, a leading authority: 'The principal cause of the collapse was the foreign policy of the monarchy, which was based upon a false principle of prestige, a *Grossmachtpolitik* which neither the domestic situation nor the economic resources of the monarchy favoured.' A.J.P. Taylor, on the other hand, maintained that, although the impulse which brought down the Habsburg Monarchy had to come from the outside, 'it could never have achieved its tremendous effect had not all been rotten within'. There were no lost opportunities for the Empire in Taylor's opinion: once launched, the national principle 'had to work itself to the finish'.¹²

Interestingly, in 1914 Vienna's German allies also thought that there was something rotten in the state of Austria-Hungary. In a letter to the Foreign Minister in Berlin, only a few weeks before Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, the German Ambassador to Vienna Heinrich von Tschirschky touched on the subject of relations with Austria-Hungary: 'How often in my thoughts have I asked myself whether it is beneficial for us to be hooked up so firmly with this state structure which is cracking at all the seams, and to carry on the tedious work of towing it along.' Tschirschky considered a possible 'decomposition' of Austria-Hungary and even speculated about the desirability of incorporating its German provinces into Germany.¹³ A worse prognosis was hardly imaginable, and was in fact fairly accurate. In 1919 the rump Austria ('Deutsch-Österreich' as it officially called itself) wanted to join Germany. Tschirschky's boss in Berlin, Gottlieb von Jagow, shared his view, writing, during the July 1914 crisis, that it was a debatable point whether Germany should hold on to the alliance with the 'increasingly corrosive' state on the Danube.¹⁴ In 1914, the German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg described the Habsburg Empire as 'crumbling'.¹⁵ Even Kaiser Wilhelm II was not too hopeful about its future. When he tried, early in August 1914, to convince the Crown Prince of Romania that it was in the interest of Romania to be on the side of Germany, he told him that Austria-Hungary 'could not last for more than twenty years', and Germany would then give Transylvania to Romania.¹⁶

The scepticism about the viability of Austria-Hungary was thus commonplace. 'One lived', the Austrian statesman Rudolf Sieghart recalled, 'in anticipation of an approaching catastrophe'.¹⁷ The mood of despon-

dency among the Habsburg elites was reinforced by the feeling that their multinational empire was inferior in comparison with other Great Powers, particularly the German Reich.¹⁸ Conversing in 1900, the well-connected historian Heinrich Friedjung and the Austrian German politician Joseph Baernreither agreed that a reform from within was unlikely and that an external saviour had to be sought – Germany.¹⁹ But what was the point of saving the Empire? The old mission of the Habsburg state, that of being the bulwark of Christendom, had lost its purpose perhaps as early as during the eighteenth century. In 1930 Robert Seton-Watson wrote that, with Turkey's expulsion and decay, 'the whole *raison d'être* of Habsburg unity has disappeared'.²⁰ Moreover, the age had also long passed when Austria had actually been seen as a European necessity. Back in 1848 the Czech historian and politician František Palacký had made his celebrated plea in favour of the Habsburg state: 'Certainly, if the Austrian state had not existed for ages, we would be obliged in the interests of Europe and even of mankind to endeavour to create it as fast as possible.'²¹ But Palacký also argued that nature knows neither ruling nor subservient nations. The Austrian state that he and many others wanted to see was a federation along national lines – a federation that would ensure national freedom.

Palacký's federalist predilection, in point of fact, figured prominently in the so-called Kremsier constitutional draft (March 1849), freely and unanimously agreed by representatives of different nations in the *Reichstag* (the Imperial Council or parliament). The draft had envisaged a liberal and federal Austrian state, incorporating the ethnic-linguistic principle together with the criterion of historical-political units.²² It was, as the great historian of the Habsburg Empire Robert Kann noted, 'the only time in Austrian history that such a comprehensive agreement was ever achieved'.²³ But the young Emperor Franz Joseph closed down this assembly and imposed an absolutist constitution instead. In doing so, he dealt what turned out to be perhaps the decisive blow to any meaningful prospect of national harmony in the realm over which he had just begun (in 1848) to rule. Although in the years to come more attempts followed to redesign the Empire along national lines, they were essentially half-hearted. The riddle that was the Habsburg state, the question of how to remove the ever-threatening national frictions, proved beyond the capacity of generations of statesmen and politicians to solve.

Thus a federated Habsburg state never happened. Instead, a compromise was reached between Franz Joseph and the Hungarians in 1867, whereby Austria became Austria-Hungary. This was the famous *Ausgleich* which established the Dual Monarchy and which was to last until the end in 1918. Following the shocking defeat in the Italian war (1859) and, especially, the subsequent debacle in the war against Prussia (1866), which ousted Austria from German affairs (as well from of Italy), the old empire

appeared to have run out of steam. Since the end of the revolutionary upheaval of 1848-49 Franz Joseph had held the reins of an authoritarian, centralist state. In order to survive, the Monarchy now had to carry out constitutional reform. But in what direction? Would some kind of constitutional centralism suffice, or would a federalism that would recognize the diversity of the Empire be embraced? The third way, dualism with Hungary, was an option which neither Austria's statesmen nor the Emperor were initially in any hurry to contemplate.

Dualism

Certainly, people in high places in Vienna were toying with the idea of some kind of federalist solution – at least in as much as provincial diets, crammed with aristocrats, would look after business that was not strictly reserved for the imperial centre. The 1860 'October Diploma' was a constitution which contained some such federalist elements. However, it was essentially a sham, designed to restore autocracy under the guise of constitutionalism. As Louis Eisenmann noted, it was certainly not 'made for the nationalities'.²⁴ Franz Joseph anticipated 'a little parliamentarianism', but not any significant relinquishment of his power.²⁵ Indeed. In 1865 the Croat politician Ante Starčević remarked that the difference between Austrian federalism and Austrian centralism was the difference between Satan and the devil.²⁶ Faced with Hungarian hostility, the scheme contained in the October Diploma foundered almost immediately. Then, as in 1848-49, the Hungarians were the most determined and the most articulate opponents of Habsburg power, and they had no time for any federalism, genuine or fake.

What the Hungarians wanted was pure dualism: a minimal constitutional partnership between the Magyars of Hungary and the Germans of Austria. Their attempt in 1848-49 under Lajos Kossuth to break away completely had been defeated. Their statesmen knew better now – outright independence was no longer a serious option, even though Russia, the saviour of the Habsburgs in 1849, was now hostile to Vienna. But any federalist scheme would put Hungary, itself a multinational land, on a guaranteed path to ruin – this, at any rate, was what the Hungarians believed. Equally, Hungary would never agree to a tight centralist system either. So when the Emperor replaced the ill-fated October Diploma with the reversion to centralism that was his 'February Patent' of 1861, this was as such simply ignored by the Hungarians, who, under the able leadership of Franz Deák, began to formulate their dualist demands. In 1865 the Emperor appointed a well-known opponent of this dualism Richard von Belcredi to negotiate with Budapest. Belcredi favoured a five-way federalist division ('Belcredi's Pentarchy') into historical-political units: Austrian-German,

Bohemian-Moravian, Hungarian, Polish-Ruthenian, and South Slav. But this was anathema to Budapest.²⁷

Franz Joseph himself, however, treasured nothing except his own position and the glory of the Habsburg dynasty. This monarch, whose popular image to this day is that of an amiable, good-hearted ruler of his nations, could not have cared less for most of them. He genuinely liked only the Italians, appreciating their culture as he did. Franz Joseph was of course a German, even a bigoted German, remarking as late as 1907 that Prague was a predominantly German city – though this had not been the case for a long time. But he would get upset even by his own people if they displayed the black-red-yellow German flag on festive occasions – suspecting in their behaviour a sympathy for the Hohenzollern dynasty. It is in fact pointless to debate this detail about his outlook, for high aristocrats, not nations, were close to his heart.²⁸ ‘His only thought was of dynastic power’, A.J.P. Taylor wrote about Franz Joseph. The dynasty was not there to serve the peoples, ‘it was for them to be the servants of the dynasty and to sustain its military greatness.’²⁹ The Emperor’s instincts, certainly, were authoritarian. He used to say to General Conrad von Hötzendorf: ‘Believe me, one cannot govern the Monarchy constitutionally.’³⁰

Franz Joseph (‘the most dignified mediocrity of his age’, according to one contemporary observer)³¹ saw himself as a kind of Roman-German emperor in the tradition of the Holy Roman Empire. To that extent the Habsburgs were German princes and to that extent there existed a German ‘slant’ in imperial ideology – making the Habsburg universalist claims somewhat hollow.³² Certainly, burdened by dynastic considerations, he had an interest in German matters that bordered on the obsessive. This led, in July 1866, to a confrontation with Prussia, a genuine German state with no universalist, but with definite German pretensions. The Emperor had stubbornly refused to concede Prussia a position of equality in German lands, and this approach finally produced a conflict.³³

When, at Königgrätz, Austria had lost that war against Prussia, the Hungarians had got Franz Joseph exactly where they wanted him. With no choice, he soon got rid of Belcredi and brought in Baron Ferdinand Beust to make the adjustment *vis-à-vis* Hungary. Beust, an anti-Prussian politician from Saxony, shared Franz Joseph’s overriding concern to stabilise the Empire internally as quickly as possible in order to concentrate on foreign policy and scheme some kind of revenge against Prussia. A war was never that far from Franz Joseph’s mind before 1870-71. The Emperor always knew that he had to appease the Hungarians, while hoping that this could somehow be avoided. The Hungarians were definitely hostile. Thus in 1866 a volunteer legion under General György Klapka had been formed in Hungary to fight with the Prussians. Of course, Bismarck’s victory over Austria in that year made some kind of compromise with the Hungarians,

the second strongest nation in the Empire, unavoidable. The future of the Habsburg dynasty was at stake, as was the standing of Austria as one of the great powers of Europe. Austria, in the view of the German historian Friedrich Prinz, had already lost the status of a genuine Great Power in the revolutionary tumult of 1848, or at the latest by 1866; the 1867 deal with the Hungarians was designed to bring about an 'artificial' prolongation of the Great Power status.³⁴

The Compromise of 1867 was struck between the Emperor and the leading Hungarian statesmen – Austria had no part in this. The Hungarians, indeed, saw the *Ausgleich* as a contract with their King (Franz Joseph), not with Austria.³⁵ Until 1915 Austria did not, oddly enough, even have an official name, its constitutional existence being acknowledged with the words: 'The Kingdoms and Lands represented in the Reichsrat'. The moment Franz Joseph realized that the Hungarians would let him retain control of the army and foreign policy, he even became impatient to finalize the agreement.³⁶ To no avail had Belcredi warned of the danger of a dualist solution that ignored the Slav peoples of the Monarchy.³⁷ But then, as Robert Kann suggested, 'the Compromise was never intended to solve the nationality problems of the Habsburg monarchy'.³⁸ As Franz Joseph said in February 1867: 'I do not conceal from myself that the Slav peoples of the monarchy may look on the new policies with distrust, but the government will never be able to satisfy every national group. That is why we must rely on those which are the strongest ... that is, the Germans and the Hungarians.'³⁹ The Slavs, seldom a unified bloc, were already seeking support elsewhere. As the negotiations with the Hungarians proceeded, a delegation of Czechs, Slovenes, Ukrainians and Croats made a pilgrimage to Russia, the Czech Palacký among them.⁴⁰ In 1865 Palacký had warned: 'The day of the declaration of dualism will, with inevitable and natural necessity, be the birthday of Pan-Slavism in its least desirable form ... We [Slavs] were in existence before Austria and we will still be here after she is gone.'⁴¹

The essence of the *Ausgleich* was two virtually independent states, Austria and Hungary, bound in union by the person of the sovereign who was the Emperor in Austria, and the King in Hungary. Joint institutions were kept to a minimum: a minister for foreign affairs, a minister of war, and a finance minister (the currency remained joint). There was, additionally, a joint ministerial council composed of these three joint ministers together with the Austrian and Hungarian prime ministers. This, however, did not in any way constitute an Austro-Hungarian Government and there was no overall head of the ministerial council – the Foreign Minister was merely entrusted with the formality of presiding over it. The joint ministers had no say in the internal affairs of either state. Both Austria and Hungary had their assemblies, but there was no joint parliament – the Hungarians would not hear of it. Instead, two 'Delegations' numbering

60 each (40 from the lower house and 20 from the upper house) would sit alternately in Vienna and Budapest once a year. But they would sit and debate away from each other – their communication was in writing (hence this body of men was known as ‘deaf and dumb’).

The budgets, of course, were separate except for the War and Foreign ministries, and so the Joint Finance Ministry had little to do. An Austrian contemporary described the Joint Finance Minister as ‘a kind of head of an accounts office’.⁴² Leon Biliński, who held the post in 1914, recalled that the extent of the joint work on the finances was ‘very modest’. The real finances, he pointed out, were in the hands of the two other finance ministers, the Austrian and the Hungarian.⁴³ In fact the Ministry was largely to busy itself, after 1878, with the administration of the occupied provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Economically, the Hungarians had struck a fantastic bargain in 1867: their contribution towards common expenditure was initially only 30 per cent, and it never rose above 34.4 per cent.⁴⁴ The *Ausgleich* was, overall, the goose that laid the golden egg for them. Louis Eisenmann, the unsurpassed authority on the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, provided a famous formula for the system of Dualism: parity of rights, two thirds of joint expenses for Austria, and three quarters of influence for Hungary.⁴⁵

The joint ministers would report to the Delegations, although in practice the real power lay, on the Austrian side, in the hands of the Emperor and, on the Hungarian side, with the Government in Budapest. Franz Joseph had a cabinet office which was divided into Austrian and Hungarian sections. Citizenships were separate – so that, for example, a domestic servant from Slovakia, holding Hungarian citizenship and resident in Vienna, would technically be treated as a foreign citizen.⁴⁶ There was a customs union between the two halves of the Monarchy, to be renegotiated every ten years together with other administrative matters – a guarantee for future disputes. The provisional character of the state was thus spelled out in the constitution itself. This became known, Oscar Jászi pointed out, as a system of a ‘*Monarchie auf Kündigung* [a monarchy at short notice]’.⁴⁷ The shambles of the system was revealed, for example, in 1902 when Austria and Hungary signed the Brussels Sugar Convention as separate states. The industrialists in the Austrian half of the Monarchy were to ‘constantly complain’ that the short term nature of the provision for customs union was a precarious basis on which to maintain the markets. Although the Joint Foreign Minister was supposed to handle commercial matters in relation to foreign countries, he was merely ‘an agent’ of the two separate governments of Austria and Hungary.⁴⁸ Moreover, military budgets for the joint army had to be approved by both sides, and this gave the Hungarians a great deal of de facto control over defence, and hence foreign policy.

Given the weakness of Franz Joseph's position in 1867, the *Ausgleich* was perhaps a predictable outcome, but it was still a remarkable achievement of Hungarian statesmanship. Antonije Orešković, a Croat in the service of Prince Michael of Serbia, met Count Andrassy in 1868 and was struck and revolted by the Magyar's arrogant attitude when they discussed the Balkans. For Andrassy belonged, Orešković wrote, 'to a lonely little nation of 4 million'.⁴⁹ As Namier observed, the *Ausgleich* 'made one of the smallest nations in Europe into a Great Power'.⁵⁰ It also made any evolution towards federalism most unlikely. Belcredi had naively asked Andrassy whether, if the Hungarian demands were met, it would be alright for Austria to organize its state as it saw fit. 'No,' replied Andrassy, 'Hungary would not be indifferent to that, for Hungary wishes that Austria remains a single state.' He elaborated the Hungarian position: Hungary insisted that Austria should have a unitary constitution and government, and that the Germans of Austria led the Austrian state.⁵¹ Franz Joseph duly obliged. Beust even said to the Hungarians: 'You will keep your hordes, we shall keep ours.'⁵²

Those hordes were the non-Hungarians and non-Germans – largely Slavs. Indeed, Beust had envisaged the pact with the Hungarians as being aimed 'against Pan Slavism'.⁵³ The Slavs of the Empire formed the majority in both halves of the Empire – the official statistics more or less confirm this but do not give the whole picture. According to the 1910 census, in the so-called 'Cisleithania' (the territories 'this side', i.e., west of the river Leitha, that is, in Austria), the Germans made up 35.5 per cent of the population; in the Hungarian half ('Transleithania' or 'beyond' the Leitha), the Hungarians represented 48 per cent of the population. But these figures hardly reveal the actual national proportions. In the natural melting pot of Vienna, large numbers of Empire Slavs turned into Germans.⁵⁴ The statistics should be treated especially carefully with regard to Hungary, in which an untold number of Slavs (the Slovaks in particular) simply became 'Hungarian' in the wake of the aggressive Magyarization policies pursued by Budapest. The state east of the Leitha, certainly, was no melting pot; it was a brutal assimilation machine, even if its work had been facilitated by the non-Hungarians' own aspirations to social mobility. In 1905 a contemporary observer estimated that, out of a population of some 19 million in the Hungarian state, barely 5 million were 'genuine' Hungarians.⁵⁵ Franz Ferdinand, admittedly no friend of the Hungarians, told the German Emperor Wilhelm II (shortly before travelling to Sarajevo) that their number had always been falsely represented, and that the actual figure was maybe two and a half million.⁵⁶

In this dualist system there was a kind of sub-division in both halves of the Monarchy. In the Austrian half, the Poles of Galicia, always anti-Russian and therefore pro-Habsburg (as opposed to pro-Austrian), quickly acquired

local autonomy after 1867. In 1848-49 they had opportunistically supported the Hungarians against Vienna, but this episode was ignored by Franz Joseph, who set up a curious criterion of monarchic benevolence: the traitors from 1848-49 (Hungarians and Poles) were to be rewarded, the loyal nations (Croats, Serbs, Romanians and Ukrainians) were to be punished. The Poles would be the only Slavonic group in the Empire to profit from it. Their help was needed by Vienna in order to secure a workable majority in the Austrian parliament.⁵⁷ In 1869 the Polish language was made official in Galicia, and from 1871 a Polish minister without portfolio would sit in the Austrian cabinets to look after Polish interests. The German language was completely expelled, even from the railways.⁵⁸ The number of Poles holding prominent positions in both the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian administrations was testimony enough to their importance. Colonel Carl Bardolff, who was in 1914 the head of Franz Ferdinand's military chancellery, observed in his memoirs that 'no one dared' act against the Poles.⁵⁹ This auxiliary master race of the Empire had a free hand to trample on its Ukrainians in eastern Galicia – economically, culturally and politically. The Poles duly informed the Ukrainians that their language was 'too primitive' for use in secondary education.⁶⁰ The Ukrainians, a majority in Galicia – though not in the main city, Lemberg (Lvov) – were at one point represented by four deputies in Vienna's *Reichsrat*, whereas the Poles had seventy-five mandates.⁶¹ In 1908 Count Andrzej Potocki, the Polish governor, was assassinated by a Ukrainian student firing from a Browning pistol.

In the Hungarian half, the Croats and the Hungarians had reached a separate compromise, the *Nagodba*, in 1868. Croatia had been tied to the Hungarian crown of St Stephen since the twelfth century: in 1102 Coloman, the King of Hungary, was recognized by Croatia as sovereign. Although this was merely a personal union, the monarch providing the only link between Hungary and Croatia, in practice the latter drifted into a subordinate position – Hungary treated Croatia as an appended part (*pars adnexa*). In 1527, following Hungary's catastrophic defeat by the Turks at the battle of Mohács, the Croatian Diet elected Ferdinand Habsburg as King. He pledged to 'honour, confirm and maintain' Croatia's rights and laws.⁶² This, together with, for example, the Croat acceptance of the Pragmatic Sanction in 1712 (well before Hungary followed suit) was indeed proof of Croatia's separate statehood.⁶³ On paper, the Croats were thus one of the 'historic' nations of the Empire. However, as in the similar case of the Czechs with regard to the Habsburg crown, this status had proved to be of little consequence. In 1848 the Croats had risen against Hungarian hegemony and, under their leader, *Ban* (Viceroy) Josip Jelačić, had done a great deal in that critical year to save the Habsburg dynasty and its state. Franz Joseph thanked them by terminating their self-rule in 1850. An

embittered Jelačić commented: 'If in Vienna they continue doing as they have been doing, I give the Monarchy a quarter century of life, and no more.'⁶⁴ In 1853, when Franz Joseph survived an assassination attempt against him by a Hungarian nationalist, there was undisguised regret among some Croats that the Emperor had not been killed.⁶⁵ Later, Franz Joseph's alleged opinion about the Croats became widely known. He is supposed to have said: 'The Croats – they are rabble.'⁶⁶

The Croat-Hungarian Agreement of 1868 paid lip service to an autonomous Croatia while establishing Budapest's ascendancy. A new, restrictive electoral law had to be introduced beforehand, and a great deal of pressure and corruption was also used in order to secure a pro-Magyar ('Unionist') majority willing to negotiate Croatia into subservience. The key to Croatia's subjugation was its lack of any financial autonomy. Moreover, the appointments of the *Ban* of Croatia were controlled by Budapest: in this matter the Emperor-King had to follow the advice of Hungarian prime ministers. Already in 1871 Eugen Kvaternik, a leading Croat politician, declared Croatia independent and led an armed rebellion during which he was killed. There were bloody demonstrations against Hungarian supremacy across the country in 1883, requiring Army intervention, and again in 1902-1903. It was only the effective, repressive policies of the country's long-ruling *Ban*, the highly able Hungarian Count Károly Khuen-Hédervály (who 'was acquainted with human weaknesses', explained the Croat historian Ferdo Šišić)⁶⁷ which prevented Croatia from emerging as the chief internal problem of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The land was, Baron Károlyi Hieronymi said in 1898, easy to govern: 'In Croatia one simply locks up an inconvenient candidate, he is kept in custody and is released after the elections are over.'⁶⁸

The Croats would regularly refer to the 'state-right' and the 'historic right' of Croatia; the absence in reality of any such rights was best reflected in the fact that Dalmatia and Istria, both predominantly Croat lands, were under the jurisdiction of Austria, not Hungary.⁶⁹ Dalmatia, moreover, suffered from catastrophic economic neglect by Vienna – the Croat historian Mirjana Gross called Dalmatia 'the most backward land of the Habsburg Monarchy'.⁷⁰ Thus the Croats lived divided in what was for them effectively a prison system cemented by the dualist compromise of 1867. Long before there was any 'South Slav Question' connected with the Serbs and Serbia, a potentially major and purely internal South Slav problem existed in the Monarchy connected with the Croats. Prior to Franz Ferdinand's assassination in Sarajevo, most of the previous South Slav assassination attempts against Austro-Hungarian officials (four out of six altogether) had been carried out by Croats.

Muddling Through

The system of 1867, as Namier observed, was impossible to reform: it, and the Habsburg Monarchy with it, could be destroyed, but ‘it did not admit of development’.⁷¹ Excepting an episode from 1905, when the Hungarian Independence Party (leading a coalition of parties previously in opposition) seemed to threaten the whole edifice of the joint empire, the Hungarians were the keenest upholders of the status quo. The Parliament in Budapest was rigged in such a way that, for example in 1913, there were only five Romanian and three Slovak deputies out of the total of 413 deputies in the assembly.⁷² Hungary’s subject races, the Romanians, the Slovaks, the Croats, the Serbs, as well as some of the Monarchy’s Ukrainians and Germans, were all the targets of the policies of Magyarization – above all the Slovaks, but also the Romanians who, like the Croats and the Serbs, had in 1848-49 rendered valuable service to the Habsburgs in their struggle against Hungary. Only Hungary’s Jews (numbering close to one million in 1910) had in large numbers opted for voluntary assimilation. The ultimate aim of ‘Magyarisation’ was the full ‘amalgamation’ of all the non-Magyar nationalities in the lands under the Crown of St Stephen.⁷³ The Magyar national aims had been perfectly clear for a long time: one state, one nation and one language from the Carpathians to the Adriatic. Robert Seton-Watson, the acknowledged authority on the nationalities question of the Monarchy, maintained that, until Hitler, ‘the Magyar conception of the *Herrenvolk* was the most thorough-paced in Europe.’⁷⁴

Theoretically, the nationalities in Hungary enjoyed some degree of equality. The Hungarian Nationalities Law of 1868 allowed the non-Magyars the use of their own language in primary and secondary education, in churches, in local administration and communal assemblies, and in local courts of law. This law is almost invariably described in history books as ‘liberal’, and sometimes even as ‘enlightened’. Scholars are careful, however, to note that its provisions were never really implemented. Yet it is difficult to see what exactly was so broad-minded about it in the first place. The Magyar language still had to be used in Parliament and administration, in the justice system, in the county councils and in the single Hungarian University. Robert Kann pointed out that the law was ‘tied to the status of the individual and did not acknowledge the existence of national groups as political bodies anchored in public law.’⁷⁵ That, indeed, was its whole purpose: to maintain the political integrity of the Hungarian state. It provided a fig leaf of tolerance of the nationalities whilst introducing the rather portentous concept of a Hungarian political nation, to wit: ‘all citizens of Hungary constitute a single nation, the indivisible, unitary Hungarian nation, of which every citizen, to whatever nationality he belongs, is equally a member’.⁷⁶ But the point of this ‘political nation’ was

that it was Hungarian. Robert Kann also drew attention to the fact that, from the Hungarian nationalist point of view, the term 'Hungarian nation' could actually be interpreted to mean the 'Magyar nation', that is, the ruling group in Hungary.⁷⁷ In practice, non-Hungarians in Hungary were treated as political Hungarians, whereas the paper concessions in the 1868 Law were soon allowed to become 'a dead letter'.⁷⁸

The problem with the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise was not so much that the Empire was split into two virtually independent halves – it was much more related to the fact that two national groups, the Germans and the Hungarians, held such privileged positions over other national groups.⁷⁹ And whereas the Magyar supremacy was being imposed blatantly and often obnoxiously, the German ascendancy and control in Austria's half seemed more natural – since it had, in most of its lands, been there for a very long time. Some contemporaries, however, did not see much of a difference. Thus in 1912 the Croat poet and political activist Tin Ujević wrote about the Austrian and Hungarian political and state shamelessness: 'cynicism *cis* and cynicism *trans*'.⁸⁰ Indeed, while outwardly not as chauvinistic as the Magyars, the Austrian Germans were on the whole every bit as contemptuous of other nations. It is therefore interesting that, hardly had the ink on the 1867 Austro-Hungarian contract dried, than no less a person than Franz Joseph himself appeared ready and willing to redefine the position of the Germans in the hereditary Habsburg territories.

This fascinating effort to re-engineer the structure of the Monarchy happened in the course of 1871 and concerned the Czech question. Two factors made the exercise possible in the first place. The Czechs had been mesmerised by what the Hungarians had achieved in 1867 – their leaders wanted, not unreasonably, the same deal for their nation. Their deputies had been boycotting the *Reichsrat* in Vienna, just to underline this point. Secondly, the Prussian victory over Napoleon III at Sedan, in September 1870, had put paid to any remaining hopes Franz Joseph still entertained that he and his state could play a meaningful role in German affairs. This meant that foreign policy ambitions had to be redirected to the south-east of Europe; which in turn required a strengthening of the domestic political position in the Austrian half of the Monarchy and a curtailment of the newly-acquired power of the Hungarians in theirs. A deal with the Czechs, it was suggested to Franz Joseph, would meet these conditions.

A rather unlikely individual actually whispered ideas along those lines into Franz Joseph's ear: Professor Albert Schäffle, a Protestant German from Baden-Württemberg who had held posts at Tübingen and Vienna universities. He had been noted for his political and economic writings, and managed to get an audience with the Kaiser on 24 October 1870. Schäffle must have known Franz Joseph's main weakness, for he told him that Hungary's 'preponderance' was endangering the country's military

strength. The only way to counter the Hungarians was to establish national harmony in the Austrian half, and that meant an *Ausgleich* between the Germans and the Czechs. Even Palacký would then, Schäffle argued, renew his recommendation that if Austria did not exist it would have to be created. Hungary, Schäffle went on, was ‘an artificial house of cards’, and if justice prevailed in the relations between the Germans and the Czechs the Hungarians would have to cease with the oppression of their Germans, Slovaks, Croats, Serbs and Romanians, and would have to introduce universal suffrage. The centre of gravity would then move away from Budapest, back to Franz Joseph, and the Crown would then be able to carry out, unhindered, ‘Austria’s oriental mission’. Schäffle emphasized that everything, including relations with Russia, Germany and Italy, thus depended on a compromise with the Czechs.⁸¹

Slightly fantastic as all this must have sounded even at the time, Franz Joseph called Schäffle again only a few days later, made him minister designate and gave him the go-ahead. ‘I can no longer’, the Emperor told the Professor, ‘lie to my peoples’.⁸² This touching remorse was not to be of long duration. A hopeful start had been made, however. In February 1871 a new Austrian government headed by Count Karl Hohenwart took office. Schäffle was given the ministries of commerce and agriculture but was in fact to lead the negotiations with the Czechs. He was, as C.A. Macartney called him, the *spiritus rector* of the whole government.⁸³ Amazingly, he managed to moderate the Czechs’ maximalist demands and came to an agreement with their leaders, Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic and Franz Rieger, Palacký’s son-in-law. The ‘Fundamental Articles’ embodied the deal which, while acknowledging the 1867 Compromise with Hungary, left Bohemia in full control of all the affairs that were not joint – this was the crucial point. The implementation of the agreement would have made Austria a federation and Dualism would have been de facto destroyed. It would have been, Friedrich Prinz maintained, ‘Austrian-Czech-Hungarian Trialism’.⁸⁴ Another Trialist solution, namely that regarding the South Slav issue, was later to be much talked about when Franz Ferdinand began to throw his political weight around as the Heir to the Throne.

But the Czechs, like the South Slavs, were never going to be allowed to taste Trialism. As might have been expected, Andrásy (‘sly as a gypsy’, according to Schäffle)⁸⁵ and the Hungarians objected rigorously – and justifiably from their point of view – as any Trialist solution would have opened a Pandora’s box of various other nationalisms, afflicting Hungary in the first place. Perhaps equally important, the Germans of Bohemia were understandably not enthusiastic to give up their leading role. One of the stipulations of the agreement between the government in Vienna and the Czechs was that officialdom in Bohemia would have to be familiar with both languages, Czech as well as German. The message was clear: the

Czechs would not tolerate anything less than total equality with the Germans. But why should the local Germans accept this? They were a formidable element on the ground – a minority overall in Bohemia and Moravia, but a minority confident of itself and not a minority everywhere. When the Prussian Army occupied Prague in 1866, it found that the majority of the population in the city were Germans.⁸⁶ The Hohenwart Government's concessions to the Czechs looked to Bohemia's Germans as if they would turn them, the Germans, into a permanently subordinated minority. Their deputies were none too pleased, and walked out of the Bohemian Diet. Elsewhere in Austria, in Vienna in particular, their co-nationals were practically in a state of revolt. 'The whole of the centralistic bureaucracy', Schäffle recalled, 'worked against us together with the parliamentary and journalistic centralists.'⁸⁷

Professor Schäffle, and the Hohenwart cabinet, duly resigned in October 1871 and so ended this Austro-Trialist farce, in which Franz Joseph himself, barely a month earlier, had issued an imperial rescript recognizing the privileges of the Kingdom of Bohemia and declaring readiness to renew that recognition in a coronation oath. This had been meant to be in Prague, where the Emperor had been meant to wear the crown of St Wenceslaus. When he abjectly failed to back his own government, and indeed this scheme to which he himself was a party, a printer in Prague printed the text of the imperial rescript on toilet paper, littering the streets of the city with it.⁸⁸ The Czechs were never to forgive Franz Joseph. This whole episode has been described as one of the strangest chapters in the reign of Franz Joseph, though it may be said that his *volte-face* was entirely predictable. When the Hohenwart-Schäffle cabinet resigned the Vienna Opera was performing *Lobengrin*. The crowd went wild at the words: 'For German soil the German sword!'⁸⁹

On the level of theoretical discussion in Austria, however, a lonely but respected voice urged a sensible policy towards the Slavs. This was Adolf Fischhof who in 1869 tackled the question of nationalities in what was probably the most important Austrian treatise of its kind in the second half of the nineteenth century. He was the only authority to recognize clearly the wisdom of making an accommodation with the Slavs of the Empire in a way that would meet their national aspirations and at the same time ensure that they remained loyal subjects. This makes him the most realistic of Austrian political thinkers of the time. 'With the exception of Russia', he wrote, 'no other country counts so many Slavic inhabitants as Austria does.'⁹⁰ Fischhof's approach was highly pragmatic. He saw Russia and Pan Slavism as the inevitable refuge of the Austro-Hungarian Slavs if they felt that they were not being allowed to develop nationally within Austria-Hungary. But he was not obsessed in any way by Pan Slavism. He thought it was for the time being only a 'fantastic dream about the future'.

What he wanted was to prevent this dream from ever becoming a reality in the first place. He believed in the 'particularism' of Austro-Slavs, that is, their natural tendency to stick to their own languages and cultures. Austria, if it were capable of comprehending its own interest, was therefore 'the natural protector of Slavonic particularism' – as opposed to Russia.⁹¹

This was far sighted. Fischhof went as far as to say that the particularism of Austrian peoples, 'especially the Slavonic ones', was in fact a guarantee of Austria's existence: to weaken those peoples would be 'self-mutilation' from which only Russia would benefit.⁹² He had a slogan encapsulating his philosophy: 'Imperio imperium, regnis regnum' – reign to the empire, home-rule to the lands.⁹³ It was exactly this advice which was never followed by statesmen of Austria-Hungary – or by the Emperor. From 1867 to 1914 they only managed to antagonize most of the nations under the roof of the Empire, as well as every single one of the neighbours across the southern and eastern frontiers. The point made by Fischhof about 'self-mutilation' was, in retrospect, a most reliable guide to the future. 'Poor Austria', he lamented towards the end of his treatise, 'how deeply you have been hurt by the mistakes of those who had guided your destiny!'⁹⁴

The 1871 Czech fiasco, or any other similar surrender by the Emperor, had already been anticipated in 1867 by Justus Freimund in an influential pamphlet which he had to publish abroad, in Belgium. 'Never can a Habsburg', Freimund wrote, 'be at peace with the spirit of the times.' The title of Freimund's work, *Österreichs Zukunft* (Austria's Future), was probably chosen with sarcastic intent by the author as he made it clear that he saw absolutely no future for the country. A centralised Austrian state, he thought, could only be upheld 'with millions of bayonets'. A dualist solution would only lead to the destruction of the state as the Hungarians worked for 'an absolute separation' from Austria – dualism was just a detour leading to a break-up. Federalism, finally, was in Freimund's view incompatible with a powerful monarchy – it was only possible in free countries like Switzerland and the United States. 'Does a state have a right to existence', he asked, 'and can it exist divorced from the raw force of the bayonets if it is not built on the foundation of the principle of nationalities? History has given the answer: No.' Thus the break up of Austria, desirable or not, was a 'historical necessity'.⁹⁵

Certainly, Franz Joseph's decision in 1871 to scrap the agreement with the Czechs enshrined the politics of internal paralysis. His pusillanimity on that occasion was to push the Empire yet nearer to its grave along the long funereal path that had begun at the latest by 1867 with the capitulation to Hungary. The Austrian historian Hugo Hantsch considered the endeavour to reach an adjustment with the Czechs 'the last practical

attempt' to reconstruct the Monarchy before the World War.⁹⁶ From that point on, Austria-Hungary was reduced to muddling through.

The phrase 'muddling through' (*fortwursteln*, that is, 'stretching sausage') is in Austro-Hungarian history most famously associated with Count Eduard Taaffe who as Prime Minister managed to steer Austrian politics for fourteen years. The year 1879, when Taaffe took up office, was significant for two reasons. First, it marked the end of the so-called 'liberal era' in Austrian politics; and second, it was when a treaty of alliance was concluded with Germany. Reliance on Berlin was to become the cornerstone of Austro-Hungarian foreign policy in the years leading up to the outbreak of world war in 1914 – this reliance, indeed, 'barred forever the possibility for a comprehensive settlement of the nationality questions' since the Austro-German and Magyar predominance in the Empire was a prerequisite of the alliance in the first place.⁹⁷ The Liberals in Austria (in point of fact centralist-minded, nationalist Austro-Germans) had opposed the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 which followed the great 'Eastern Crisis' – thereby earning themselves the wrath of Franz Joseph, who tolerated no encroachments into his leadership of foreign policy. As good Austro-Germans the Liberals had every reason to dislike an increase in the Monarchy's number of Slavs. They were of course to be proved right in more ways than one. Their main sin in Franz Joseph's eyes, however, was to even hint that Parliament should have a voice in foreign policy – as Eduard Herbst, one of the Liberal leaders, had suggested.⁹⁸ Their almost uninterrupted reign in Austria since 1867 reflected Franz Joseph's own Austro-centralist tendencies, but this alliance was now over.

By bringing in Taaffe, however, Franz Joseph was not in any real sense contemplating federalism again. Taaffe was the Emperor's childhood friend, a nobleman of Irish ancestry, immune to nationalist squabbles. He simply recognized that 'Austria represented a permanent compromise'.⁹⁹ The Austro-German Liberal idea that Austria could only be German or it would otherwise simply not exist was soon thrown out as his long administration began. Taaffe managed to bring the Czech deputies back to the *Reichsrat*, constructing together with the Polish and Slovene deputies a solid Slavonic bloc (which admittedly did not include the Ukrainians) in his governmental 'Iron Ring' – as it was known. The Poles in particular supported Taaffe by extracting counter favours 'with fine political *savoir faire*'.¹⁰⁰ The Czechs were temporarily bought off with some language concessions: although their wealth and self-confidence had increased considerably since 1871, their demands had curiously become more restrained. The steadfast nature of the Taaffe regime rested on moderate administrative decentralization and equally moderate concessions to the nationalities. As Austria stabilized internally, Dualism with Hungary also solidified – there was no question of restructuring the 1867 edifice built with Hungary.

Taaffe's famous formula for the nationalities was to keep all of them in 'a condition of even and well-modulated discontent'.¹⁰¹

This, however, could only work for a while. Taaffe had only briefly 'blunted the edge of Slavic discontent'.¹⁰² The Czech-German conflict in Bohemia never went away and in fact had already re-emerged under Taaffe. The so-called 'Young Czech' Party, a radical new formation in the politics of Bohemia, stood in opposition to his coalition – they had 'a sort of spiritual home in the Paris of the Third Republic'.¹⁰³ The government that came after Taaffe in 1893 fell in 1895 following a dispute over the proposed building of a Slovene-language school in the predominantly German town of Cilli (Celje). The next government, led by Count Kasimir Badeni (a Pole), was in 1897 having to renegotiate the economic aspects of the *Ausgleich* with Hungary (in accordance with the ten-year stipulation laid down by the Compromise) and required the support of the Czech deputies – in particular the 'Young Czechs' who had come to dominate the politics of Bohemia. A bargain was now made. The government passed decrees to the effect that all German officials in Bohemia and Moravia, irrespective of rank, would have to become competent in Czech. This was a moment of huge crisis for the whole of the Empire. The Austro-Germans were up in arms. Riots took place. Such violence 'Austria had not seen since 1848'.¹⁰⁴ Karl Hermann Wolf, a writer and a German deputy from Bohemia, uttered the words 'Germania irredenta' in the parliamentary debate (he and Badeni were to duel with pistols, and the latter was wounded) – capturing and articulating what had in effect become a wave of Austro-German anti-Habsburg sentiment.¹⁰⁵ Franz Joseph hastily accepted Badeni's resignation. The language decrees were revoked. The judgement of the Slovene historian Fran Zwitter with regard to this episode should perhaps be quoted here: 'The fall of the Badeni government ... proved that, from now on, no important change in Cisleithania was possible against the will of the German parties.'¹⁰⁶

The Hungarian equivalent of this state of affairs had of course for a long time already held in Transleithania. Unlike in Austria, however, the nationalities in Hungary hardly had a formal political presence. The big, but in practice insignificant, exception were the forty Croat delegates to the Hungarian Parliament who were supposed to look after Croatia's interests there. A Hungarian satirist described the Budapest Parliament thus: 'Below the gallery, in separate sections, sit the belligerent Saxons and the Croats. What can we say about the latter? One Croat, two Croats, three Croats – forty Croats. It doesn't make any difference.'¹⁰⁷ Whereas Austria under Badeni had already considerably increased the franchise, Hungary remained a country ruled by a relatively small circle of landed aristocracy and gentry. On the basis of property qualification only six per cent of its population were entitled to vote – a sure way to suffocate the

nationalities.¹⁰⁸ By contrast to Austria's internal disorder, Hungary was to present a very different problem for the stability of the Empire.

For thirty years, from 1875 to 1905, Hungarian politics were dominated by the Liberal Party – 'even more unrepresentative', Robert Kann wrote, 'than its counterpart in Austria'.¹⁰⁹ The governments which it fielded were all loyal to the Dualist system – Hungarian statesmen like István Tisza were fully aware that 'Great Hungary' was inseparably connected with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.¹¹⁰ And yet the party's dissidents were to develop a nationalist wing. Indeed, nationalism was alive and well in Hungary, its targets including the relationship with Austria as much as the subservient nations. The Austrian writer Anton Mayr-Harting considered the notion that Austro-Hungarian relations had been regulated once and for all by the *Ausgleich* as 'pure fiction, repeatedly debunked'.¹¹¹ The name of the joint Army, for example, was a bone of contention. Already in 1889 the Hungarians succeeded in getting it renamed from 'kaiserlich-königliche Armee' into 'kaiserliche und königliche Armee' – whereby, as the historian Victor Bibl noted, the inconspicuous conjunction became in fact quite telling.¹¹² The 'und', of course, reflected the Hungarian obsession with emphasizing the existence of two separate states. A further heated debate concerned the joint coat of arms, agreement on which was reached between Austria and Hungary as late as 1915.

In 1894 Lajos Kossuth, the celebrated leader of the 1848-1849 Hungarian revolt against Vienna, died in exile and was given a grand funeral at home. The opposition Independence Party suddenly received a major injection of support. What this party wanted was complete independence, leaving only one link to Austria: the King-Emperor. To them, the 1867 Compromise was no less than treason. A most serious crisis in relations between Vienna and Budapest began in 1903 when a parliamentary bill on army reorganization prompted the opposition to voice its demand for the introduction of Hungarian as the language of command in Hungary. This was already separatism, pure and simple. Franz Joseph read the signs correctly when, in September 1903, he issued his famous army order from Chlopy in Galicia (where manoeuvres had been held), insisting on the unity of the military.

The Magyar populace had already been demonstrating against the playing of the imperial anthem. Hungarian separatism, in fact, soon triumphed in the formal sense. In January 1905 the opposition parties, in a coalition led by Kossuth's son Ferenc ('the weak son of a great father', is how Robert Kann described him),¹¹³ won the elections handsomely. By April the Army Operations Bureau had plans ready for military action against Hungary.¹¹⁴ The separation of Norway from Sweden reinforced the crisis psychosis – as did revolutionary upheavals in Russia. Yet there was an important domestic development at the time (discussed in chapter three) that served

as a red light against the proposed use of the Army: in October the Croats and the Serbs agreed on a joint front, offering to back the Hungarians against Vienna.¹¹⁵ Early in 1906, nevertheless, Franz Joseph acted to close the Parliament in Budapest by force. He had appointed the trusted General Géza Fejérváry as Prime Minister and summoned the Parliament for 19 February in order to dissolve it. When the Parliament refused to accept Franz Joseph's letter (in which he announced the dissolution), Army units broke into the hall, chasing out all the deputies and personnel, and sealed the entrance. The Croat politician Ante Trumbić commented later: 'Not a drop of blood was shed by the Magyars in defence of the millenium-old Constitution.'¹¹⁶ Franz Joseph finally resorted to a clever tactic to end the impasse: he threatened to extend the franchise system in Hungary. The intimidation was successful because a widening of the electorate would have made Hungary far less Hungarian-dominated and possibly even destroyed it. 'Before this threat', C.A. Macartney wrote, 'what courage the Coalition leaders had left collapsed.'¹¹⁷ Hungary soon went back to normal, but retained its restrictive franchise.

Franz Joseph's action regarding the franchise was no empty posturing: he actually believed in the benefits of universal manhood suffrage. But he had his own specific reason, believing in the extension of the franchise as a way of solving the nationalities problem of Austria-Hungary. Albert von Margutti, who served in his military chancellery, recalled the Emperor's deep conservatism from that period: 'To utter the words trialism or even federalism was already a sacrilege.' Any new restructuring in internal affairs would inevitably make Austria-Hungary a Slavonic state – and from this 'the Emperor Franz Joseph would flinch'. Therefore, according to Margutti, Franz Joseph sought to make harmless the nationalist sources of friction, especially 'the Slavonic danger', by the universal remedy of social-democratic levelling. The panacea was universal franchise.¹¹⁸

Already in January 1907 Austria introduced this electoral reform (the new system applied to all males over twenty-four). Experts agree about the conservative background to Franz Joseph's acquiescence to reform in Austria. His view was that the bourgeois classes were responsible for spreading subversive nationalism and that the working classes would save the Monarchy. The suffrage reform, however, was for him just 'an expedient like any other to keep the Monarchy ticking over'.¹¹⁹ The reform represented a recognition on the part of the Habsburgs of the growing strength of nationalism – a step towards reconciling 'the great contradictions of their empire'. At the same time it was also 'the last of the delaying actions' fought by them since 1848-49.¹²⁰ In the event, however, the reform achieved none of the aims of its proponents with regard to solving the nationalities question. The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 proved that the parliament (*Reichsrat*) in Vienna had no influence over vital

matters. There was certainly more democracy after 1907, but the 'Reichsrat did not govern Austria'.¹²¹ Instead of class struggle replacing national conflicts, various nationalisms were merely given more room to play. The parliament building became the scene for deliberate chaos, scandal and obstruction. In March 1914, continued obstructionism by the Czech deputies resulted in the adjournment of the *Reichsrat* – and so in the months before the outbreak of the European war Austria was ruled on the basis of an emergency decree – the famous paragraph 14 of the Constitution.

A very telling episode connected with this state of affairs took place immediately after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. The Austrian Prime Minister Count Karl Stürgkh, who had acted to shut down the *Reichsrat* in March, now came under pressure to recall it in order to make possible a parliamentary commemoration for the assassinated Heir to the Throne. However, he refused, insisting adamantly that this would only lead to renewed 'embarrassing scenes' which would reveal to the whole world 'the spectacle of inner disintegration'.¹²²

I

Heir to the Throne

The Sorrows of Franz Ferdinand

SO LONG AS the Hungarians did not challenge his sway over the unified Army, whose language of command was German and which, more importantly, served as a decisive factor in propping up his royal clout, Franz Joseph went happily along with Dualism. This was not surprising given his increasingly conservative disposition. Prussia's defeat of France in 1870 had buried his remaining ambitions to play an active role in German affairs. Now he was only interested in stability, both foreign and domestic. The closest he came to contemplating a foreign adventure (excepting the 1878 occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina) was in 1898 during the Spanish-American War when he got upset with his Foreign Minister Agenor Gołuchowski for not lifting a finger to bring about intervention by European Powers in Cuba. Gołuchowski told him that Austria was better off with a republic in Spain than with a war against the United States.¹ Meanwhile, in domestic affairs, new experiments – at least any far-reaching ones – were also out of the question following the bungled 1871 attempt to replace Dualism with Trialism by bringing in the Czechs. Even with regard to the Austrian half of his Empire, Franz Joseph never had any illusions about trying to create a single multi-lingual nation.² He once told Ernest von Koerber that Austria was an old house whose various inhabitants bickered all the time, and that the way to tackle this problem was 'by cautious repairs, because a thoroughgoing reconstruction would be dangerous'.³

The Emperor, simply, wanted a quiet life. Paul Nikitsch-Boulles, Franz Ferdinand's private secretary, recalled in his memoirs that the reports submitted to Franz Joseph had to be doctored in order to camouflage any unpleasant news.⁴ The Dualism that he and the Hungarian elites were building came to perfectly reflect his beliefs, inclinations and, indeed, selfish interests. Alexander von Spitzmüller, a prominent Austrian banker and statesman, even asserted that the whole system was being kept alive only by the authority of the Emperor.⁵ As Rudolf Schlesinger noted, the

second part of Franz Joseph's reign (under Dualism) was much more successful than the first.⁶

Franz Joseph, however, was getting old. He was 70 in 1900. What would his successor do? In 1889 his only son, Crown Prince Rudolf, a political liberal, had committed suicide in the hunting lodge of Mayerling – a wretched affair, in which Rudolf's lover, the young Marie von Vetsera, also lost her life. Rudolf and his wife Stéphanie of Belgium only had a daughter. For almost another decade it was not exactly clear who the next monarch was likely to be. Franz Joseph's younger brother Karl Ludwig, next in line of succession, was only three years his junior, and state matters did not interest him. He apparently preferred 'old wines, young women, horses and hunting.'⁷ This man who, according to sycophantic accounts, is supposed to have instilled a firm Catholic outlook in the young Archduke Franz Ferdinand, his eldest son, is remembered elsewhere as 'a fat old man of brutish instincts', one of whose chief recreations was ill-treating his third wife, the young Infanta Marie Thérèse of Portugal, Franz Ferdinand's stepmother.⁸ Karl Ludwig was never officially declared the Heir to the Throne. He died conveniently in 1896, but well before then attention had understandably turned to Franz Ferdinand as the heir presumptive.

It appeared at the time, however, that the Emperor's nephew was perhaps not such a good bet to succeed him. In 1892 Franz Ferdinand showed symptoms of tuberculosis. He had inherited this, along with a cynical and suspicious frame of mind, from his mother Maria Annunziata of Bourbon-Two Sicilies who had succumbed to the illness in 1870, aged only 28. In 1892, the youngish Archduke (born in 1863) held the rank of a colonel, commanding at the time the 9th Hussars regiment in the small Hungarian town of Sopron (Ödenburg). To his irritation and dismay, his mostly Hungarian officers issued orders in Hungarian rather than in German – paving the ground for the Archduke's ardent hatred for all things Hungarian. However, his anathema was not confined to the Hungarians. By this stage he had already begun to develop an aversion to Jews, liberals, Freemasons and socialists. On learning about his illness, he decided that the best cure would be to travel round the world. The journey which he subsequently made, lasting from December 1892 to October 1893, provided good opportunities for shooting – his favourite pastime – and material for a two-volume travelogue which he subsequently published in Vienna.⁹ More importantly, the tour took Franz Ferdinand across the United States where he came face to face with federalism in a multi-ethnic state.

Although his mind was broadened, his health did not improve. Dr Victor Eisenmenger, who examined the Archduke in 1895 and who was to become his personal physician, established that the apex of his right lung had already undergone big changes due to tuberculosis, and the left one was also suspect. The doctor ordered absolute physical and mental rest.

Franz Ferdinand reluctantly obeyed and started a long cure in different health resorts. Eisenmenger considered his patient's condition serious, but also 'quite curable'.¹⁰ The rest of the world thought otherwise. To Franz Ferdinand's great fury, the semi-official Hungarian newspaper *Magyar Hirlap* declared him practically a dead man. Begging to differ, he immediately complained to Franz Joseph about the 'masonic' Hungarian government.¹¹

Even more painful than Hungarian opinion, from Franz Ferdinand's point of view, was official behaviour in Vienna itself. This, too, could leave little doubt even to a wider public that he was perceived in the highest quarters as a walking corpse. Evidence of how Franz Joseph rated his nephew's prospects came in 1896 when Franz Ferdinand's younger brother Archduke Otto was given the Augarten palace in Vienna as his official residence. At the same time Otto was officially representing the Emperor at events and ceremonies. The idea to give him a sumptuous palace in Vienna apparently came from the Foreign Minister, Count Gołuchowski, who was acting specifically in the light of Franz Ferdinand's grave illness.¹² But Gołuchowski himself was of course powerless to direct things in the House of Habsburg – the turn towards Otto must have come from Franz Joseph.

Gołuchowski, a Pole, was never forgiven by Franz Ferdinand. The Poles, along with the Hungarians, were now firmly on his list of detested nations – a list that was going to be steadily enlarged. In a letter of February 1897 to his friend, Vienna's great socialite Countess Nora Fugger, he complained bitterly about Gołuchowski and his perceived largesse towards Otto, which included the palace, a royal household complete with cooks, and the Lipizzaner horses.¹³ In the same month Otto was being presented at a society ball as the 'presumptive' Emperor of Austria.¹⁴ In April of that year he accompanied Franz Joseph on an official visit to St Petersburg. In May, Franz Ferdinand wrote about the desirability of giving Gołuchowski (and Count Kasimir Badeni, another leading Polish politician) a small dose of 'rat poison'.¹⁵

Whereas the Emperor did not show any sympathy or affection for the reserved and even haughty Franz Ferdinand, he rather liked Otto. At first sight this might seem strange, for this Archduke (two years junior to Franz Ferdinand) was generally considered to be an embarrassment to the dynasty and the country. 'The handsome Otto [*der schöne Otto*]', as he was widely known, broke many a female heart, but he also broke all the rules of etiquette governing the public behaviour of Habsburg archdukes. Renowned for his 'drunken and obscene orgies', Otto's escapades were legendary.¹⁶ Perhaps the worst incident was when he and his hunting companions (including brother Franz Ferdinand and Crown Prince Rudolf) came across a funeral procession on a road in the country. Otto, according to one account, ordered the priest to halt the procession, so that he could