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1 Foundations

In 1782, when B.F. Hermann published his *Sketch of the Physical Constitution of the Austrian States*, most of the lands he discussed had been under a common ruler for two and a half centuries. Yet as his title showed they had still not acquired an official collective name. Tell-tale nomenclature betrays the problem which was henceforth to dog the empire increasingly to the end of its days: its origin as a dynastic rather than ethnic union in a continent of emerging nationalisms. Even in the eighteenth century, when none expected ethnic and political boundaries to coincide, the Habsburg lands stood out for the number of self-conscious national traditions they encompassed. But what lends this problem its peculiar interest is not so much that it remained ultimately unsolved as that elements of identity became as strong as they did. When Hermann wrote, an attempt was being made to create a new cohesion in the Habsburg Empire, an attempt which, for all its failings, helped ensure that in the second half of the empire's life its subjects were linked in many more ways than by loyalty to a family. The later Monarchy's bureaucratic traditions – cumbersome but relatively fair and efficient; the German cultural orientation of its educated classes; the conjunction of manufacturing and agrarian zones and of a semi-official Catholic Church and tolerated religious minorities: all this goes back to the reform period of the second half of the eighteenth century. In this sense these years saw the foundation of the Monarchy as it is still remembered vividly in much of the region today. Much as the reforms owed to monarchical initiative, they also reflected the impact on the Habsburg lands of broader central European, indeed, European developments. It is the interplay between its own complex structures and such wider influences in making and unmaking a multi-national polity which gives the Habsburg Monarchy its distinctive place in modern European history, and which will be the subject of this book.

Government and Elites

The dynasty's rise to prominence began when Rudolf of Habsburg, of a family owning lands in southern Germany and Alsace, seized the

Alpine duchies of Austria and Styria from the Bohemian king Otakar in 1278. Originating as the 'Eastern march' of Charlemagne's Christian empire and long ruled by the Babenbergs from the still older Roman frontier fortress of Vindobona (Vienna), Austria became the nucleus from which, over the next couple of centuries, Rudolf's descendants extended their control westwards to the Tyrol and Vorarlberg, and south-west through the German-Slav borderlands of Carinthia and Carnolia to the Italian Adriatic port of Trieste and the county of Gorizia. From 1445 till 1792 the head of the family was regularly elected Holy Roman Emperor. Achievement as this was, the real break-through came in 1519–26 when, as a result of previous marriage compacts, two grandsons of the Emperor Maximilian, Charles and Ferdinand, inherited respectively the thrones of Spain, and of Hungary and Bohemia. The kingdom of Hungary was in union with that of Croatia, and with Bohemia went the provinces of Moravia and Silesia, collectively known as the Czech lands. Though the territories of the eastern and western inheritances were kept separate, Habsburgs in the sixteenth century emerged predominant in the new world and the old.

Marriage compacts were a regular feature of late medieval politics and frequently resulted in temporary unions of crowns. What gave the Habsburg accession in Hungary and Bohemia unusual permanence was the combination of the Turkish threat and the Counter-Reformation. Ferdinand became king of these two countries because in 1526 his predecessor, Louis, had died childless on the battlefield of Mohács against the Turks. Where nation-states – Bulgaria, Serbia, then Hungary – had failed, the Habsburgs became the supranational defenders of Christianity against Islam. They also became the bulwark of Catholicism against the Protestant-dominated noble estates and towns of east-central Europe. The suppression of Protestantism thus aided them in a movement towards absolutism similar to that gathering strength almost throughout early modern Europe.

Bohemia was the crucial case here. The routing of Bohemian Protestant rebels at the Battle of the White Mountain outside Prague in 1620 led to Habsburg assumption of key rights of the Bohemian Diet over legislation, citizenship and appointments, and – through expropriation or exile – accelerated the displacement of a broad-based native middle nobility by a small aristocracy, exclusively Catholic and largely non-Czech. While other factors than Habsburg vengeance also played their part, by *c.* 1770 Bohemian knightly families had revenues amounting to no more than 4% of those of the

nobility as a whole, instead of a half two centuries before. The proscription of Protestantism was accompanied by the re-endowment of the Catholic Church, a massive programme of church building and the promotion of the cult of the fourteenth-century Bohemian saint Jan of Nepomuk to implant notions of *Bohemia Sacra* – a Counter-Reformation patriotism – in an initially sullen population. The fact that Jan of Nepomuk held the dedication of more than half the statues erected in the German-speaking diocese of Vienna in the twenty years since his tongue was discovered ‘incorrupt’ in 1717 shows how the flamboyant symbols and practices of Baroque Catholicism were meant to serve as a binding link between all Habsburg lands and peoples. Up to 150,000 people attended the annual pilgrimages to the Styrian miracle site of Maria Zell in the eighteenth century, where the nonagenarian Empress Zita, last surviving Habsburg sovereign, paid homage in 1985 after a lifetime’s exile. By this time restored Catholicism and a German-speaking aristocracy so linked the provinces of the Bohemian Crown with the Habsburgs’ original Alpine possessions that both areas were equally deemed to be part of the dynasty’s ‘Hereditary Lands’.

In Hungary too the Counter-Reformation played an important role in the establishment of Habsburg power. Yet here the situation was more complex. For a century and a half the Turks held the bulk of central Hungary, while to the east the province of Transylvania was an autonomous state ruled by a line of Hungarian Protestant princes. Both before and after the liberation of nearly all Hungary from the Turks by 1699 there were lengthy wars between the Habsburgs and native opponents, such that the final peace of Szatmár (1711) bore something of a compromise character. The native upper class survived to a much greater degree than in the Czech lands and at least a quarter of the total population of Hungary remained Protestant, including a Calvinist majority among Magyar speakers east of the river Tisza; the less numerous Lutherans of north Hungary were mainly German or Slovak. Habsburg sovereigns were still obliged to take an oath to uphold Hungary’s rights. The Hungarian Diet and the locally self-governing county units retained significant powers. While the Renewed Ordinance of 1627 made German, mother tongue of the Habsburgs, equal with Czech in the administration of Bohemia, polyglot Hungary retained Latin as its official language.

The common distinction between an absolutist Austria and Bohemia and a constitutional Hungary can, however, be overdrawn.

In an age of poor communications and low literacy, monarchical absolutism ran up against limitations even in the Austro-Bohemian lands, whose Diets till the mid-eighteenth century kept a substantial administrative role and a real right to grant direct taxation – the so-called *contributio* for military purposes. Dynastic authority at this level rested on a convergence of its interests with those of provincial magnate elites, expressed in provincial officials' dual responsibility to Diet and sovereign. On the other hand, Hungary's freedoms had narrow limits. Like the rest of the Monarchy in certain fields she was effectively subject to central monarchical institutions, though Hungarian participation in them was usually slight: the Hofkriegsrat (War Council) for military affairs, the State Chancellery, detached from the Austrian General Chancellery in 1742, for foreign policy, the Hofkammer (Court Chamber) which dominated the Hungarian Kammer, for the administration of Crown estates, customs and excise, monopolies and other regalian (royal) economic prerogatives. From 1527 a variously named Privy Council or Privy Conference oversaw problems of the Monarchy as a whole. Moreover, Hungarian constitutionalism, a perhaps anachronistic term, remained undeveloped. Political rights of any kind were confined to the noble class. The Hungarian Diet retained legislative powers – granting the government the right to hold a standing army in Hungary in 1715 – but was rarely summoned in the eighteenth century and barely challenged the Crown's assumption of responsibility for religious matters, or for expanding policy fields like education or welfare, not central to traditional noble concerns. Since Hungarian law also assured the monarch a wide prerogative in matters of appointment, ennoblement and regalian rights, the Lieutenancy Council set up in Pressburg (modern Bratislava) in 1723, responsible to a Hungarian Chancellery in Vienna, developed a considerable role in Hungarian life. Transylvania remained apart, with its own Diet and Chancellor, and the 'Military Frontier' built up since the sixteenth century as bulwark along the Turkish border was directly administered by the Hofkriegsrat. In these circumstances Hungarian constitutionalism took on a beleaguered guise, amounting to the enunciation of principles – like regular Diets – rather than their enforcement and deriving its real strength from the stubborn caste spirit of the nobles who ran the most distinctively Hungarian institutions, the courts and the counties.

Yet the distinction between Hungary and Bohemia under Habsburg rule retains its importance. Though the Hungarian great

magnates also became, with rare exceptions, an exclusively Catholic body, incomers remained a minority in their ranks. Above all, a large and often Protestant gentry class remained, for all the restrictions reiterated in 1731 on Protestants' freedom of worship and public role. Hungary and Bohemia's relations to the dynasty showed early the pattern of asymmetry which was to culminate in the Austro-Hungarian 'Dualism' of 1867–1918.

Till the end of the seventeenth century, the Turkish occupation of central Hungary, the seniority of the Spanish Habsburgs and the role of the leading German Habsburg as head of the amorphous but still prestigious 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation' tended to obscure the identity of the latter's dynastic lands as an empire in its own right. The extinction of the Spanish line of the family in 1700 and increasing enfeeblement of Turkey and the Holy Roman Empire changed this situation and increased the saliency of the 'Austrian Monarchy', though till 1804 the imperial style of its rulers continued to derive from the ancient title of Charlemagne. Charles VI's 'Pragmatic Sanction' of 1713, eventually adopted by the Estates of all his dynastic lands, took them a step nearer to common statehood, for as well as asserting the undivided inheritance of these lands in the Habsburg line, both male and female, it also proclaimed the obligation of common defence. The Pragmatic Sanction was designed to ensure the succession to a sovereign who had at that time no heirs and later a daughter – Maria Theresa – rather than a son. In the formal sense it failed because on Charles VI's death in 1740 Bavarian claims precipitated the War of Austrian Succession (1740–48), begun by Frederick II of Prussia's seizure of Silesia. To the traditional Habsburg enmity with Bourbon France, theme of the previous wars of the Spanish succession (1700–13), was now added a feud with upstart Prussian Hohenzollerns. But the famous rallying of the 1741 Hungarian noble Diet to their young queen's cause showed that a viable polity had nonetheless come into existence. Linked by ties of loyalty and self-interest, dynasty, magnates and Catholic hierarchy stood at the apex of what has been called a *höfische Gesellschaft* or court-orientated society, whose leading positions in Church and state were held by members of the magnate elite, largely created by the Habsburgs themselves. At this august level, at least, the Austrian Monarchy had acquired its own *esprit de corps*, if a fragile one, for many Bohemian and Upper Austrian nobles cooperated with the temporary Franco-Bavarian occupiers.

Thus eight aristocratic families monopolised the post of Royal Commissioner to the Bohemian Diets of 1627–98. In 1756 nine Hungarian bishops held between them twelve high sheriffships of Hungarian counties. Membership of most Austrian cathedral chapters required sixteen quarters of nobility. The most noteworthy overlap was at the top: as Apostolic King of Hungary the Habsburg emperor had the right to a veto in the Papal electoral conclave, exercised as late as 1903 through the Archbishop of Cracow. This union of throne, altar and noble seat was lubricated by wealth. The eighteenth-century Monarchy retained a system of ‘hereditary subjection’ (*Erbuntertänigkeit*) of feudal origin, whereby, excepting mainly the free peasants of the Tyrol and certain historically rooted free communities in Hungary, the great bulk of the land was held by the privileged orders. This land was categorised either as *dominical* (in Hungary, *allodial*), cultivated as the lord’s demesne or let out on temporary terms to cottars, or as *rustical* (Hungary: *urbarial*), on which peasants had rights to the fruits of their labour on performance of a complex set of obligations. Wherever in the early modern period nobles turned towards the *Gutsherrschaft* system of direct demesne farming of their estates there had been pressure to expand dominical land at the peasants’ expense; thus in late eighteenth-century Bohemia about two-fifths of land was dominical and in Hungary the lion’s share, though the percentages were somewhat inflated by nobles’ near monopoly of forest as opposed to arable. Peasant obligations, infinitely varied in detail, followed a roughly common pattern, including dues in cash and kind, services like carting and unpaid labour on the lords’ demesne (the notorious *robot*), and the requirement to purchase the lord’s wine or beer and use his mill. When an individual magnate might have 35,000 homes on his estates, as Prince Miklós Esterházy had on the three-fifths of Hungary for which figures exist in the survey of 1784–87, the resultant income could be huge – 700,000 florins a year (about £70,000) in this case, probably exceeded by the heads of the Schwarzenberg and Lobkowitz families. The ten wealthiest magnates of Bohemia around 1770 held property with a declared capital value of 71 million florins, by contrast to the five million florins capital of the thirty biggest merchants of flourishing Trieste in 1767. Clerical wealth was almost equally striking. The clergy’s share of dominical revenues at this time varied from just over a sixth in once Protestant Bohemia to two-fifths in Upper and Lower Austria – and while the Archbishop of Esztergom had an income of 360,000 florins a year no

Hungarian town's annual revenue exceeded a hundred thousand until the 1790s.

To be sure, this wealth was often a condition for the public role magnates and clerics played in a society still bureaucratically underdeveloped. Prince Lichtenstein spent ten million florins of his own fortune overhauling Maria Theresa's artillery. The Esterházy and Pálffy maintained army regiments at their own expense. Great estates provided the work-forces and resources for the first manufacturing ventures of Austrian mercantilism. The Hungarian National Theatre began with a troupe of actors who, like Haydn, had been in Esterházy employ, while its painted scenery came from the estate theatre of the Batthyánys. In Bohemia the theatre company of the Schwarzenberg castle at Krumlov played a not dissimilar role. With its 4268 tallow candles the illuminations of the most spectacular of Esterházy pageants in 1784 exceeded the 3445 oil lamps, six steps apart, which made Vienna the first regularly lit city in Europe, let alone the 300 lights introduced into Pest in 1790. But it was the dynasty which set the tone. No aristocrat could match the 300,000 volumes of the Court Library, available to the public before 12 a.m., or Schönbrunn palace's menagerie and botanical gardens, likewise opened up in 1752–53, or the great scientific expeditions dispatched by Habsburg rulers from 1755, which laid the foundations for the Austrian national museums of natural history and ethnography. A society moving towards 'modern' cultural concerns was still rooted in ancient institutions.

There was some place, too, for the towns in this picture, weak though they were. In the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries most urban populations failed to keep pace with overall demographic advance, as east-central European cities were detached from the trade route patterns of the Age of Discovery, nobles arrogated to themselves control of the lucrative corn trade to the West and burgher homes within the walls yielded to noble town houses, monasteries and convents. Vienna, with 200,000 inhabitants and Prague with over 70,000 in 1780 were the only substantial cities in the Austro-Slav lands, while in Hungary Pressburg alone, at 30,000, was built largely in stone. Most town-dwellers, moreover, were not 'burghers' endowed with citizenship rights; the majority were primarily engaged in agriculture, particularly in the so-called village towns of the Hungarian plain, where peasants and others had come together for security in the troubled Turkish period. The Royal Free Towns which enjoyed charter status and burgher self-government

were a small minority of urban settlements alongside the often more enterprising 'noble towns' on seigneurial land – which sometimes purchased themselves a precarious autonomy – and the yet humbler 'market-places' (*Marktflecken*), mere overgrown villages with rights of market. Thus while Hungary had some 700 market settlements and one-fifth of its people lived in agglomerations of more than two thousand, only 5% inhabited the forty or so Royal Free Towns and less than 2% were house owners or established artisans in these. The Austro-Bohemian lands showed a similar, if somewhat denser pattern, with 72 larger towns, 377 smaller ones and 888 market-places recorded in 1762.

Yet the absorption of this small-scale urban world into the nexus of Habsburg power did not mean total insignificance. Towns were the centres of administration, education and culture. The elegant public buildings of this period remain the best testimony to a common past from Slovak Bratislava to Croatian Zagreb and Transylvanian Cluj (*Kolozsvár*). Baroque devotional life was at its most intense in the towns, not the under-resourced countryside; Vienna had 103 lay confraternities in 1780. Here too were the agencies of charity, the hospices, chantries and dispensaries of the traditional order and the earliest hospitals, asylums, orphanages and foundling homes of modern type. While education at village level remained primitive and for the majority non-existent, the towns boasted a relatively developed network of secondary schools, usually Jesuit or Piarist but in Hungary also Lutheran and Calvinist, whose non-privileged graduates, inured by study to strict discipline and thankful for any security in a hard world, provided their betters with the administrative and clerical duties the court-orientated society required. Mid-eighteenth-century Hungary, where at most a quarter of children had any primary education, had some 130 secondary schools of various kinds.

Another role of the towns was to aid the dissemination of German as the means of communication between the Monarchy's interlocking elites. Medieval German settlements in the Czech lands, Slovakia and Transylvania were supplemented by fresh movements of German speakers into the towns of inner Bohemia-Moravia, particularly Prague, from the late seventeenth century and into depopulated Hungary after the Turkish withdrawal. The Germanising process in the towns no doubt assisted the growing fashion for German in the upper classes. In the 1720s the Esterházy children began to be educated in German rather than their native Hungarian. By the 1780s the Hungarian Chief Justice *Ürményi* was reportedly incompetent

in his national tongue. Already by mid-century the bulk of the Bohemian upper middle classes and almost the entire aristocracy, including the minority of Czech descent, had made German their first language.

The linguistic trend was undoubtedly linked with shifts in social consciousness in elite circles of the consolidating Monarchy, though these were neither abrupt nor uniform. While Count Harrach, the last Bohemian Chancellor, retired to his office and wept after proclaiming his Chancellery abolished on Maria Theresa's orders in 1749, Prince Kaunitz, the Empress's greatest minister and himself of Moravian Czech descent, failed to understand how people could put their 'regional' loyalties before the interests of the 'state'. The Habsburg achievement was to foster this latter sense of a wider allegiance among large sections of the Monarchy's upper classes. It might be an allegiance more narrowly dynastic than Kaunitz's, like that of the Schwarzenberg who, shot in a hunting accident by Charles VI, exclaimed before dying, 'It was ever my duty to give my life for my sovereign'.¹ It might not be wholly reliable, as in temporary defections of 1741. But this is outweighed by the loyalty in the crisis of the previously restless Hungarian nobility. The overall tendency was plain.

This was further shown in the fact that no Bohemian nobles were executed or dispossessed after 1741, unlike the Croatian *frondeurs* Frankopan and Zrinski seventy years earlier. A civilising of manners was taking place which was a feature of the eighteenth century. The dynasty's trump-card was that this trend, hailed by contemporaries, was associated with the assertion of monarchical authority and an abatement of particularism and 'feudalism'. The Viennese university professor Justi, commenting in 1764 on the decline in 'upheavals' in contemporary society, ascribed it to the growth of standing armies² – one of the main features of absolutist rule. In becoming more regular and less arbitrary, power was also becoming more centralised. This process might arouse the nostalgia of a Harrach, but the complementarity of interests of monarch and aristocracy had become too great for the exponents of creeping absolutism to fear an effective traditionalist backlash. Besides, their actions could usually be justified in terms of a royal prerogative acknowledged in feudal precept, only now more vigorously exercised. One development, minor in itself, reveals the underlying process at work. In 1749 the *Ritterakademie* founded by the Lower Austrian Provincial Diet passed under central government control. Such academies had been

founded to train nobles for employment, but as the chief source of noble employment was now the expanding state administration the need for independence no longer seemed so pressing. In an age of increasing interdependence of government and elites, the government held the cards. By the reign of Maria Theresa the main challenge it faced was not from mutinous Hungarians or Bohemians, but from a politically more integrated Prussia, hoping to find in the still diffusely organised Monarchy easy game for its ambitions.

Lands and Peoples

Frederick the Great's bold seizure of Austrian Silesia in 1740 reflected awareness of the shallow base of Habsburg power. Only a few hundred aristocratic families comprised the multi-cultural elite through which the dynasty habitually worked. Beneath it were the thousands of gentry, tens of thousands of petty nobles and burghers, hundreds of thousands of artisans and urban workers, and at the bottom millions of peasants whose traditions still owed little or nothing to Habsburg rule. Here loyalties went to the assorted kingdoms, principalities, archduchies, duchies, counties and other entities subject to the Pragmatic Sanction, which jealously guarded their separate legal codes, their historic tribunals, even their own tariffs.

Central government in such a context could hardly be a matter of fine tuning, especially when the knowledge available in educated circles remained disconcertingly imprecise. 'Some writers will have the number of towns in Moravia at 500 and the villages at 15,000', mused the famous traveller Keyser, though adding tartly that this and another estimate of 33,559 were exaggerations.³ Confidential statistical information increasingly compiled by government from the 1750s shows that the authorities hopelessly underestimated the population of Hungary until the census of 1787. Nor did the profusion of weights and measures help. The 'geometric' German mile, Keyser noted, numbered 15 to a degree of longitude (about four English miles) but as 'computed' it was often five to six English miles; the Bohemian mile, fixed by King Otakar in 1268, was a third shorter at only 4755 geometric paces!

The bureaucratic and statistical incoherence of pre-modern society was compounded by the Habsburg lands' emphatically multi-national structure. Excepting far-flung possessions in the

Austrian Netherlands, roughly, modern Belgium, and the duchies of Milan and Mantua in Lombardy (all acquired in 1714–15) and the scattered *Vorlande* (including Freiburg) in south-west Germany, the core of the Monarchy still contained a dozen nationalities, albeit in a relatively compact territory (by 1780) of over 230,000 square miles, 90% of which was drained by the Danube. The population in this area was then approaching 22 million (the Hungarian lands contributing some 45%, the Czech and Alpine lands 40%, Galicia and the Bukovina 15%) with another 2.4 million in Belgium and 1.5 million in north Italy. Vienna, sited where the Danube rounds the Alpine outliers of the Vienna Woods and moves south, east and south through the Hungarian plain (the *Alföld*) was thus only 134 miles from Budapest and 40 miles from Bratislava, Hungary's medieval and early modern capitals respectively. Prague lay 180 miles to the north-west. This made Vienna the hub of a wheel whose three chief spokes since 1526 had been German, Magyar and Czech, making up in turn approximately a quarter, a fifth and a sixth of the population of the central lands.

Of these three major groups it was the German speakers on whom the dynasty could most naturally rely. Divided between the Alpine and Czech lands, and scattered through Hungary and Transylvania, they had never acquired a collective identity to match their historic loyalties to province, dynasty and, where relevant, Holy Roman Empire. If the statistician Joseph Rohrer's exclamation 'To the mountains, my friends!' and the vivid description of the Semmering pass in his work of 1804 on 'the western provinces of the Austrian state' suggest the beginnings of an Austrian self-perception in modern terms, he still expected his readers' response to be a mutter about avalanches.⁴

In fact, the two and a quarter million inhabitants of the lands of present-day Austria, as of 1754, had the least fraught relations with the dynasty, partly through the relatively peaceful course of the Counter-Reformation there, though Protestant remnants could still be expelled in the 1750s. The lesser nobles once associated with Protestantism, too, had lost ground, as in Bohemia, but less drastically. The noble *latifundia* associated with the shift to the *Gutsherrschaft* system of arable-based demesne farming remained rare, only 9% of noble revenues coming from the demesne in Lower Austria in 1754, as opposed to 38% in Bohemia. The role of the unpopular feudal *robot* was correspondingly restricted, with quite high formal labour requirements of two to four days a week (much lower in

Upper Austria) being extensively commuted to money payments. Indeed, Austrian nobles' income from their peasants came mainly in cash, through commutations, fines imposed in 'patrimonial' or noble courts, taxes on documents needed by peasants, charges for transfer and inheritance of peasant plots, and the sale of noble beer and wine. Onerous as these exactions were – a reflection of the fact that noble estates formed the basic units of local government – the importance of cash commutation and of written documents suggests a peasant community living some way above subsistence level, at least for its better-off members. By the eighteenth century population growth had made for a quite sharply differentiated rural society, where income was regularly supplemented by domestic industry, carting or other ways. The holders of 'full plots' on whom the labour services mentioned above were due had become relatively few and the term peasant (*Bauer*) was conventionally applied to those who held a quarter-plot or more, with services scaled down proportionately. The majority of the rural community already fell into the ranks of cottars (*Kleinhäusler*), various grades of *Innleute* (sub-letters on *Bauer* land or *Bauer* family dependants) and finally *Gesinde* or domestic servants. By the late eighteenth century the single common room of the traditional house had become the servants' quarters, with the *Bauer's* private parlour alongside. As the village community lost its old self-regulative functions, so he in his homestead assumed a paternalist role in keeping with the mores of the court-orientated society. In the Salzburg Pinzgau district at the end of the century peasant households might have ten to fifteen servants apiece.

Nonetheless, with the exception of the wine-growing peasantry in the vicinity of Vienna, with their stone houses, even their morning coffee, the peasant lifestyle remained much simpler than the urban. Rye bread with curds, washed down with water, was more common than the wheaten bread, wine, beer and regular meat of the cities; rural meat consumption in 1800 was a third that of Vienna. Spoons were used, personally marked for individual use, though not yet forks or plates. But Austrian peasants did not lack confidence. 'Look, my dear Empress,' young Peter Prosch began a begging letter to Maria Theresa, 'I am a poor lad without mother and father, lodging here at my sister's . . . and one night I dreamed of you since I have heard what a good monarch you are.'⁵ Simon Hollnmeister (1737–1823) made some twenty trips to Vienna on behalf of his village community. Whatever lay behind his claim to his fellow peasants that he had often sat by the stove talking to the Emperor of 'this and that' as

the Empress served them cold meats,⁶ it could only have been made in a society where paternalism was a reality.

Self-confidence seems all the more to have been a trait of the Viennese, noted for their much remarked pride in the capital status of their bustling city, with its gates open day and night, its five and a half thousand resident foreigners and its house-maids who wore bespoke clothes. A quarter of the inhabitants of the inner city were in some way or other in the employ of the court. But the superiority syndrome went further than the capital. A Styrian German, wrote a contemporary, would be ashamed to go barefooted or booted rather than shoed, as did the 'Wends' (Slovenes) from the south of the province. Bartenstein, one of Maria Theresa's ministers, commented on the energy of the German townspeople of Bohemia and the very different spirit of their Czech neighbours. The widespread role of German speakers as the landowning and bourgeois class in Slav areas obviously influenced such perspectives, but of whatever class the German-speaking population of the Monarchy saw themselves as a cut above the rest.

The comparison was usually made with the Slavs, most sharply with the Czechs. German-language accounts of eighteenth-century Bohemia convey a sense of impotent alienation on the part of a Czech under-class not dissimilar to pictures of the Gaelic-speaking peasantry of Ireland in the same period. These sturdy workers, good soldier material, wrote one observer in 1757, had the potential talent for profitable employment, but the serfdom under which they groaned had made them fearful and impoverished, 'savage and vengeful'. Another in 1794 noted the Czechs' 'blind obedience and cringing denial of the feeling of human dignity'.⁷ It was the graphically named *Stockböhmern* or monoglot Czech speakers who were the particular object of these remarks, as opposed to the 'utraquists' or bilingual Bohemians of Czech mother tongue, and the German speakers of the towns and the mountain rim enclosing the gently undulating inner Bohemian plateau. Germans were over a third of the total population. Equating the Bohemian Germans with Irish Protestants and the utraquists with the eighteenth-century Irish Catholic urban middle class enables the Irish parallel to be drawn still further. In each case defeat of the native elites in the early modern period had taken on the appearance of an irreparable historical reverse, reducing the leaderless masses into hewers of wood and drawers of water. Little more than a century after the Czech Diet of 1615 had made Czech the sole official language of the realm, it had been virtually

discarded by the upper class. When in the 1770s the Rosenmüller family sold the concession for the newspaper *Český postillon*, founded in 1719 in a vain attempt to get the Bohemian elite to read the provincial news in Czech, the new concessionaire could raise only nine subscribers.

But though enforced Counter-Reformation had deprived the Czechs, a mainly Protestant people before 1620, of their religion, at least it had put them on the same level as their Austrian Catholic conquerors according to a key criterion of the age. The utraquists of Czech background were therefore less marginal than the English-speaking Catholics of Ireland in the public administration of their country, which, besides, still derived in many ways from the old Czech state and even gave the Czech language a certain ceremonial precedence, rather like French in the Jersey States today. The bilingualism of the utraquists, a largely educated urban group, had a two-fold significance. It encouraged Germans to believe that Bohemia was, in all essentials, a German province, or at least in transition to becoming so, while ensuring a residue of Czech sentiment beyond the village level, and a modest infrastructure for a Czech world largely beyond German gaze, in terms of pastoral care and primary education in the mother tongue. The role of the utraquists was thus to soften socio-ethnic antitheses in Bohemia as compared to Ireland. Its people, incidentally, had a reputation as the most musical in central Europe, instrumental music teaching being common even in elementary schools: music would retain a prominent place in the Monarchy's life till its end.

Yet the screwing up of *robot* obligations and the noble appropriation of peasant rustical land in the early modern period created tensions in Bohemia not alleviated by ineffective royal patents of 1680, 1717 and 1738. For all some historians' querying of the term serfdom in the Habsburg context, particularly in its German form *Leibeigenschaft*, with its implication of peasant chattel status – Habsburg peasants unlike Tsarist ones could not be sold without their land – peasants' rights, like that to court action, depended in practice on the cooperation of noble-dominated authorities. Moreover, they were subjected in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland to intimidatory corporal punishment to a degree unknown in the Austro-German lands. It is thus not surprising that travellers of the Enlightenment stressed the social roots of the resentments of the *Stockböhmén*. Some recent Irish historiography suggests, however, that continuing ethnic alienation may play a compounding role in such cases. The

picture is not clear-cut. In time the Habsburgs undoubtedly won the acceptance, even loyalty, most people usually accord their rulers; the richest vein of surviving Czech popular ballads centre round soldiering for Maria Theresa in the Seven Years War (1757–63). Nervous contemporaries exaggerated the links of underground chiliastic sentiment among the poor to memories of the proto-Protestant martyr Jan Hus, burnt at the stake in 1415. But Baron Riesbeck's observation in 1787 of 'a secret hatred to the Germans' arising from 'a kind of national pride' matches Count Hartig in 1850 on the 'secret hatred of the Czechs against the Germans which has never been extinguished' too closely not to suggest some persistence of popular ethnic sentiment.⁸ Eighteenth-century travellers noted Czechs' reluctance to speak German to strangers even when they knew the language. Bohemia was not natural Habsburg territory in the way that German-speaking Austria was.

Was this true of Austria's other non-German lands? While it should not be overlooked, the ethnic sentiment of the time was unlike modern nationalism. Peasant identity was a diffuse mix of religious, linguistic, social and regional factors. 'National consciousness' with a coherent political thrust existed for the most part only where 'historic nations', i.e. nations which had had a state of their own, retained a privileged elite, as in Hungary. It was memories of Bohemian independence, in fair measure, which gave Bohemian Slavs their particular identity. Even the Czech speakers of Moravia, whom contemporaries dauntingly divided into Bohemian Moravians, Hannakites, Moravian Slovaks and Moravian Wallachs (or mountain Slovaks!), could not simply be equated in feeling with their Bohemian neighbours as part of a single Czech nation. For one thing, they lived more interspersed with the Moravian German minority and relationships between the two language groups were warmer than in Bohemia.

The 900,000 Slovenes living athwart the route from Vienna to the Adriatic were an unambiguously 'non-historic' people, criss-crossed by regional and dialect differences in their Alpine homeland, the size of Wales. Over the thousand years that they had lived under Austro-German rule their territory had contracted leaving a Slovene majority only in the province of Carniola with its capital Laibach (modern Ljubljana) and minorities abutting Germans in Styria and Carinthia, and Italians in Gorizia and Trieste. The Slovene language, similar to Serbo-Croat, had flowered in written form only during the short-lived Slovene Reformation, though a trickle of pastoral

and polemical publications continued in Counter-Reformation times. Marko Pohlin's *Carniolan Grammar*, published in German in 1768, albeit resentful of neglect of the native tongue, showed in its title how little a collective Slovene identity had yet emerged – the term had first been used in a roughly modern sense eighteen years before. Only 3% of Carniolan children attended school in 1780. The tiny Slovene people, still 93% peasant *c.* 1800 and with no historic axe to grind, for long posed no questions for Habsburg power.

It was otherwise with the Poles of Galicia, who entered the Habsburg orbit only in 1772, on the first partition of Poland by Austria, Prussia and Russia. The Poles were a historic nation *par excellence*, or rather some of them, for the identification of the nobility with the Polish state at the expense of the non-privileged classes had so weakened the body politic that Galicia presented late eighteenth-century Austria more with practical administrative than with national problems. The Galician nobility, some 141,000 strong in a population of 2.3 million in 1773, and divided into great magnates and numerous lesser gentry, appeared to contemporaries to be even ethnically distinct from the Polish-speaking peasantry; these, the so-called Mazurians, were described in similar terms to the *Stockböhmern*. Polish landlords dominated not only the Mazurians in west Galicia but also the Ruthenian majority in the east of the province, whose language was closer to Russian than to Polish. East Galicia is the modern West Ukraine, the cutting edge of contemporary Ukrainian nationalism. Its eighteenth-century inhabitants, however, lacked this overriding identity. Divided by observers into plain-dwelling 'Red Ruthenians' and mountain 'Pokutians', they shared only the Uniate or Greek Catholic Church, with its Orthodox-style liturgy and married clergy, yet loyalty to Rome. It had been introduced by their Polish masters to distance this originally Orthodox people from Tsarist Russia. All but half a dozen Galician towns were subject to noble as well as king, though the average lesser noble lived in a cottage. A large Jewish population subsisted in the interstices of a generally harsh feudal regime. Elsewhere Jews, who were to play so big a role in the Monarchy's later history, were still few, perhaps 30,000 to 40,000 each in Bohemia and Hungary in mid-century, the latter largely rural and increasing rapidly, partly through immigration of the former, who suffered restrictions even on their freedom to marry; Vienna's 550 Jews in 1777 already included wealthy banking families like the Eskeles and Arnsteins. Thus in its 175,000 Jews (*c.* 1773) Galicia showed again that it was separated from German Austria or

even Slavic Bohemia by more than the mountain barrier of the Carpathians. Abutting Galicia on the east, Bukovina, a small province ceded Austria by Turkey in 1774–75, contained Ruthenians, Romanians and Jews.

Hungary, however, remained the most bafflingly diverse and politically problematic of Habsburg lands. In the words of the British envoy in 1774, it was ‘so unlike the countries that surround it, that in two days’ journey from hence [i.e. Vienna], I thought myself already removed to the other side of the terraqueous globe’, among ‘hordes’ who had, he declared, originated from as far apart as the Chinese Wall and the White Sea, Saxony and Rome, without finding over the centuries ‘sufficient reason for . . . moulding down their opposite peculiarities into one uniform national character’.⁹ The Magyars, however, a people of non-Indo-European linguistic origin who had entered the Danube basin in the late ninth century, provided the cement which till 1918 united the central Hungarian plain and encircling mountains in the ‘lands of the Crown of St. Stephen’, so-called after the first Hungarian ruler to be crowned king, in AD 1000. Probably a majority in these lands in the Middle Ages, the Magyars were reduced by Turkish invasion, non-Magyar encroachment and Habsburg resettlement policies to perhaps 40% in the later eighteenth century. Yet the Magyar character of the state was preserved by restriction on participation in the *natio* or political nation to the nobility alone, overwhelmingly of Magyar or assimilated Magyar stock.

Of course, the 160 or so great magnates on whom Habsburg power could especially rely – there were a further thirty in Transylvania – held a disproportionate share of the land. West of the Danube 47% of peasant land in 1767 was in the hands of just 28 lords. But ultimately it was the more numerous *bene possessionati* or middle nobility who ran the county administrations with their rumbustious triennial elections and competed to be county deputy sheriff, the real county executive officer rather than the high sheriffs appointed by the Crown. Moreover, Calvinism was strongly represented in the middle nobility, many of whom saw it as the ‘Magyar faith’ which the Habsburgs had failed to crush. Cut off from the highest levels of wealth and power, Hungarian Protestants zealously defended their remaining institutions, like the great Calvinist colleges of Debrecen and Sárospatak and the Lutheran *lycées* of north Hungary, as well as their links with their co-religionists abroad. The linguistic reformer Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831) has left an affectionate portrait of his Calvinist grandfather, a long-serving county court judge. His life in an

unpretentious house of adobe and thatch revolved around morning prayers, visits to his well-stocked barn, wine-cellars and stables, before settling down in front of the house to chat with passers-by and read pious works or German papers brought him from students abroad.¹⁰ The 'liberties' such men defended from Habsburg absolutism were nobles' sole right to public office and their exemption from taxation and military conscription – except for the feudal levy or *insurrectio* which nobles voluntarily took upon themselves, as on Maria Theresa's behalf in 1741. For Protestant nobles, though, embattled religious freedoms were also at stake, and an element of wider solidarity with the non-noble lineages of pastors and college teachers who provided the majority of Protestant students abroad – seven hundred permits for such study were granted for one sixteen-year period in the later eighteenth century. The proliferation of small nobles, more numerous in many areas than parliamentary voters in pre-1832 Britain, also lent the anti-Habsburg *fronde* its populist allure. Perhaps three-quarters of all nobles belonged to the petty nobility: whether on the fringes of middle noble status (social historians see the transition occurring between owners of 100 to 300 yokes of land or 143 to 429 acres); joint-holding squireens; impoverished small-holders; or the *armalistae* who had been ennobled without land and often offered their services to their landed brethren.

Naturally, the peasants of Hungary fully reflected the country's ethnic diversity. Slovaks and Ruthenes predominated in the Carpathians to the north and north-east; Romanians, with Lutheran Saxons, in Transylvania; Serbs and German Catholic Swabians in the southern plains. But Magyars and non-Magyars shared a common backwardness. Except in parts of Transdanubia to the west and in German areas agriculture was at the two-field or even slash-and-burn stage of development. Peasants built their own homes and made their own clothes and furniture. The round form of the Finno-Ugrian house of the Magyars' ancestors was still reflected in shepherds' huts. Backwardness made for stronger traditions of village community than in Austria. While in general pressures on peasants were on the increase – Transylvanian taxes rose four to ten times in the eighteenth century – local research has also shown interesting evidence of resilience. Nobles did not always succeed in usurping the appointment of village headman, Esterházy estate villagers kept the right to dispose of their plots and some noble jurists accorded peasants virtual property rights to their vineyards and to land they had cleared themselves. The extended communal family existed, with

variants, among Magyars and non-Magyars, though it flourished best in its south Slav *zadruga* form. The immensely prolific folk poetry and song that was to yield scores of thousands of examples in the Romantic age likewise revealed both particular and universal traits. Alongside the Finno-Ugrian motifs scholars have traced in Magyar peasant lore were themes found in many lands: the girl who dances herself to death, the soldier who wishes his cloth-wrapped heart to be sent to his loved one, the Bluebeard who locks maidens away in a secret room in a castle . . . The fifteenth-century Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus became a folk hero in Slovak and Slovene popular culture, and it was to his memory that the Serbo-Croat speakers of the Military Frontier appealed in their rising of 1755. Peasant life showed an eclectic profundity alien both to Enlightened reason and the later categories of nationalism.

Yet not all non-Magyars in Hungary were merely peasant, ‘non-historic’ peoples. The Croats of the south-west had retained elements of autonomy since accepting a common king with the Magyars in 1102. Though Croatian society had developed along Hungarian lines, with a noble constitution and county administration, Croatia had its own governor, the Ban, and Diet, the Sabor, which had negotiated separately with Vienna in 1527 and over the Pragmatic Sanction in 1712. This was not enough, however, to prevent the truncating of the Croatian lands. The three counties of Slavonia after their liberation from the Turks had entered into a somewhat closer association with Hungary than the three counties of Croatia proper and had a class of large landholders as likely to speak German or Magyar as Croatian. The Civil Croatia and Civil Slavonia so constituted were, moreover, separated by part of the Military Frontier. The third part of the ‘Triune Kingdom’ of Croatia–Slavonia–Dalmatia as conceived by Croatian patriots, Dalmatia, had been ruled by Venice since the fourteenth century. The sense of Croatia’s weakness and fragmentation but also of its merits as ancient Roman Illyria and forepost of Christian struggles against the Turks had inspired two different proto-nationalist responses at the end of the seventeenth century: one in the Panslav theories of Juraj Križanić of the greatness of the Slav race of which Croats were part, the other in Ritter-Vitezović’s glorification of the alleged historic rights of the Croatian state. But mid-eighteenth-century Croatia was a society in slumber. Of the 65 works published between 1713 and 1750 in Zagreb, two-thirds were devotional and many of the rest were textbooks for the local Jesuit academy.

These splits between various foreign hegemonies, proud past and stunted present, Panslav and state right ideologies – though Vitezović in a sense linked the two – have contributed to the tension in modern Croatian history between aspiration and reality. To them must be added the divide between town and country. While the little towns of Civil Croatia were part and parcel of the Austrian Baroque, as the Dalmatian ports were of the Italian Renaissance, inner Dalmatia and the Military Frontier were home, in contemporary parlance, to some of the ‘rudest’ of the Slav peoples, whose lifestyle had acquired European notoriety from the Italian Alberto Fortis’s work on the ‘Morlaks’ of Dalmatia, published in 1774. From their diet of coagulated milk, barley cakes and ‘succulent herbs’ to their smoky, insect-infested huts shared with cattle, and the mournful, monotonous songs with which they occupied their ‘artless minds’, Fortis’s Slavs were the very image of patriarchal simplicity.¹¹ The other side of the coin was the notorious ferocity of the peasant soldiers of the Military Frontier, making up a quarter of the Habsburg forces in the Seven Years’ War – and degraded by Austrian discipline, according to one later account (1787), from being ‘open-hearted, hospitable, frank . . . like all the children of nature’ into ‘a band of treacherous, tricking, cowardly robbers’.¹² Few peoples of their relatively small size have had such a complex history and social structure as the Croats.

The Military Frontiersmen held their plots as free peasants in return for army service when required. Actually, nearly a half of them were of Serb or Orthodox stock who had entered Catholic Croatia in flight from Ottoman rule in the Balkans. The largest migration, led by the Serbian Patriarch of Peć in 1690, had won from the Habsburg emperor the so-called Leopoldine Privileges, allowing Serbs religious toleration under their own elective church hierarchy in southern Hungary and Croatia. Here developed in the eighteenth century the most vigorous Serbian society since the fall of medieval Serbia to the Turks, focused around the growing mercantile centre of Novi Sad and the Orthodox metropolitan see of Karlowitz (Sremski Karlovci), with its wealthy monasteries. Serbian life was not without its problems: in the struggles of the settlers against Magyar feudal pressures and Catholic efforts to make them Uniates, above all in the battle to preserve the Privileges as a kind of national constitutional charter against Habsburg attempts to make the Karlowitz metropolitans their nominees and agents in the Serb community. The Privileges thus took the place of the ‘historic rights’ which

all groups who claimed them sought to defend against incursions by the central power.

Slovaks were more numerous in the Monarchy than either Serbs or Croats – some 1,200,000 strong in 1804 as against 1,480,000 for the other two peoples combined. But they were a classic case of a ‘non-historic’ community. Even the capital of the ninth-century Great Moravian Empire to which Slovaks now lay claim has never been located, and not long afterwards they had fallen under Hungarian rule. To the eighteenth century they appeared a submissive peasant people of upland valleys, sharing their market and mining towns with dominant Magyar and German elements. There is some evidence, however, that the proportion of Slovak-speaking master craftsmen and lesser gentry grew during the century. The Lutheran minority, about one-sixth of the whole, cherished links with once Protestant Bohemia, whose language, very close to their own, they used as their literary medium. Yet Slovaks’ primary identity as ‘Hungarian Slavs’ was bound up with the Hungarian kingdom of which they had so long been part. The great polymath Matthias Bel (1684–1749) expressed this identity well when he described himself as a Slav by mother tongue, a Hungarian by nationality and a German by education.

At the bottom of the pile were the Ruthenians of north-east Hungary and the Romanians of Transylvania. The only intelligentsia they possessed was the hierarchy of the Uniate Church introduced at the end of the seventeenth century, their only significant institutions the Uniate seminary and schools established from the 1730s in the little Transylvanian town of Blaj. For the Austrian army officer Demian in 1804, ‘the whole external appearance of the Wallachs’, as he called the Romanians:

betrays the inclination to intemperance of every kind. The low, prematurely wrinkled forehead, the brown unkempt hair hanging over the eyes, the thick bushy eyebrows and small rolling eyes, the lean faces overgrown by beard and moustache and the bony bodies fully reflect the wild spirit that animates them.¹³

Yet ironically the ugly name Wallach (cognate with Welsh) was originally used by German speakers to connote aliens they associated with the Roman empire, and in 1774 the Uniate priest Samuel Clajn elaborated the theory of the continuity of Romanian settlement in their present lands from the time of the Roman province of Dacia (AD 107–270). Whatever the truth – and Hungarian historians see

evidence of a Romanian presence only from the twelfth century – by the eighteenth century Romanians were a majority both in this province and the adjacent parts of Hungary. They remained, however, excluded from the power-sharing Transylvanian pact of 1437 between Magyars, Magyar-speaking Szeklers and German Saxons. The remoteness of the ‘Wallachs’ from the predominant power is illustrated by the failure of the government-sponsored Uniate Church to wean most of these predominantly upland herdsmen away from their Orthodox traditions, a failure recognised when Maria Theresa appointed a Transylvanian Orthodox bishop in 1761. His subordination to the Serb-controlled see of Karlowitz was in the spirit of an empire where everything, including ethnicity, was ranked hierarchically.

There were two Habsburg territories in the eighteenth century which could not easily be classified in terms of the core Monarchy’s feudal code. Lombardy and the Austrian Netherlands were detached socially and politically as well as geographically from east-central Europe. With their large towns, powerful patriciates, prestigious French and Italian speech – and in the Belgian case provincial estates and charters of liberty like the Brabant *joyeuse entrée* – they were on the whole loyal to a distantly benign authority which saw them as a source of loans and taxes, but was content to step these up by Belgian piecemeal measures or the more ambitious Lombard land tax reform. Completed in 1760, it is considered a major achievement of eighteenth-century statecraft.

The Monarchy just described was one which defies much modern conventional wisdom about pre-industrial ‘traditional’ society. Contemporary accounts reveal a world little less febrile than our own. Thousands of Czech artisans scoured western Europe, Slovaks hawked their goods all over Hungary, 30% of rural Austrians – mainly the poor – changed home annually, Romanians swarmed back and forth between Transylvania and Wallachia-Moldavia, Serbs migrated in their tens of thousands from the Monarchy to the Ukraine. Ethnicity, far from taking the back seat certain theories lead us to expect, was a matter of frequent and blatant generalisation, often as a tool of social explanation, whether in the fifty years by which Bohemian Slavs were held to be behind Bohemian Germans or the centuries seen between the Romanians and their neighbours. Modern readers attuned to see the very stuff of crisis in ethno-cultural differentials will readily deduce – correctly with hindsight – the fragility of any authority operating in this treacherous terrain.

This was not the perspective of eighteenth-century writers, largely, of course, from dominant groups, because their experience to that point told them differently. For contemporary commentators the fact that very diverse populations lived under the rule of tiny elites bred not apprehension but confidence. If authority had successfully maintained itself so far in these circumstances, what could it not do when reinforced by the new administrative mechanisms, technology and information of an age of unprecedented intellectual activity? The eighteenth century was a high noon of governmental optimism because advancing civilisation was consolidating the elites without yet consolidating the masses. Whether it was a matter of Irish Protestants or the German Baltic barons, Swedish speakers in Helsinki or German speakers in Prague, the various ‘ascendancies’ followed a natural tendency of human nature and envisaged more of the same. Conscious of the vast human toil taking place beneath them and growingly aware that it could be more efficiently directed; intellectually better informed and psychologically more secure, they felt increasingly able to engage in the constructive as well as the repressive deployment of power. Judged by the standards of a later age the eighteenth century was still far from law-abiding. Maria Theresa’s reign was peppered by peasant outbursts. But what is significant about these events is that they were no longer seen as inevitable hazards of government or fruits of original sin, but as evidence of defects in the social order which could and should be put right. The extreme diversity and decentralisation of the Habsburg Monarchy became part of the syndrome of backwardness which had to be addressed if the Monarchy was to remain competitive in a changing continent. The case for Enlightened absolutism came to seem overwhelming.

Towards an Austrian Enlightenment?

Two factors thus underlie the Austrian reform movement of the eighteenth century, associated with the reigns of Maria Theresa (1740–80) and Joseph II (1780–90). One was the need to remedy the weaknesses shown in the War of Austrian Succession (1740–48), through an overhaul of the Monarchy’s army and finances in anticipation of renewed conflict. Such conflict was all the more likely because the balance of power aimed at in contemporary international politics was continually threatened by the decline of Poland and Turkey, potential candidates for partition. The other spur to

reform was the European Enlightenment: growing secularisation of outlook, increasing confidence in reason as the arbiter of human problems, finally the development of a government-friendly central European variant of these potentially very radical western ideas. All this provided the psychological background and the intellectual basis for change.

These twin factors, the pragmatic and the ideological, have often been set against each other in attempts to explain the reforms. Were they not designed to strengthen the state rather than satisfy enlightened consciences? True, for Maria Theresa overwhelmingly so, but the antithesis seems too sharp. The question is not whether rulers wish to strengthen their states – naturally, they do – but what means they think will have this effect. Nor does one have to prove that politicians followed exactly the blue-print of a *philosophe* to demonstrate intellectual influence. It is more a matter of the assumptions behind a policy and the framework of reference within which it is formulated. This is the context in which the case for an Austrian Enlightened absolutism should be probed.

The transmission of ideas is usually indirect. The west European Enlightenment, with its democratic Rousseau and its atheist d'Holbach could not be transposed lock, stock and barrel to Austria, which had, besides, its own reform tradition, the 'cameralist' advocacy from the late seventeenth century of state-sponsored economic development. Even the north German version of Christian Wolff (1679–1754), which transformed the monarch from feudal *primus inter pares* to sovereign agent of the common good, obliging him only to observe the rule of law, was partly tainted by its Protestant origins. True, from the 1730s Austrian nobles were abandoning the Jesuit colleges for education in German Protestant universities. By the 1760s the influence of the Saxon and Prussian Enlightenment was very strong in nearby Bohemia. The Catholic historian Maass has stressed the role of neo-Protestant rationalism in weakening the Counter-Reformation legacy which had been the ideological cement of early modern Austria. But also at work here were traditions native to Catholicism itself, which paralleled certain Protestant or rationalist motifs: Austrian Gallicanism, or the pursuit of an Erastian state Church by Austrian rulers; Febronianism, a movement in German Catholicism for conciliar rather than Papal government of the Church and, most interesting, Jansenism, a tendency officially condemned by Rome but which continued to influence forms of spirituality in much of Catholic Europe.

Jansenism was an austere creed with Calvinist overtones, reliant on Grace rather than the flamboyant external devotions of Baroque piety, on plain Sunday worship rather than saints' days and processions. It reached Austria partly from the Low Countries and partly from Italy, the Jansenist-inclined Italian priest Muratori's *True Devotion* being published eight times in Vienna between 1752 and 1795. Archbishop Trautson of Vienna (1750–57) echoed Muratori when he lamented that priests talked more to their flock of the rosary than of Jesus Christ. His successor, Migazzi, wrote the foreword to the 1762 edition of *True Devotion*. A third of Austrian bishops had Jansenist sympathies in the 1760s, as did Maria Theresa's influential doctor Gerhard van Swieten. The Jansenists' main critics, the Jesuit order, were in eclipse, with their Piarist rivals in the educational field leading a movement for stress on the mother tongue, modern languages and the natural sciences in the schools. It is in the fusion of a reconceived piety and up-to-date intellectual motifs, drawn in part from Protestant models, that an Austrian Catholic Enlightenment may be seen emerging in the 1760s, championed by men like the charismatic Karl Heinrich Seibt, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Prague. Seibt's inaugural lecture on 'The Influence of Education on the Happiness of the State' set forth the goal of an Austria catching up and outstripping her Protestant neighbours under the impact of an intellectually open, recharged Catholicism. The sense of the need for a new broom was enhanced by reformers' disquiet at what they felt to be the excesses of Counter-Reformation religion, including such sensitive issues as the enforced reconversion of Bohemia. The psychological parallel is, perhaps, with the reform communism of the early, heady days of Soviet *perestroika*.

In its hostility to inherited forms of religion Reform Catholicism, as it has been called, could imply a critique also of old feudal norms, a dawning individualism. Muratori criticised the proliferation of saints' days because they prevented workers from earning an honest penny. Values were being reshaped, as the Habsburg Monarchy participated in the beginnings of a European demographic upsurge and an economic expansion which has yet to be reversed. The upsurge in the population of the Hungarian lands from some four million in 1720 to nine and a half million in 1787, and trebling of Bohemia's population to 2.6 million between 1648 and 1771, may be explained in large part by recovery from war and devastation, the smaller advance in the Alpine provinces more tentatively by agricultural prosperity in the first half of the century.

Whatever the cause the result was the swelling of the percentage of cottars, small-holders, labourers and also of the outright destitute over the century. In 1727 a twelfth of the people of Upper Austria were recorded as beggars. Though what evidence exists shows that eighteenth-century beggars were disproportionately elderly and female, it was the growth in the able-bodied poor which caused alarm and linked poverty with delinquency in contemporary minds. A Chancellery proposal of 1770 for houses of correction in the Moravian capital Brünn (modern Brno) destined it for criminal delinquents, rebels, serfs, beggars, vagabonds and the mad and infirm – an interesting association of ideas.¹⁴ From mid-century the Monarchy saw a rapid development of government-sponsored workhouses, orphanages, foundling hospitals, spinning schools and ‘houses of care’, showing both concern to maintain social discipline and a tacit recognition that the welfare role hitherto exercised by the Church was passing to the state. Respect for earlier forms of paternalism was weakening. The otherwise conservative Upper Austrian Baron Hellenbach in 1742 accused nobles who supported begging of thinking only of the revenue they gained from beggars’ over-indulgence in noble-owned taverns, and of the fines they could impose for the subsequent mayhem. While the Moravian authorities in 1685 had banned water-powered looms because of the unemployment they caused, in 1751 their commercial organ declared one rich man to be worth more to the state than ten paupers.¹⁵

Some recent historians, aware of the social context of Enlightened absolutist policies, have seen them as the response of fearful rulers to mounting pressures from below, a kind of Foucaultesque exercise in social control. This oversimplifies what was happening. Alongside the undoubted desire of eighteenth-century rulers to maintain social discipline there was also a novel confidence in the problem-solving power of the new institutional forms that were being copied across Europe. Moreover, if what has been said above is correct, the path of reform had been smoothed in part at least by the weakening of communitarian, externalised forms of piety in favour of a greater stress on rational religion and the inner sense of individual responsibility. English Methodism and German Pietism provide certain parallels here.

Perhaps such attitudes can be related to what Sandgruber, the historian of Austrian consumerism, believes to be the paradox of the eighteenth century: that consumption was increasing though real wages did not rise. People seem to have been working harder.

Bemusingly long as the traditional artisan day was, allowance must be made for the numerous religious festivals, reduction of which in 1771 led indignant Viennese workers to institutionalise ‘Blue Monday’ or the long week-end. By contrast, the new state institutions and ‘manufactories’ ran a strict and formidable regime – a 5 a.m. rise in the Wiener Neustadt military academy, founded in 1752, up to 16 hours a day for textile manufactory workers. Harder work may have meant more labour was needed to make both ends meet, but also that rewards and work opportunities were available for extra effort, as consumer evidence implies. In fact, the Habsburg economy was growing and certain of its features, like the expansion of domestic industry in the countryside, fit all the above suppositions. Economic growth was more a matter of better organisation and transport than of technical innovation. Non-agrarian wealth remained preponderantly mercantile rather than industrial and manufacture was mainly a matter of noble not bourgeois initiative. The eighteenth century still saw more plans for infrastructural development on paper – particularly of canals – than were put into effect. But significant things were done. Extending the navigability of the river Sava so that Banat grain could reach the Adriatic and opening the Danube to the Black Sea (the first Danube shipping ordinance was issued in 1770) helped quintuple Hungarian wheat exports and almost sextuple its wool exports between 1748 and 1782. Croatia’s 48 fairs became 187 in the second half of the century. The role of Balkan Orthodox merchants in Hungary and in Trieste, extending their commercial networks via the great grain markets of Pest to Vienna and beyond, was paralleled by the French, Italian and German merchants of Vienna, whose monopoly of the wholesale trade came increasingly to be shared with native Austrians. This development of inter-regional trade helped stimulate proto-industrialisation and population growth in the German Austrian provinces and particularly in the infertile mountain rim of German-speaking Bohemia, with its long-standing traditions of domestic industry in textiles.

Initiatives were also being taken in agriculture, though only by the big estates. The first Austrian provincial agricultural associations were founded in the 1760s. Trained estate officials began to propagate west European notions of root crops, systematic manuring and breed improvement; on the Schwarzenberg estate, manager Petr Světecký broached the question of dividing the lord’s demesne among his tenantry, under the influence of French *physiocratic* ideas of the benefits of a prosperous peasantry. Likewise, from the middle

of the century a professionalisation of Hungarian estate management can be seen. The result in Hungary was the reversal of the previous pattern of higher peasant rather than noble productivity, with noble estates overseeing the gradual transition from stock-rearing to arable, if not yet displacing the primacy of cattle and wine (a largely peasant product) in Hungarian exports.

Much of the expertise on which these methods drew stemmed from bourgeois scholarship. In Prague, a private Learned Society grouped a remarkably talented bunch of mathematicians, statisticians, botanists and geologists, while early travelogues of Hungary were largely written by geologists on terrain. The role of the sciences as adjuncts of economic development was reflected in the foundation of new university chairs and in the advance of engineering studies. The 24 engineering students in Prague University in 1767 became 200 by 1780 and a thousand by the end of the century. A secular-minded bourgeois intelligentsia was emerging in Vienna and Prague which developed literary as well as scientific interests. Johann Trattner, Vienna's leading publisher, was the first man of bourgeois origin to build on the grand scale in the city. The works in which he specialised were those of the German Enlightenment, fostering notions of the 'simplicity' and 'naturalness' of German bourgeois culture by contrast to the 'artificiality' of aristocratic French or Italian tastes.

Reform Catholicism, economic expansion and the emergence of bourgeois culture were separate but not unrelated aspects of a society in transition, which shared certain features with European, more particularly, central European ideas. Some character sketches will illustrate the nature and scope of what may, then, be called the Austrian Enlightenment.

Prince Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz (1711–94), Maria Theresa's State Chancellor from 1752 – effectively her foreign minister – was a member of a Germanised Moravian noble family. A self-proclaimed *philosophe* and exemplar of the Enlightenment's love of rational system, whose very foibles were enlightened – he kept windows permanently shut for fear of germs – his liberalism nonetheless stopped short of the idea of the career open to talent: 'a nation can be great if education corresponding to each class of citizens offers youth a healthy and clear idea of its obligations', as he once remarked.¹⁶ Kaunitz engineered the 'Diplomatic Revolution' of 1756 by which Habsburg Austria ended its long feud with Bourbon France and concentrated its fire on crushing the Prussia of Frederick the Great,

though failure here confirmed him in the view that the true strength of a state lay in internal prosperity and the gradual removal of ‘prejudices’. This was the man who once received the Pope in his dressing-gown and shook the hand outstretched for him to kiss. A grand seigneur who was as at home in French as in German and had sixteen courses served for dinner, though personally abstemious, Kaunitz showed how new thinking could penetrate to the heart of the Habsburg state but in necessarily circumscribed form.

While great nobles continued to occupy the highest offices of state, the theoretical underpinning of their reforms was usually provided by men of bourgeois origin. Men like the Vienna University law professors Martini, Riegger and Justi, advocates of ideas of ‘Natural Law’ based, it was believed, on universally applicable principles, were public figures, active as members of government commissions, authors of textbooks and memoranda and tutors of the nobility. The career of the Professor of Politics at Vienna, Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732–1817), son of a Jewish rabbi who had converted to Catholicism, shows both the range and the limitations of a reform movement allied to an absolutist state. Sonnenfels’s adaptation of Rousseauist terms like ‘social contract’ and ‘civil society’ to mean the individual’s duty to submit his will to the common good was pure enlightened despotism. But his insistence that the state existed to seek ‘the best’ for its people implied a right to popular self-fulfilment which struck a different note, while his elevation of subjects to the status of ‘citizens’ (*Bürger*) subtly altered the nature of nobility. Though nobles’ leading role was not questioned, they functioned implicitly for Sonnenfels as an interest group in ‘civil society’ whose privileges needed to be justified through their mastery of enlightened principles of government. In fact, Sonnenfels tended to take the bourgeois values of the German Enlightenment as the standard for a civil society. In his work as a theatrical censor he opposed both the Viennese tradition of low-life comedy and the French dramas favoured by the upper classes. In this he was true to the growing earnestness of the age.

Also a government employee, Ignaz Born (1742–91) is a striking representative of contemporary scientific advances. Born was a Transylvanian Saxon, educated in Vienna and Prague, who entered the state mining administration and became a geologist, mineralogist and chemist of international repute, an early advocate of the volcanic theory of mountain origin and of the significance of fossils for the study of climate in the past. Dismissing as myth the Biblical story of the flood, which a Jesuit academic rival sought to prove,

and supporting Bohemian historians who were similarly demythologising Czech origins, Born was the prime mover in the foundation of the Learned Society in Prague around 1773, ancestor of the Czech Academy of Sciences; if Iceland and Siberia had been subjected to scholarly enquiry, he complained, then why not Austria?¹⁷ Born left Prague to become head of the imperial natural history collections and a leading Viennese Freemason. He lives on as the model for Sarastro in Mozart's *Magic Flute*.

In Kaunitz, by descent a Germanised Slav, Sonnenfels, of Prussian Jewish stock, and the Transylvanian Saxon Born, active in Prague and Vienna, we see how by the last third of the eighteenth century the Habsburg Monarchy had acquired a dominant 'high culture', German in speech though varied in origin and united in the desire to emulate or adapt the experience of its more advanced neighbours. But it was confined very largely to the aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie. The bulk of the Hungarian nobility remained untouched. There was little intellectual friskiness in the 1764 Hungarian Diet's condemnation of a pro-absolutist treatise as being contaminated with the Jansenist heresy, the 'liberal' principles of Grotius, the 'sacrilegious' errors of Luther and the 'godless' doctrines of Machiavelli and Hobbes. Nor were the beleaguered leaders of the Protestant minority, clinging to a narrow religious orthodoxy, the natural allies of new thinking, as the innovative Debrecen college mathematician Hatvani found in a career of uneasy trimming with his superiors. In Croatia Count Oršić's diary in the 1770s expressed the nobility's nostalgia for rustic paternalism and resentment of the first bourgeois lawyers appearing in their midst. In Vienna itself supercilious Protestant observers like the Englishman Wraxall and the Prussian Nicolai mocked the superstition and shallowness of Austrian high society.

But should such outsiders be allowed the last word? In its own terms the Monarchy in the later eighteenth century showed certain novel traits, with some evidence of their penetration even beyond elite circles. The Czech peasant judge and diarist Vavák did not drink, derived a basic Christianity from his Bible reading, wrote a Czech-language agricultural handbook and dedicated himself, in short, to state service and improvement with exemplary seriousness. The two parts of the very popular *Satire* (1762–79) of the Croatian Military Frontier officer Matija Antun Reljković lambasted the 'prejudices and bad customs' of his countrymen and extolled the glass windows, state-built roads and government-recommended bee-keeping and silk-worm techniques that passed for modernity in his

world. Among the Serbs Zaharije Orfelin and Dositej Obradović challenged monkish obscurantism in a language reflecting common speech rather than the Russianate jargon of earlier writers. What should not be lost sight of is that Habsburg subjects were becoming more used to the concept of a regulating, provident state. The reports of Count Pergen, first Austrian Governor of Galicia, are a sustained diatribe against arrogant, exploitative nobles, lazy, ignorant priests, unsanitary towns without trained midwives and regulated apothecaries, and much more.

Is this evidence of an Austrian Enlightenment? Sceptics would say that Pergen was a pragmatic politician who was to show the unenlightened face of absolutism as Joseph II's minister of police. There is another way of looking at it. Is it not significant that the pragmatic Pergen's assumptions about his targets, whether nobles, priests or public provision, mirrored those of 'enlightened' discourse? His reports show how far by the 1770s Austrian absolutism had taken on an enlightened tinge. The foundations of modern Habsburg policy, with its curious mix of authoritarianism and benevolence, were already being laid.

The Maria Theresan Reforms

This is the background to the reform movement which gained speed on the conclusion of the War of Austrian Succession in 1748. The immediate motives were wholly practical. The fissiparous tendencies visible at the start of Maria Theresa's reign needed to be checked and parlous state finances strengthened for future struggles, which duly followed in the Seven Years' War of 1756–63. The architect of the first bout of reform in 1748–49, the cameralist-influenced Count F.W. Haugwitz, was no more interested in the *philosophes* than the Empress. She herself was a clear-headed, strong-minded woman, less concerned with speculative ideas than her faith, her authority and the sixteen children she had with her husband Francis Stephen, a sportsman with an entrepreneurial streak who left the politics to his wife. As well as raising the level of the *contributio* to support a standing army of 108,000 men in the Hereditary Lands, Haugwitz got the Diets to grant it every ten years instead of annually, merged the affairs of these lands under a common Directory and set up provincial executives responsible to Vienna, not the Diets. A Supreme Court in Vienna followed in 1751, whose work on unifying legal codes further

threatened provincial distinctiveness. For that reason a rearguard action delayed the publication of the first definitive section of the pan-Austrian Civil Code till 1786, while the interim Theresan penal code of 1766 contained many traditional features, including provision for torture and crimes of blasphemy and sorcery. Indeed, provincial sentiment brought back some old estate offices in a splitting up of the cumbersome Directory in 1760–62, though the key provincial demand for the restoration of the Bohemian Chancellery, abolished by Haugwitz, was refused. The guiding spirit of government was now the ostentatiously enlightened Kaunitz, prime mover behind the State Council (*Staatsrat*) set up in 1761 with an advisory brief for the Monarchy as a whole. The downgrading of the provinces was thus confirmed, though Diet standing committees retained a certain importance as conduits of provincial credit to a hard-pressed centre, and detailed legislation was still enacted separately in individual provinces, with local circumstances taken into account.

At first this invigorated government was chiefly concerned to prevent nobles from weakening their peasants' tax-paying capacity. The extension elsewhere of the Bohemian system of appointed officials at district (*Kreis*) level gave Vienna the means to check noble appropriation of peasant land, since though noble land was taxed from 1748 it was so at a lower rate. Even before Kaunitz, however, measures in other fields were less overtly utilitarian. The simplification of church mourning ritual, the banning of trumpets in church processions, the attack on Jesuit dominance in the universities from 1749, the increasingly liberal policies followed by the Court Censorship Commission set up in 1752 all spoke to the rejection of Baroque tradition. It was the Censorship Commission's chairman, the Jansenist doctor Gerhard van Swieten, who examined and absolved an alleged Croatian witch whose sentence Maria Theresa queried in 1758, with the words that other countries did not persecute witches and trials against them were trials against herself.

By the second half of the reign peasant protection took on a more comprehensive character. The state began to intervene directly in the landlord–serf relationship and to adopt the physiocratic standpoint that a prosperous peasantry should be a prime concern of government. Though this reflected awareness that financing future wars would have to rely less on foreign mercenaries and English subsidies, the leading government specialist on peasant matters in the 1760s, Franz Anton von Blanc, actually argued in terms of Natural Law that peasants' right to subsistence came before their obligations to

lord and state. Maria Theresa's motives were more mixed. She would not, she once said, risk eternal damnation by being deterred from just policies by a few selfish nobles; but she also believed in a hierarchical society and distrusted peasants for their periodic recalcitrance. The outcome was a see-saw in government–noble relations in which peasant upheavals were regularly turned against obstructive Diets and made the occasion for reforming government intervention, whether in the Patents of Slavonia in 1758, Hungary in 1767, Bohemia in 1775 or Silesia in 1778. Such Patents codified the levels of *robot* which nobles could demand, while other measures chipped away at their rights of preemption of peasant produce, limited the various inheritance charges they could impose and broadened peasants' security of tenure. Most innovative of all, the so-called Raab system introduced on Crown estates in Bohemia from 1775 abolished *robot* altogether and distributed the demesne among rent-paying tenants. It pointed to a post-feudal organisation of the land, along English lines.

The peasant majority was to be educated so that it might learn its responsibilities. The principle of general education was declared in Austria in 1774 and in Hungary in 1777. Schools were to be graded, with one- or two-class schools in villages and small towns, three-class 'main schools' in larger towns and four-class 'normal schools' with teacher training facilities in provincial centres. It was a characteristic of the Austrian Enlightenment to concentrate on primary education for the masses as opposed to the Latin schools for the higher classes. For practical reasons, however, clergy continued to play a leading role in the new educational initiatives though the guiding spirits were men of Reform Catholic stamp, like the author of the 1774 education scheme, Abbot Johann Ignaz Felbiger, bringing Protestant Pietist influences from his native Silesia.

Traditionally minded clerics found the atmosphere more hostile, particularly after the creation of an Ecclesiastical Department in the United Court Chancellery (the main successor body to Haugwitz's Directory) in 1769. Its head, the ennobled bourgeois F.J. Heinke, supported the Erastian policies Kaunitz had already been pursuing in the Duchy of Milan. Both men viewed the Church as an association, albeit the highest, in the state and thus subject to state supervision in all but purely spiritual matters, which they defined quite narrowly. Thus both claimed that many features of church life post-dated the pristine model of early Christianity, like monasticism, 'this reckless contrivance against all the rights of nature', as Heinke put it.¹⁸ While the Pope grudgingly accepted the reduction of the

number of saints' days (1771) and himself dissolved the Jesuit order in 1773, the restrictions on entering the monastic life and the state appropriation of the property of Jesuits and of religious brotherhoods were imposed unilaterally. State interests here led the pious Maria Theresa to align herself with 'enlightened' positions. But as Catholic and sovereign she rejected religious pluralism. At the end of her reign she rejected the strong pleas of Kaunitz and Joseph to grant open toleration to crypto-Protestant communities in Moravia.

Ideological considerations apart, the Church's resources would have exposed it to pressures from a needy government – though a modern estimate of Jesuit annual income sets it at only a million florins. Maria Theresa shared the view that the Church's wealth was not being put to the best public good. Better economic management as a source of indirect taxation was a potent theme at a time when the share of direct taxation in spiralling state budgets was falling sharply despite Haugwitz's pressure tactics, which Kaunitz criticised. Charles VI under cameralist influence had built roads and 'manufactories'. Energising progress came, though, under his daughter, with new commercial councils at central and provincial level, the former successively revamped from 1746, tariff unification of most of the Austro-Bohemian lands (1775), institutions like the Mining Academy at Schemnitz (Banská Štiavnica) in northern Hungary and government sponsorship of a Trieste that trebled in size. Progress seems to have come mainly after 1770 when the state turned from direct subsidy or monopoly to more indirect benefits in terms of tax relief, grants of sites and favourable access to labour and raw materials, which did more to stimulate as yet slender entrepreneurial talent. But the trend to the bourgeois professional over the reign is unmistakable in the ranks of central government itself – though such employment usually brought ennoblement. There were eight counts among the 24 members of the Directory in 1754 and only one in the fifteen members of the United Court Chancellery in 1775.

Symptomatic of government's growing coherence were military innovations, which gave the army its famous black-gold colours (1745), standardised its uniforms (1750), introduced conscription districts (1770), raised young lieutenants' pay and restricted the rights of high-born regimental patrons over corporal punishment and promotions. A pension fund was also established for invalid officers. The prohibition of duelling, however, remained a dead letter; no doubt the unification of the officer corps brought about by ennobling its commoner members entailed more traditional values.

Although some innovations were weakly rooted (like the general staff introduced in 1758) and they hardly touched the harsh lot of the common soldier, the army which became so closely associated with the dynasty in its subjects' consciousness was taking shape.

Embourgeoisement, commercial policy and a well-funded army, like much else, ran up against one strong barrier. It was Hungary, though even there expanding technical services of government led to 430 ennoblements over the reign. While certain central policies – in education, for example – were loyally implemented in Hungary, the most important, like the ending of noble immunity from taxation, were not. Austrian opinion was sharp. Vienna's resentment was focused on the Hungarian *contributio*, limited by noble tax exemption to less than half that of the Bohemian lands alone in 1749, though royal cameral revenues and army provisioning profits from Hungary partly made up for the relative Hungarian short-fall. The key to inconsistencies in Hungary's relations with the rest of the Monarchy in these years probably lies in the Empress's own attitudes, which combined a fund of goodwill, based on Hungarian loyalty against Prussia in 1741, with the strong sense of her own authority that she showed also towards the Church. Thus while restoring large areas detached from Hungary's southern flank during the time of Turkish threat, Maria Theresa summoned only three Hungarian Diets in forty years. After the last of these had declined cooperation she imposed her own Urbarium or Patent of 1767, limiting *robot*a for a full peasant with a plough team to a day a week and extending the right of appeal to the royal courts held by Austrian peasants to Hungary. Perhaps the most notorious example of the colonial relationship of which Hungarian historians have complained was the subordination of Hungary's economic interests in the tariff arrangements of 1775, which placed heavy duties on Hungarian exports outside the Monarchy and discriminated in favour of Austrian products within. No attempt was made to develop Hungarian manufactures. Between 1760 and 1790 86% of Hungary's commerce was with her wealthier Austrian neighbour.

The Hungarian case shows best that Maria Theresa did not pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of the unitary state. Despite the administrative 'revolution' of 1748–49, administrative structures remained forbiddingly complex. Government performed unevenly. In some spheres – the numbering of all houses for military recruiting (1770), effective border quarantine procedures (1773), the regulation of local food prices – it could be surprisingly efficient; a request

of 17 November 1773 from the butchers of Eperjes (Prešov) in north-east Hungary for a meadow for a cattle reserve was answered by 6 December after being processed at several levels up to the Empress herself.¹⁹ But all attempts to avert the Bohemian famine of 1771–72 failed dismally. The overall objective of the reforms, to restore the state without state bankruptcy, was hardly reached. Though the Monarchy put 250,000 troops of a retrained army into the field by 1760, its leaders' cautious tactics and the fall-off of allied support allowed Frederick to end the Seven Years' War in possession of all but a strip of Silesia. Though regular revenues rose from 20 million florins to 50 million over the reign, the cost of the abortive Austro-Prussian War over the Bavarian succession in 1778–79, in which hardly any fighting occurred, was nearly 65 million. Over 40% of the peace-time budget went on the army and a further quarter on interest on the state debt. Less than 1% apiece went on education, trade support and civic public works. The failure to acquire Bavaria or reacquire largely German-speaking Silesia assumes significance against Austrian Germans' nineteenth-century inability to match their cultural and economic power with democratic weight of numbers. The Monarchy's Slavic element was reinforced by its participation in the first partition of Poland, agreed between Austria, Prussia and Russia in 1772. Characteristically, the pious, practical Maria Theresa thought the partition immoral but was unwilling to be left out.

Mixed as it is, this record does not seem quite to justify the view that Maria Theresa is more appropriately viewed as an 'active feudal ruler'²⁰ than against her Enlightenment context. This chapter has sought to show that a decline in support for feudal values and institutions aided acceptance of the claims of monarchical absolutism in the Habsburg lands. In exercising these claims Maria Theresa drew on many advisers of enlightened persuasion, whose sometimes quite radical schemes benefited from government's freedom from public control. Her reign marked a transition from the court-orientated society of the Austrian Baroque, with its union of throne, altar and aristocracy, to the post-feudal vision of her son. Like all times of transition it had its share of compromises and unresolved tensions: between the Empress, Kaunitz and Joseph, between a common Monarchy and Hungarian autonomy, between serfdom and citizenship and a state religion and freedom of conscience. The foundations of a new Austria were being laid, but with many ambiguities and limitations. To no-one were these more irksome than to Maria Theresa's

co-ruler, son and heir – Joseph himself – with whose brief and turbulent reign the long dénouement of modern Habsburg history may be said to begin.

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Note: In the case of first names, the native form has been preferred (for example, *Karl*, not *Charles*) except for sovereigns, where I have followed what seems to be the actual spoken usage in British English: thus, *Franz Joseph* but *Emperor Charles*. Where I have found a basis in Austrian or contemporary English use, *Baron* has been used rather than *Freiherr* in titles.

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