



# THE EMPIRE AT EUROPE'S END

by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn

In the German name for Austria, *Osterreich*, *Reich* denotes more than "empire" in the sense of territorial extension; there is also a certain spiritual content. In the Middle Ages, empire meant the Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium, and after Christmas Day 800, when Charle-

magne was crowned by Pope Leo XIII, the *Sacer Imperator Romanus* was a German and from 1440 on, with one exception, a Hapsburg. He was the protector and nominal overlord of all Western Christendom. The Holy Roman Empire (whose colors were Black and Gold) existed, at least on paper, until 1806.

In 1804 Francis II assumed the title Emperor of Austria but two years later dropped the "Roman" claim that had been drained of meaning by Napoleon's conquests. However, prayers for the Holy Roman Emperor on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, contained in *all* Catholic missals the world over, were abolished only in 1952. (In these, God's help was implored to strengthen the Empire against the attack of the barbarians who were "merely trusting in their ferocity.")

The Second *Reich*, founded by the Hohenzollerns, was created in Versailles on January 18, 1871, when William I became the German Emperor—not the "Emperor of Germany," since a country called *Deutschland* ("Germany") has existed officially only since 1949. The *Deutsches Reich* of 1871 was a federated state dominated by Prussia. Its character was not conservative but national-liberal, and the National-Liberal Party was the force behind Bismarck, an ex-conservative, who as a young man had been a Prussian patriot and not a nationalist.

The history of Austria is inseparable from German history. In 1866 the Prussians destroyed the German League (which served as a successor, of sorts, to the Holy Roman Empire), first by making a treaty with Italy against Austria and then by defeating Austria in the war that ensued. A year later, Austria had to come to terms with Hungary, smaller in population but larger in area. Hungary, too, was a *Reich*, just like Austria, and it had a longer continuous history. Saint Stephen, King of Hungary, had received his royal crown from Pope Sylvester in 1001, while Francis II (now Francis I) established the Empire of Austria only in 1804. Thus from 1867 until 1918 we speak of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Still, we have to return to the concept of *Reich*. It is a large country and not a national state. A *Reich* ideally contains a great variety of states, races, ethnic units, languages, dialects, classes, laws, institutions, traditions, privileged groups, and so forth. Besides "Empire," *Reich* in German also means "rich" and is connected with "*reichen*," to reach (out). Its uniting force is not *Nationalismus* (ethnicism-racism) but patriotism—a pride in a wealth of forms which must be stronger than some sort of warm, collectivis herd-feeling with a suspicion for otherness. A *Reich*, above all, must have a continental, if not a global, mission—a task, an aim. Although Switzerland is a shining



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example for a vibrant patriotism based on a military democracy, a *Männerbund* (male league), an *Eidgenossenschaft* (its official title referring to binding oaths), the monarchical form of government, is a much more suitable coordinator of patriotic fervor. The old order, we have to bear in mind, was vertical: as God the Father in Heaven, the Holy Father in Rome, the monarch (the Father of the Fatherland), and finally, the father—a king in his family. The monarch and his wife were “parents,” and thus a female sovereign (a “mother image”) was not inconceivable, as attested by the career of Maria Theresa, wife of Francis I, Holy Roman Emperor, and a real sovereign in her “hereditary countries.”

Austria, not Germany, had inherited the symbolism and the privileges of the Holy Roman Empire: the double-headed eagle, the black-golden flag, the hymn composed by Haydn, the veto-right at the papal election (last exercised in 1903), and, above all, the Hapsburg dynasty, which became the focus of all loyalties of the specific Austrian or Austro-Hungarian patriotism. This made the “Dual Monarchy” (two parliaments, two sets of laws, one economy, coordinated armed forces, and one foreign policy) a going concern for over a century.

No doubt, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had its weaknesses and troubles, but the great Czech leader František Palacký declared in the last century that if it did not exist, it would have to be invented. Its main problem lay in being a multinational empire which had drifted into an age of ethnic nationalism. Thanks, above all, to American intervention in World War I, it was willfully destroyed. No fewer than 13 languages were spoken in the Dual Monarchy; there were five major religions (including the Catholic Church with its three different rites), and the Austrian part consisted of 17 “Kingdoms and Countries Represented in the Imperial Diet” (the *official* name of Austria). In Austria, the Germans formed the largest group and were present everywhere in varying degrees and with different social status. Since Vienna had been the residential center of the old “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,” German sentiments were fairly strong. Significantly, Austria-Hungary’s last crown-prince, Otto (with a dual citizenship), represents Bavaria in Strassburg’s European Parliament. (If the German League had won the German-Prussian War of 1866, the Germanies would have been united by Vienna and not by Berlin.) Austrian Germans (or Austrians, in the narrow, present-day sense of the term) represent the southernmost North Europeans and the easternmost West Europeans. These overlapping marginalities engendered sophistication and a fertility of ideas. Only recently have American scholars discovered that Vienna and its gravitating areas were intellectually and artistically a real pivot of the Old World. There, the Teutons, Latins, Slavs, Finno-Ugrians, and Semites met, exchanging thoughts, visions, and notions. The old Monarchy could have become the very center of the United States of Europe (now aimed at with very insufficient measures), but the Hapsburg Empire was killed by default. It first became a victim of national democracy and then of National Socialism.

With the rise of “horizontalism,” the ethnicism-racism of the 19th and 20th centuries, the nationalities awoke to a dynamic egocentrism which led to fatal local animosities.

This happened especially when the agrarian element of one ethnic group was pitted against the urban element of another or when the farmers of one *Nationalität* felt oppressed by the landowners of a different origin. The antagonisms were also frequently regional, and, to make matters even worse, they finally found their concrete expression in the Diet, the *Reichsrat*. In addition, outside influences of varying degree were trying to destroy the monarchy: St. Petersburg declared the Western Ukrainians of Austria to be “in reality Russians,” denying their separate character and demanding their “liberation”; a number of Czechs developed “Pan-Slav” tendencies (of which they are now cured for all times); the Rumanians clamored for Transylvania (where they now suppress the Magyars in the most brutal manner); the Serbs propagated a “Pan-Yugoslavisism” and used assassination to achieve it; and many German Austrians cast longing glances in the direction of Berlin. The Poles, however, were utterly loyal, expecting from Vienna the eventual end of their partition. Even the majority of Italians were good Austrians, and a Socialist Italian journalist wrote in a book published in 1911 that Italian irredentism in the Trent region was hopeless since, except for a few “bourgeois,” the people there were all *austriacanti*, friends of Austria. The reason for this, claimed the journalist, was because the Austrian administration was vastly superior to that of Italy. The journalist’s name? Benito Mussolini.

His observation was not without substance. Ethnicism-racism is a middle-class disease. The aristocracy, like royalty, is strongly internationalized as is the Catholic clergy with its head in Rome. The old Monarchy, indeed, appealed to the farmers, the military, and the civil servants because of their hierarchic outlook. (The working class? If politicized, it was also “international.”) The Austro-Hungarian Army fought in World War I bravely to the bitter end. In July 1918 the Generalissimo, Baron Arz (a Lutheran Transylvanian), said to my mother, who spoke of our “heroic soldiers”: “Madam, these are no longer soldiers, but desperate, hungry beasts in rags.” Still, the middle class, because of its urban character (politics comes from *pólis*), always plays a key role. And the Old Monarchy was politically by no means feudal but middle-class. Edward Crankshaw pointed this out in his *The Fall of the House of Hapsburg* and added that society in the Monarchy was “much more democratic than in England” and that “government was very largely a middle class affair.” “The Austrian half of the Empire,” he wrote, “enjoyed a very high level of freedom for the individual and a much higher level of social welfare than, for example, England. Politics and administration were open to all talents.” (C.A. McCartney, on the other hand, insisted that the poor Hungarian peasants were better off than their counterparts in Britain.) In 1835, according to the American author Nathaniel P. Willis, the Austrian administration buildings, schools, and hospitals were the best he had seen in Europe. And in Austria there was also that nice fickle, anarchical *joie de vivre* with occasional violence which characterizes nations not affected by the discipline and community sense of the Reformation. “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion,” a historically minded American would say. Indeed, nobody could imagine a Francis Joseph countersigning the Volstead Act or



joining the "Watch and Ward Society."

The unfortunate mistake of the Danubian Monarchy was its veering towards political democracy. Ever since the middle of the 19th century the constitution provided for an ever-increasing suffrage, and by 1907, earlier than in England (or America, with its poll tax), the one man-one vote system was adopted, thereby rendering parliamentarism inoperable. The warning of John Stuart Mill in his *Representative Government* that "free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities" was ignored. (Nor are they workable with a substantial religious rift, as in Northern Ireland; it would also be sheer madness to adopt them in South Africa!) The language of the army and (basically) of the administration was German, but the sovereign, from childhood on, had a multilingual training. Language was a problem: An educated Slovak in Northern Hungary had to "start" with a knowledge of Slovak, Magyar, and German before he could think of learning French and English.

The "nationalists" in the age of nationalism were not too happy in the old Monarchy, but C.A. McCartney said rightly: "For a very considerable proportion of the people of the Monarchy, then, the Monarchy with all its faults represented a degree of protection and national security which was not lightly to be hazarded."

World War I has correctly been called by Sir Dennis Brogan the "Second War of Austrian Succession." It was actually not at all the Treaty of Versailles with Germany but the treaties of St. Germain-en-Laye with Austria and of Trianon with Hungary that radically changed the map of Europe. The fall of the Russian monarchy made it possible for Woodrow Wilson, egged on by his "left hand in foreign affairs," the socialist George D. Herron, to arrange America's entry into the war—a war transformed from a bloody contest between nations into an ideological crusade "to make the world safe for democracy." It actually made it safe for Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler.

In Wilson's original "Fourteen Points," the phrase concerning the "autonomous development of the nations of Austria-Hungary" (as their real author, Walter Lippmann told me) merely aimed at the decentralization of the Monarchy. (This also had been the plan of the murdered Archduke Francis Ferdinand and of Emperor Charles.) Yet Wilson let himself be persuaded by Thomas Masaryk to destroy the Dual Monarchy. (Masaryk also convinced him that it was not Germany but Austria-Hungary who was the real enemy of freedom, democracy, world peace, enlightenment, and progress.) Herron, who actually had become Wilson's agent in Europe, ruined the second Austrian peace effort in February 1918. He met the secret emissaries of Emperor Charles in Switzerland and rejected the offer because it implied the political survival of the Hapsburgs, which would have meant, as he said, that the whole war had been fought in vain. So the hostilities continued for another nine months, to effect a real holocaust.

The nations of Austria-Hungary paid dearly for the follies of some of their leaders and for the fanaticism of Western "democratists." According to Max Eastman, Sigmund Freud had called Wilson "the greatest idiot of this century, no, of all centuries, and a real criminal, albeit not conscious of it." How many Americans laid down their lives in

World War II for the misconceptions of Woodrow Wilson? The first part of that butchery was an outcome of the Hitler-Stalin partnership while the second part resulted from the Stalin-Roosevelt alliance. As Winston Churchill confessed, "There is not one of the peoples or provinces that constituted the empire of the Hapsburgs to whom gaining their independence has not brought the tortures which ancient poets and theologians had reserved for the damned."

World War II, the "Third War of Austrian Succession," could have been easily foreseen. (Even the naive George D. Herron prophesied in 1920 "Wars of Tartaric Ferocity.") The Versailles Treaty contained the notorious Article 231 affirming Germany's war guilt, based on the Potsdam Crown Council of July 29, 1914, which G.P. Gooch proved had never taken place! Nevertheless, it was made the moral foundation of the ruinous reparations leading to a crisis which, in turn, made Hitler's rise, within the democratic framework prescribed by the Allies, truly inevitable.

To make matters worse, the impoverished and methodically humiliated Germany *had geopolitically won the war*. The Dual Monarchy, which Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu had called the keystone of Europe, was no more.

His Magnificence, Professor Ernst Kornemann of Breslau University, pointed out in his Rectorial Address on October 15, 1926, that Germany was by now in a unique geographic position. Before 1914, it bordered on three great powers—France, Austria-Hungary and Russia—but now only on one. Between Germany and Russia, with the exception of Poland, there was now only a mosaic of either totally artificial or thoroughly maimed and tiny countries. This was a situation, he explained, which he hoped Germany would take good advantage of in the future. Hitler did. Born an Austrian, he hated Austria (as he did his father) so intensely that he made even its very name taboo. (It became "the Alpine and Danubian districts.") Together with Stalin he started the Third War of Austrian Succession during which the heart of Europe fell first to the Germans and finally to the Soviets.

In the little Austrian Republic, the "Imperial Idea" is not entirely dead, and it is gaining nostalgically in all the other parts of the former Empire—not only in North-Eastern Italy but, above all, in the lands now under Red Rule. In Italy these sentiments can obviously be far more freely expressed: In Trieste (which became Austrian in 1383 and now is a center of intensive studies of the Imperial past), in Gorizia, even in the Province of Venice (where the Austrian rule terminated in 1866) T-shirts with the portrait of Francis Joseph are being sold, and a real *Movimento Mitteleuropa* (Italian-German words for "Central European Movement") is gaining enthusiasts. There is the mounting feeling that faraway Rome does not understand their problems. In Slovenia and Croatia, now ruled by the Balkan city of Belgrade; in Prague, which the Soviets reoccupied in 1968; in Budapest, where according to a poll the Austrians are considered the "best neighbors," the past appears in a very new light. (There, Austrian aid in 1956 is remembered, and the silly, brutal treatment of Hungary in 1849 is forgiven and forgotten.) Never had the old Monarchy a greater prestige than now. It is "Paradise Lost." The feeling is now general that all these countries between Germany and

Russia should draw together in independence from Berlin and Moscow. This, however, leaves the question open how a central, but not a centralizing, government ought and could, at least theoretically, be constituted. Again a one man-one vote parliament? Should that failure with the ceaseless, idiotic, and offensive talk about "majorities" and "minorities" be repeated?

I remember my childhood days, when above the beds of simple people one saw the Emperor and the Empress (in Hungary, they figured as King and Queen). These were the additional parents. The monarch was trained from his earliest years for his difficult, grueling, thankless job (usually without retirement), which hardly left him time for a private life. (Francis Joseph? His brother was executed in Mexico by Benito Juárez; his wife, Elisabeth, was murdered by an Italian anarchist; his son committed suicide; and his nephew and heir was assassinated by the minions of Serbia.) This was a world, admittedly, with very modest living standards since technology had not yet made the average person a very productive worker. But people looked with confidence into the future, honesty prevailed, the artistic and intellectual life flourished, security was great, social rise was frequent, tolerance amazing. The foundations of the "libertarian" Austrian School of Economics had been laid (Carl von Menger, Böhm von Bawerk, Ludwig von Mises), and (genuine) liberalism was rampant. (Francis Joseph's daily newspaper was the liberal *Fremdenblatt*—not the Catholic and conservative *Reichspost*.) "Anti-Semitism" admittedly existed, but it was far less virulent than in the United States. Whereas the Prussian army had only over 80 Jewish career officers, the Imperial-Royal army had over 2,000. Only after the great triumph of democracy in 1918 there were (in the words of Winston Churchill) loathsome monsters crawling out of the sewers.

Austria-Hungary was in size the second largest (in population the third largest) country in Europe, and it provided its citizens with a feeling of space, freedom of motion, variety, color, and a richness of life which is gone but not entirely forgotten. There were areas where within one or two miles entirely different cultures could be found—in the southern parts of the Tyrol, for instance, churches and houses suddenly appeared in a different style, while melodies, the popular dress, food, and inscriptions changed. There were cities where the farmers, coming in from the rural districts to sell their products, seemed to come from another world. Hungary had different stamps (so had Bosnia), but the banknotes were in German on one side, in Hungarian on the other. The bodyguard of the Emperor wore fezzes, since they were Muslims from Bosnia, where polygamy was legally permitted for them. (No jailings, as for Mormon fundamentalists in the United States!) Austria was more "democratic" than Hungary, but Hungary was more "liberal." (There were two citizenships!) The death penalty was in force, but between 1889 and 1914 the Emperor had signed only one order of execution. The administration was modestly rewarded, and cases of corruption were extremely rare; but sticking to written law when it obviously made no sense was equally rare. (The "Majesty of the Law" is a republican phrase.) There was school on Saturday, but Jewish pupils did not have to write a single line. Old Austria was a Catholic country, but the (salaried)

Evangelical minister and the rabbi came to the public school for instruction, and their marks, like that of the Catholic priest, headed the report card.

Austria was a real *Reich* with the Crown of the Holy Roman Empire (still!) in its treasury. It was a "rich" country, rich in a welter of forms and institutions. In the north, in Bohemia and Moravia, people frequently crossed ethnic lines, and this happened often between brothers and sisters, parents and children. There were Germanic aristocrats who spoke Czech to each other and Czech noblemen who conversed in German. Asked whether they were Germans or Czechs, they insisted they were Bohemians, referring to an ancient kingdom, not a race. There were Saxons who figured as Hungarian citizens and Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholics (with married priests) who were just as much Catholics and "Austrians" as the people from the Tyrolean mountains, with their leather shorts and plumed hats.

I well remember how my good mother broke into tears in 1964, when she heard a man on the radio sing with a thick Hungarian accent. (A Czech or Polish accent would have had the same effect on her.) "The old monarchy," she explained sobbing, "I shall never forget it." Indeed, neither can I, although for me it was a mere childhood experience, later mixed with my Hungarian years as a university student. Here we have to remember the words of Lord Acton, a great Catholic and a great liberal of partly German descent, who wrote: "Those states are substantially the most perfect which, like the British and Austrian Empires, include various distinct nationalities without oppressing them." This notion is very much in the same vein as the words in the testament of Saint Stephen, King of Hungary, to his son, Saint Imre: "Remember, my son, that a country of only one language and one custom is a feeble and foolish thing." Such sentiments are totally unacceptable to the leftist mind which dreams of a country with one race, one language, one class, one type of education, one ideology, one party, one income, and so forth. Imre's name, my readers should recall, was translated into German as Emmerich, and Emmerich was Italianized into Amerigo, which is at the root of "America."

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# THE WAR YEARS *by Anthony Harrigan*

World War II seems both near and far away. In one sense, it seems like only yesterday that I was 17 years old, in uniform, and in Georgia and California. In another sense, that period is ancient history. We have traversed a century or more in human experience since the early 1940's.

The conflict was a vast maelstrom that changed the world more than anyone imagined at the time. The war involved colossal sacrifice for those who were thrown into battle. It shattered peaceful lives. It sent Americans from quiet communities into the most remote regions of the globe. It brought the United States out of the Great Depression and turned sharecroppers into riveters in shipyards. It caused a major migration from the sleepy Southern back country to the industrial heartland of the Midwest, thereby producing severe social upheaval in the decades to follow. It spawned different social and economic realities, a different and higher technological order, different politics, and different sets of notions about how people should behave toward each other. Those of us who were born in the 1920's found ourselves catapulted into another age.

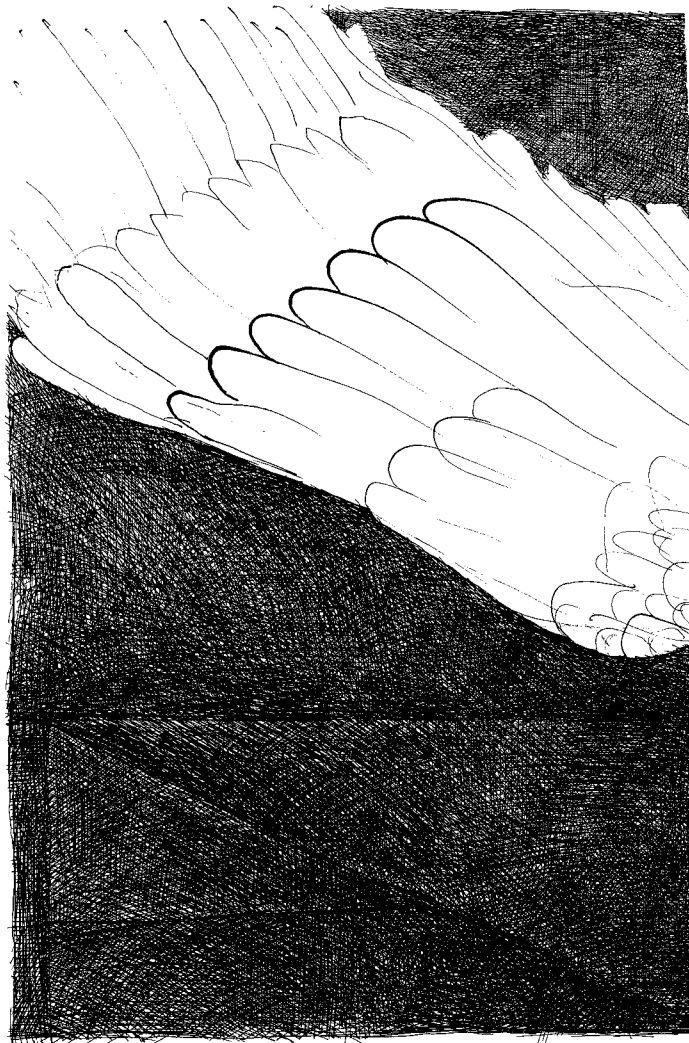
I saw nothing of the violent side of World War II, actual combat, or the faraway places, though at the time, the military encampments of California seemed very far away indeed. I also recognized nothing of the change that the war was working in American life. I never anticipated the social transformation that would result from the conflict. I didn't see anything beyond my own small journey in the direction of adult life.

I was 16 years old on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and I heard news of the attack on the radio in our living room at 10 Legare Street in Charleston. In the afternoon I sat in my friend Craig Bennett's automobile and listened to the follow-up reports on the car radio. The next day we gathered in the assembly hall at the High School of Charleston and listened to President Roosevelt's broadcast in which he referred to "a day of infamy." The perfidy of the attack made a deep and permanent impression on my mind. More than 40 years later, I continue to view our Japanese "allies" with deep suspicion, as many Frenchmen in their innermost hearts must view the Germans.

In the months after Pearl Harbor, Charleston organized for attacks that never came. My friend Rutledge Webb and I, accompanied by his father, did spells of duty as air raid watchers on the roof of the Sumter Hotel. We scanned the skies for the Junker bombers that were thousands of miles away. Other Charlestonians were organized on a block-by-block basis, prepared to lead their neighbors to shelter in the event of attack. The harbor mouth was closed by a steel submarine net, as were the creeks, for Lowcountry residents feared invasion by minisubs such as the Japanese had used at Pearl Harbor. People were deadly serious about the peril, and anyone who let a light shine in a blackout received a

stern reprimand. Off the Carolina coast, German submarines *were* active, destroying tankers that carried precious fuel. And one night Charlestonians heard the rumble of naval gunfire at sea. They went to the High Battery to watch for signs of the naval action, but there was nothing to be seen. There also were rumors, as there had been in World War I, that certain Charlestonians with German names were ferrying supplies to U-boats off the coast.

The next fall, while at school in Massachusetts, the war impinged in only the most minor of ways—a dormitory heated by wood instead of coal, sugar rationing, odd types of meat in the dining hall, old men serving as train conductors, servicemen on leave in downtown Boston, and the ubiquitous headlines telling of battles in places with strange-sounding names. The war was a minimal presence, however, and didn't interfere seriously with my newfound appreciation of Mozart and Faure or my interest in school politics and a beautiful girl with the nickname of IDB (for idle brain). By the end of the year, however, there was much talk among my classmates of future military service. It was simply a matter of when one would go and in which



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