

deal with them. That the monarchy's rulers quickly and successfully met all but the last of these challenges attests to their competence and – in the last case – to the high stakes that were involved. Nor is it mere coincidence that each chapter of this book is built around the first six of these crises that occurred before 1815. This is because each chapter deals with a major stage in the monarchy's development, and each stage hinged in turn on the resolution of a crisis, a turning point in the monarchy's evolution on which its very survival depended. In the end the monarchy emerged stronger and more secure from the successful resolution of each of these challenges. Indeed, the monarchy's greatest crises tended to precede its greatest achievements.

2 The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648)

The monarchy and the "general crisis"

The difficulties posed by the monarchy's diversity and exposed central European position preoccupied its rulers throughout its history. These problems were, however, compounded by other challenges that confronted it and much of the rest of European society at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Over the past generation most historians have accepted the notion that Europe was then in the throes of a "General Crisis" as it tried to adjust to the dramatic developments that had taken place over the previous century. The economy was changed forever by the dramatic expansion in trade and by the inflation, or "price revolution," caused by the influx of silver from the New World. Europe had heretofore had a predominantly barter- and subsistence-oriented agrarian economy controlled by land-owning nobles, but worked by their peasant labor force. It now began slowly converting to a money- and market-oriented economy controlled by the bourgeoisie and other capitalist elements seeking higher profits from trade and industry, as well as from agriculture. International relations were revolutionized by the sudden emergence of the new Habsburg world empire and the almost perpetual wars between it and its two natural enemies, France and the Ottoman empire. The need to feed the resulting arms race transformed domestic politics into a struggle between rulers and their people over the power to tax. Finally, the monarchs' concern for the security of their realms extended to their growing insistence on religious uniformity among their subjects, lest the growth of heresy inspire rebellion or civil war. The Austrian Habsburg monarchy faced all of these problems by the opening decades of the seventeenth century.

The economic crisis

As they entered the seventeenth century the Habsburgs needed to gain greater control over taxation, but first had to decide on whose shoulders the burden would fall. Whatever course they took the monarchy itself was not

without the economic means to support an active role on the international stage. It is true that the Habsburg dominions never enjoyed either the commercial or manufacturing infrastructure of maritime societies such as England or the Netherlands, or the well-balanced economy of France. But they were not economically backward by the standards of the rest of the continent. The Bohemian lands provided the monarchy with a populous and productive manufacturing center that was complemented by the textile and iron industries of Upper Austria and Styria. The monarchy also enjoyed a firm agricultural base, especially in Silesia, the two archduchies, and its share of the Hungarian plain. Meanwhile, the mountains of the Tyrol, Inner Austria, Bohemia, and Upper Hungary made the monarchy one of Europe's foremost producers of over a half dozen different key minerals. Admittedly its regional economies tended to operate independently of one another and were not yet integrated by a single economic policy, but this was hardly as much of a problem as the monarchy's political, administrative, and cultural divisions.

The early seventeenth century was, nonetheless, a difficult time for the monarchy's economy. Although they may have been in the very heart of the continent geographically, the Habsburg dominions were no longer at the center of its trade routes. Expansion overseas had sharply reduced Europe's dependence on overland commerce originating in Italy and the Mediterranean in favor of the Atlantic sea lanes. The shift was felt most in the Tyrol, but also hurt the rest of the Austrian and Bohemian lands. The influx of American silver and gold also hurt the monarchy's mining economy, as did the increased extraction of Scandinavian copper and iron. Meanwhile, Hungary had been particularly devastated by the wars and constant border raids that followed the Turkish invasion. Losses in population, livestock, and crops were especially severe during the Fifteen Years' War (1593–1606), as the enemy began deploying armies of over 100,000 men, including thousands of particularly savage Mongol tribesmen. Nor was the damage restricted to Royal Hungary. Turkish attacks across the Austrian, Moravian, and Silesian frontiers were so frequent that towns typically erected bell towers, or *Türkenglocken*, to warn them of the approaching enemy.

Perhaps the most damaging development was the European price revolution. In the short term, inflation brought handsome increases in the profit to be made from exporting agricultural and other commodities to central and western Europe. In every part of the monarchy noble landowners endeavored to enter this market by increasing production of various products for export. Nowhere was this entrepreneurial spirit greater than in Hungary. Like their counterparts in the other sparsely populated lands of Christian eastern Europe, Hungary's landowners jumped at the opportunity by increasing the production of grain, wine, and livestock. By the middle of

the sixteenth century the kingdom's *hayducks* were driving an average of 50,000 and sometimes as many as 100,000 livestock west each year. But the emphasis on commodity production came at the expense of ignoring investment in manufacturing. As a result the kingdom became wholly dependent on the import of finished goods, including all but the coarsest textiles, and even copper products that had been mined in Upper Hungary but refined and fashioned elsewhere. It ultimately paid dearly for its over-reliance on food production when, in the opening decades of the seventeenth century, a downturn in the central European economy brought a 50 percent decline in grain and livestock prices.

But the gravest consequences of the conversion to a market economy were borne not by Hungarian noble entrepreneurs, but by the entire monarchy's peasants and townspeople. In order to enhance profits landowners throughout the Habsburg lands strove to maximize productivity. This was by no means an unmitigated catastrophe since, among other things, it inspired greater efficiency in the organization and administration of increasingly large estates. It also led to the experimental cultivation of new crops, such as silk in Lower Austria and Moravia. In parts of Bohemia, noble entrepreneurs even constructed and stocked huge artificial lakes for the purpose of commercially breeding carp and pike. Estate owners in Lusatia, Silesia, and Bohemia also encouraged peasant households to supplement their income by spinning and weaving cloth for export to Germany. With the help of German, English, and Dutch middlemen, a small but productive cottage textile industry had evolved on many estates by the beginning of the century. But noble entrepreneurs also boosted production by arbitrarily placing greater burdens on their peasants. Hardest hit were enserfed peasants who were typically already prohibited from acquiring or selling their plots, or leaving the manor without their noble overlord's permission. In order to increase their profits noble entrepreneurs throughout the monarchy worked to reduce the amount of land that their serfs farmed for themselves, while increasing the size of their own demesne land. They then increased the obligatory labor service, or *robot*, that the peasants had to perform on those demesne lands. It is difficult to make precise generalizations because of the local variations in land tenure and labor obligations. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that conditions were most onerous in Hungary, where *robot* service rose from an average of perhaps one day a week in 1500 to three to six days a century later. Peasants in the Bohemian lands and Carniola appear to have suffered almost as much from this "new feudalism" that was now based largely on market forces and capitalist profit motive. By contrast, a few areas escaped these developments, most notably the largely free peasantry of the Tyrol and Vorarlberg, as well as the privileged soldier-colonists of the Croatian Military Border.

Nor were the exploitative effects of noble capitalism limited to matters of land tenure and labor obligations. Many a noble seigneur also tended to value his peasants as a captive source of suppliers and consumers. He might require them to process their crops at the manorial mill, brewery, or other facilities, and to sell all of their produce directly to him, often at a discount, so that he could then resell it directly to agents for export at the prevailing market rate. He might also insist that his peasants make all of their own purchases in towns and villages that lay within his seigneurial jurisdiction. Commercial imperatives such as these constituted yet another imposition on the freedom of the monarchy's peasants. It posed an even greater threat to the livelihood of so-called free towns that were neither owned nor subject to the authority of the local nobility but which now lost business to competition from the neighboring manorial towns or the nobility's foreign export agents.

Like the peasants themselves, the towns were not equipped to fight back without assistance from the crown. Indeed, as they declined under the impact of war, seigneurial competition, shifting trade routes, or the lack of industrial development, the towns were losing out to the landholding nobility in the competition for royal favor. Their relative position was evident in some of the regional diets, such as Lower Austria and Hungary proper, where all of the free towns shared only a single vote. By contrast, the political ascendancy of the monarchy's greatest landholders was most vividly illustrated by the crown's decision in 1608 to grant each of Hungary's roughly one hundred magnates individual representation in the upper table of that kingdom's diet. Given the economic and political trends set in motion by the new feudalism, it was virtually inevitable that the crown would avoid a confrontation with its resurgent aristocracy; instead, it would be easier to mortgage further the monarchy's economic development by shifting a greater share of the tax burden onto the backs of its free towns and unfree peasants.

Germany, Spain, and the threat of Habsburg hegemony

A second challenge that confronted the Austrian Habsburgs was their need to establish a secure position within the European alliance system. In the past they had benefited from close relationships with both the German princes and the Spanish Habsburgs. The two associations were, however, not necessarily compatible with one another. Nor were they strengthened by the dynasty's dramatic growth over the previous century. Both branches of the dynasty had originally risen to prominence in response to the need for a regional balance of power directed primarily against France in western and the Ottoman empire in eastern Europe. Yet it had been so successful that,

by the middle of the sixteenth century, Spain had replaced its two nemeses as the principal threat to European security. As Christian Europe's second most powerful state, France could now count on receiving assistance from countries that had previously been in the Habsburg camp. Indeed, during the Protestant Reformation, several Lutheran German princes had enlisted French support against Charles V's attempts to maintain religious uniformity within the empire. The desire to rid Germany of Spanish influence was so strong that, when a defeated Charles abdicated in 1556, Catholic and Lutheran electors alike insisted on the succession of his younger brother, Roman King Ferdinand, rather than his own son, Philip II of Spain (1556–98). Emperor Ferdinand I (1556–64) and his successors managed to steer clear of Philip II's wars and, in the process, avoided crossing swords with the Spanish monarch's French, Dutch, and English enemies. Yet, as dynastic allies of Spain, the Austrian Habsburgs were still implicated in the Spanish threat to the balance of power.

The same prospect of Habsburg hegemony also troubled the dynasty's relationship with the rest of Germany. Despite gaining an upper hand in the middle ages the German princes had remained wary of the emperor's power. The dynasty's sudden emergence at the helm of not one but two large states had done nothing to assuage their fears. Indeed, many princes had used the appearance and spread of Protestantism as a weapon for undermining the authority of Charles V. Charles's troubled reign had demonstrated the need to reach an understanding with the major Protestant princes both in order to guarantee peace within the empire and to enlist their aid against the Turks. With his brother's abdication, Ferdinand I had immediately signed the Peace of Augsburg (1555), recognizing the equal right of Lutheran and Catholic princes to impose their religions on their subjects. By tolerating Lutheranism Ferdinand and his immediate successors ushered in a half-century of religious peace within Germany.

By 1600, however, the two confessions were again on the verge of open⁷ conflict. Both sides were at odds over the status of several imperial prince-bishoprics that had been declared Catholic by the Peace of Augsburg but which had since become Lutheran following the unexpected conversion of their bishops. They had also failed to resolve religious conflicts within several imperial cities. Nor had they anticipated the subsequent adoption of Calvinism by several German princes which, at the very least, added a more militant strain of Protestantism to princely politics. The prudent inaction of Ferdinand I and his successors had merely put off the inevitable conflict over the status of the disputed bishoprics and of Calvinism within the empire. Yet for the emperor to act would renew the Catholic-Protestant conflict, and at the same time excite fears that Habsburg power would be used to destroy Protestantism, if not German princely liberties altogether.

There was a sudden upsurge in Protestant paranoia when, in 1607, the emperor intervened on behalf of the Catholic minority of the imperial city of Donauwörth. The Protestants immediately reacted by forming the Evangelical Union, an armed association of nine princes and seventeen imperial cities led by the Calvinist Elector Palatine, Frederick V. Nor were princes without reason for concern. With the conversion of the lay electors of the Palatinate, Saxony, and Brandenburg the Protestants were only one vote short of controlling the next imperial election. Now, in response to the Evangelical Union, a competing Catholic League of twenty princes was created by Frederick's Wittelsbach cousin, the powerful Duke Maximilian of Bavaria. Both princely alliances were also in close contact with foreign powers. They needed only a just cause to push them over the edge into a religious civil war.

Religious conflict in the Habsburg dominions

In the end that push came from within the emperor's own dominions. The sixteenth-century Habsburgs had proven ineffective in opposing the spread of Protestantism within the monarchy. Their resistance had been tempered somewhat by humanist ideas that promoted free inquiry and Erasmian toleration. Indeed, Ferdinand's son Maximilian II (1564–76) had evinced Protestant inclinations in his own personal life and worship. His successor, the cosmopolitan Rudolph II (1576–1612), had actually turned his court at Prague into a center for unorthodox ideas and expression that ranged from unconventional art to alchemy and a genuine interest in scientific inquiry. His patronage of the Protestant émigré astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler constitute the monarchy's most significant contribution to the Scientific Revolution. But the principal reason for their timidity stemmed from what they perceived as a greater need to win the allegiance of their new subjects and mobilize popular support against the Turks. Hence, although the central government and the Habsburg archdukes who ruled Inner Austria periodically harassed their Protestant subjects, the threat of organized opposition prevented them from implementing a serious program of persecution.

By the second half of the sixteenth century the monarchy's peoples presented a confessional mosaic that reflected both Habsburg discretion and their own ethnic diversity: a majority of the German-speaking peoples of the Austrian, Hungarian, and Bohemian lands had adopted Lutheranism, as had most of Inner Austria's Slovenes and Upper Hungary's Slovaks; Vienna itself was mostly Lutheran. Hungary's Magyars had become overwhelmingly Calvinist. Although many Czechs remained nominally Catholic, most of them adhered to anti-Roman Hussite, or Utraquist, religious practices that

had found an echo in the preaching of Martin Luther; meanwhile, many Czechs had converted to Calvinism or to the even more radical Church of the Bohemian Brethren. Although Croatia proper was largely Catholic, its Military Border was a haven for Orthodox Serbs. Indeed, of all the Habsburg dominions only the Tyrol remained essentially untouched by Protestantism. The Catholic Habsburgs were now a religious minority among their own people and had been compelled by their Protestant-dominated estates to grant varying degrees of religious toleration in every crownland except the Tyrol and Croatia proper. In most instances only the nobility and residents of free towns enjoyed freedom of worship. Yet, since most nobles were already Protestant, their peasants tended to be as well.

Toleration did offer some advantages. By accepting Protestantism the Habsburgs had removed religion as a source of conflict and promoted a certain degree of coexistence among the monarchy's different peoples, such as in Silesia, where Lutherans and Catholics actually took turns sharing churches on Sunday. By defusing the religious issue they also guaranteed the loyalty and support of their Protestant estates in the continuing struggle against the monarchy's foreign enemies. But all that changed with the coming of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. The reform and renewal of the Catholic church in the second half of the sixteenth century brought an intense commitment to reconverting the millions of Christians who had become at least nominally Protestant. At first this mission was borne independently by the various religious orders, most notably the Society of Jesus, which dispatched missionaries to preach and work among the monarchy's Protestant communities. With time, as the monarchy's Catholic laity became more committed to the spirit of the Counter-Reformation and convinced of its own righteousness, it became more impatient with the Protestant majority in its midst. Finally, during the closing years of Rudolph II's reign a previously reluctant central government committed itself to action.

A number of factors finally inspired the Habsburgs to confront their Protestant subjects. Their own religious principles doubtless played a role. So did the free hand they gained following the Peace of Zsitvatorok that ended the Fifteen Years' War in 1606. Indeed, both sides felt less inhibited about fighting each other once the common Turkish threat had subsided. Finally, Rudolph II and his successor, Matthias I (1612–19), were probably inspired by developments outside the monarchy. Both had been educated at the court of Philip II of Spain, where they could not have overlooked the terrible toll that religious conflict had inflicted on such confessionally divided societies as France and the Spanish Netherlands. Indeed, beginning with them the Austrian Habsburgs appear to have become convinced that only a uniformly Catholic society could be trusted to remain steadfastly loyal

to the crown. At the same time they were doubtless encouraged by the example of their cousin, Archduke Ferdinand of Inner Austria, who had recently achieved some initial success in reintroducing Catholicism in his lands.

Whatever the causes, religious persecution began in earnest with the succession of Matthias. Although he encountered opposition everywhere, Matthias aroused the greatest resistance within Bohemia by attacking the religious concessions granted by Rudolph II's Letter of Majesty (1609). He began by rescinding the Protestants' prior right to construct places of worship on church- or crown-owned land. Then he started censoring religious publications and excluding non-Catholics from civil office. Finally, after Matthias had withdrawn their right to assemble and present grievances, Bohemia's Protestants decided to act. On 23 May 1618, following the government's destruction of two Protestant churches, a group of nobles marched into Prague's Hradcany Castle and confronted Matthias's two representatives, Vilém Slavata and Jaroslav Martinic, in their chambers. Following a heated exchange they hurled both men, plus their secretary, out of a window. As the three men fell sixty feet into the dry moat below, one of the conspirators taunted them by exclaiming "See if your Virgin Mary will help you now!" The survival of all three men, two with only superficial injuries, prompted a flurry of pamphlets claiming that eyewitnesses had seen angels swooping out of the heavens to break their fall to earth. Whether by divine intervention or sheer luck the three had, in fact, survived the celebrated Defenestration of Prague by falling onto a pile of manure that had been dumped directly under the window.

To be sure this was neither the first nor last defenestration in the city's history. The Hussites had launched their revolt by the same means two centuries earlier. Three centuries later the Communists completed their takeover by pushing Czechoslovakia's prime minister to his death (though they claimed he jumped). Likewise the Bohemian rebels of 1618 intended their actions to symbolize a clean break with the established authority. A hastily convened diet promptly elected a new government and raised an army to defend the country. It was soon joined by Silesia and the Lusatias, which sent troops, and ultimately by Moravia as well. No less ominous for the Habsburgs were the reactions of their non-Bohemian crownlands. The nobility of both archduchies and then Hungary reacted to religious persecution in their own lands by aligning themselves with the Bohemians for mutual defense against the dynasty. As Matthias looked for help, only Catholic Croatia and the two Habsburg archdukes who ruled Inner Austria and the Tyrol remained loyal.

It was in the midst of this crisis that all of the Habsburg dominions suddenly fell into the hands of one man. The unmarried Archduke

Maximilian of Tyrol died during the course of 1618, followed by Emperor Matthias himself on 20 March 1619.¹ In other circumstances Matthias's demise might have mollified his rebellious subjects. But this was not the case in 1619. Before his death the childless emperor had designated as his successor his cousin, Archduke Ferdinand, who, after two decades of determined persecution, had virtually eradicated Protestantism among the general population of his Inner Austrian lands. Although a Bohemian diet had already elected Ferdinand as Matthias's heir in 1617, the nobility now refused to accept a sovereign who was certain to escalate the harassment of its own Protestant population. In August 1619, even as the German princes were electing Ferdinand to succeed Matthias as Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II (1619–37), the rebellious estates declared his earlier election as king of Bohemia null and void. They first offered the Bohemian crown to the Lutheran Elector John George of neighboring Saxony who, however, had the good sense to decline a confrontation with his new emperor. The estates found a more willing candidate in the young and adventurous Calvinist Elector Frederick V of the Palatinate, whose easternmost territories (the so-called Upper Palatinate) also bordered on Bohemia. Despite the advice of almost everyone, including the princes of the Evangelical Union, Frederick accepted his election and travelled to Bohemia, where he was crowned on 4 November 1619.

Posterity has justly criticized Frederick for irresponsible, if not treasonous behavior that helped transform the Bohemian revolt from a local, confessional conflict into a German civil war. At the time, however, he appeared to be in a far stronger position than his Habsburg adversary. In June 1619 Bohemian rebel forces had actually surrounded Ferdinand's new capital and only the timely arrival of some Styrian cavalry had saved him from capture. Moreover, in addition to 25,000 troops raised by the Bohemian crownlands and by his own means, Frederick could count on the active assistance of disaffected Protestants from elsewhere in the monarchy. At the time of his election the prince of Transylvania, Gabriel Bethlen (1613–29), had actually invaded Royal Hungary on behalf of the Protestant cause. By October Bethlen had joined forces with bands of Bohemian and Lower Austrian Protestant nobles in besieging Vienna a second time. Then, in January 1620, a group of Hungarian nobles assembled at Neusohl (Bansk Bystrica) and emulated the Bohemians by dethroning Ferdinand and electing Bethlen their king.

Despite their earlier commitment to Ferdinand I, the Bohemian diet and the rump assembly at Neusohl had used their kingdoms' elective privilege to

¹ The Tyrolean line established by Ferdinand I had actually died out in 1595, but Rudolph II had ceded Tyrol and Outer Austria to his younger brother Maximilian in 1602.

dethrone the Habsburgs and elect another dynasty in their place. Moreover, in Frederick V and Gabriel Bethlen the Bohemian rebels had enlisted foreign support in resisting the Habsburgs, just as had the Hungarian supporters of Janos Zápolya when they invited in the Turks in 1529. And, like his namesake a century earlier, Ferdinand II hardly had the resources to resist. Although the newly reunited Tyrolean lands were loyal and had sent some troops, they were too far removed to offer significant help. Likewise, Inner Austria continued to stand by Ferdinand, but the Protestant nobles who still controlled its estates were reluctant to mobilize against their co-religionists. By the beginning of 1620 even Croatia's heretofore loyal Catholic estates were in doubt, having threatened to seize control of the Military Border from Inner Austria and subjugate its free, Orthodox Serb *Grenzer*. Given the current constellation of forces within the monarchy, Ferdinand II seemed powerless to forestall the monarchy's dissolution or, at the very least, a complete capitulation to his Protestant subjects.

What saved Ferdinand and the monarchy in 1620 – and on numerous occasions thereafter – was the timely intervention of foreign allies whose interests its survival somehow served (see Map 1). The first armed assistance had already come at the end of 1619 from the Catholic King Sigismund of Poland, who orchestrated raids into Upper Hungary and Transylvania that forced Bethlen to withdraw from Vienna. At the same time Maximilian of Bavaria promised to mobilize the Catholic League, which was alarmed that Frederick's takeover of Bohemia would give the Protestants a four to three majority in the Electoral College. By the following March Ferdinand had also enlisted the aid of the Lutheran Elector John George, who was offended both by Frederick's militant Calvinism and by his wanton violation of imperial law. While Maximilian offered to conquer Bohemia proper, Elector John George undertook to pacify Silesia and the Lusatias. The price for their support was high, but worth the expense: Maximilian was promised the permanent transfer of the Palatinate's electoral dignity, as well as the right to acquire Frederick's German lands by conquest; at the same time Ferdinand agreed to pay for both invasions by pawning Upper Austria to Bavaria and the Lusatias to Saxony.

Aid from Spain came with fewer strings attached, and with good reason. King Philip III (1598–1621) saw the Austrian Habsburgs as a crucial ally in the continuing struggle with the Dutch and Frederick V, a natural enemy whose Rhenish territories threatened the supply lines between his lands in Italy and the Netherlands. Hence, by 1620 Philip had sent Ferdinand one army from each area, plus a third to conquer the Palatinate. With aid such as this the emperor hardly needed troops of his own. Nevertheless, generous subsidies from Philip III (1.2 million fl.) and an equally concerned Pope Paul V (380,000 fl.) enabled even Ferdinand to field an army.

While Ferdinand was building up this imposing array of forces, his adversary was becoming increasingly isolated. Frederick received no help from the kings of England and France, who regarded successful noble revolts against legitimate sovereigns as more dangerous than the survival of a far-off, demonstrably weak Habsburg emperor. By July their agents had even persuaded his own Evangelical Union not to come to his aid. Meanwhile, Frederick squandered his popularity within Bohemia by failing to curb his soldiers' depredations or his own contempt for his Lutheran and Utraquist subjects. With the coming of the campaigning season, the end came quickly for the "Winter King." First, Maximilian occupied Upper Austria and the Upper Palatinate. Then, the Spanish overran the Rhenish Palatinate. Finally, while the Saxons marched into the Lusatias and Silesia, a combined Spanish and Catholic League army under Count Tilly headed straight for Prague. On 8 November 1620 it took Tilly's veterans only one hour to rout the large, but poorly trained rebel forces at the battle of White Mountain. With Bohemia lost and his German lands already under Spanish and Bavarian occupation, Frederick was forced to flee into exile, never to return.

The Habsburg monarchy during the Thirty Years' War

The massive foreign assistance that culminated in the battle of White Mountain converted Ferdinand II from a virtual prisoner of the Hofburg to one of the most powerful and influential rulers in Austrian history. The new emperor was, in most ways, a typical Habsburg. He was a man of impeccable morality and piety, whose daily routine included two masses and at least two hours in meditation and prayer. No less typical was his dedication to the dynasty and the dominions it had acquired. What has always distinguished Ferdinand has been his reputation as an intolerant, almost fanatical, partisan of the Counter-Reformation, who stubbornly insisted on restoring Catholicism, no matter what the risks. In doggedly protecting his subjects from the evils of Protestantism he was convinced that he needed only to do God's work to insure His assistance, regardless of the temporal forces arrayed against him. This faith had been vindicated during his early years in Inner Austria, when he became the first Habsburg to restore Catholicism despite war with the Turks and the opposition of his Protestant estates. And it had been proven again by his miraculous survival following the Bohemian revolt.

There is a great deal of truth behind this characterization of Ferdinand II. Nevertheless, he was far less eccentric than his reputation suggests. Several of the seventeenth-century Habsburgs shared his faith in divine intervention and in the dynasty's providential mission. And, as we shall see, he was quite capable of flexibility and compromise when conditions required it. What

made him unique were unusually favorable circumstances during the opening years of his reign that seemed to justify his sublime faith in Providence and the bold policies that emanated from it. In the East the monarchy was just beginning over a half-century of relative peace with the Turks. This was no accident. The outbreak of war with Persia inclined the Sultan toward peace. For his part, Ferdinand was committed to avoiding any provocation that might lead them to resume hostilities in the Balkans. Although both sides continued to launch devastating raids against each others' Hungarian lands, incursions were limited by prior agreement to frontier districts involving fewer than 4,000 men, no artillery, and immediate withdrawal from occupied territory. Though these conditions offered little solace to Ferdinand's Hungarian subjects, they posed no threat to the monarchy's overall security. Moreover, on those occasions when local Turkish commanders exceeded these self-imposed restrictions, the government in Vienna had the good sense to look the other way rather than risk drawing the Sultan into a two-front war that both monarchs wished to avoid. Having secured his eastern flank Ferdinand enjoyed the luxury of concentrating his attention in the West, where the triumphs of the Catholic League, Spain, and his own army afforded them hegemony in Germany for a full decade. Except for some military reverses during the early 1630s, the monarchy enjoyed a free hand in its Austrian and Bohemian lands until the end of his reign. It was the freedom afforded by peace with the Turks and his allies in Germany, rather than the zealotry inspired by his faith, that permitted Ferdinand II to put his stamp on the monarchy.

The triumph of the Counter-Reformation in Austria and Bohemia

During the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) Ferdinand II worked to restore Catholicism and enhance his own authority both in the monarchy and in the Holy Roman empire. We know far more about Ferdinand II's ambitious, but ultimately ill-fated imperial policies because of their long-ranging implications for Germany and their immediate bearing on the Franco-Spanish struggle for European hegemony. It was, however, in the Habsburg lands that the religious conflict had started, where the dynasty's primary interest lay, and where the emperor ultimately had the most lasting impact.

Ferdinand dealt most thoroughly with the Bohemian and Moravian crownlands. In June 1621 the government executed twenty-seven rebel leaders, whose corpses were then mutilated and exposed for several years on Prague's Charles Bridge. Several hundred more noble and burgher families were punished with the confiscation of their wealth. In addition to punishing individuals, Ferdinand also destroyed the underlying structures that had nourished the closely connected evils of political opposition and Protest-

antism. In 1624 he removed the Bohemian Court Chancery to Vienna, where he could control its officials. He then imposed the so-called Renewed Constitution (*Verneuerte Landesordnung*) on Bohemia in 1627, followed by a similar document for Moravia a year later. The law seriously impaired the Bohemian estates' ability to oppose royal authority. It replaced their right to choose future kings with an automatic, hereditary Habsburg succession. It also awarded the king various powers previously held or shared by the estates: although they retained the right to approve most taxes, he alone could maintain military forces, introduce major legislation, appoint and replace key public officials, and grant titles of nobility, even to foreigners. As a result of these changes royal administrators began to operate in the countryside for the first time, albeit in conjunction with commissions of local nobles. Ferdinand's restructuring of the country's religious constitution was equally far-reaching. Although the systematic persecution of Protestants had already begun within a year of White Mountain, it was the *Verneuerte Landesordnung* that officially ended Christian religious diversity in Bohemia. Henceforth only Catholics would be tolerated, except for a small number of privileged Jews. To underscore his commitment to the eradication of Protestantism, Ferdinand literally tore up the Letter of Majesty with two strokes of his own dagger.

By contrast, greater Bohemia's northern crownlands got off more lightly, mainly because of the intervention of Ferdinand's Saxon ally. Elector John George negotiated the Dresden Accord with Ferdinand in 1621, guaranteeing Lutheran religious freedom in Silesia in exchange for its declaration of loyalty and a subsidy of 300,000 florins. The Protestant cause was also defended by the Calvinist Piast and Podiebrad princes of Lower Silesia. Ferdinand had better luck in Upper Silesia, where he banned and seized the lands of the Protestant Hohenzollern margrave of Jägerndorf for his complicity in the Bohemian insurrection. Although the nobility continued to dominate politics at the local level, Ferdinand was also able to increase his administrative control throughout the rest of Silesia. Most notably, Silesia joined Bohemia and Moravia in placing its once independent treasury under the direct control of the *Hofkammer* in Vienna. In the end Upper and Lower Lusatia escaped Habsburg authority altogether. Originally pawned to Saxony, Ferdinand eventually accepted their permanent cession in order to keep John George tied to the Habsburg cause.

Ferdinand was also more lenient with the two archduchies, whose resistance had never led to an outright break with the dynasty. Perhaps it was their long association and close identification with the Habsburgs – or maybe just the greater proximity of Ferdinand's forces – that induced the Lower Austrian estates to make peace with him in the months before White Mountain. Whatever the motivation, they received from him a general

amnesty and the retention of their privileges, including limited Protestant religious freedom. The Upper Austrian estates were less pliant and succumbed only under the weight of Bavarian occupation. Nevertheless, Ferdinand made no attempt to infringe their various other liberties following the end of the Bavarian occupation in 1628. His only meaningful innovation was the creation of an Austrian Chancery in 1620 to oversee the administration of the various hereditary lands that had been reunited by the recent deaths of Archduke Maximilian and Emperor Matthias. It was not long, however, before the archduchies' Protestants shared in the fate of the Bohemian and Moravian crownlands.

In his attempt to restore Catholic religious uniformity Ferdinand employed the same graduated process of persecution that had proven so effective during his early years as ruler of Inner Austria. Within his Austrian and Bohemian lands only Silesia was spared from such compulsory tactics. Persecution invariably began with the immediate expulsion of all Protestant clergy and schoolteachers, even in Lower Austria despite Ferdinand's recent promise of religious freedom. Protestant churches and other community property were seized or destroyed. Heretical works and other repugnant literature were consigned to the flames. One Bohemian churchman boasted of having burned as many as 60,000 volumes. Next came the implementation of forced conversion, first in the towns, then in the countryside. Burghers and nobles alike were generally given the option of conversion or expulsion, while peasants were essentially left with no choice at all. Only in Lower Austria were individual nobles permitted to remain Protestant, although they were subject to less overt forms of pressure. Enforcement was entrusted to "Reformation Commissions" that included representatives of the monarch, the local bishop, and often the local lord, together with a small troop of soldiers. Individuals were fined for not observing Catholic rituals such as mass, feast days, or fasts, as well as for less confession-specific trespasses like adultery or blasphemy. Finally, after a grace period had passed, recalcitrant Protestants received further punishment, such as the quartering of troops, the denial of Christian burial, and (in the case of burghers and nobles) ultimately exile.

Of course, compulsory observance did not guarantee inner conversion of the soul. The process of reeducating and reorienting the public was entrusted to a veritable army of priests who now fanned out into the towns and countryside, reappearing in many areas that had been Protestant for decades, including Silesia. Staffing such an enterprise posed a considerable challenge to the government. Ferdinand drew not only from his own priesthood, but from a truly international army of clerics that included Italians, Spaniards, Irish, and English exiles and, above all, Germans. Various religious orders contributed to the effort, though none more than the Society

of Jesus. Most important, the Jesuits established an instructional infrastructure that provided the monarchy with a continuous stream of teachers for years to come. By 1640 two dozen Jesuit colleges were in operation, including sixteen in the Bohemian lands, where an additional nine institutions were also under development. By mid-century the Society also ran or dominated all of the monarchy's major universities, including Graz, Vienna, and Prague, together with the lone Hungarian university at Tynau (Trnava). True to the Church's international mission, they attracted students from all over Europe. The Jesuit University of Graz even gave sermons in eighteen different languages.

The religious orders supported their instructional crusade by building churches and other religious houses that showcased the triumph of the Counter-Reformation. The wave of new construction was most evident in Vienna, where they often built on land that had been seized from exiled Protestant burghers. But the most pervasive instrument of conversion was the steady regimen of clerical teaching, preaching, and devotional practice that they fostered among the laity. The clergy's promotion of religious rituals took several forms, most notably pilgrimages to shrines – many of which had only been recently established – and the patronage of local cults.

In Bohemia the church sponsored pilgrimages to the White Mountain battlefield and promoted the cult of its medieval king and patron saint, Wenceslas. But throughout the monarchy it used popular devotion to advance the belief that God had entrusted the Habsburgs with the divine mission of protecting the True Church against its enemies. To support this message it embraced Ferdinand's Providential interpretation of the miraculous survival of Slavata and Martinic, his own rescue from the two rebel sieges of Vienna, and the subsequent victory at White Mountain. Above all, however, the clergy and its Habsburg patrons looked to the distant past in linking the dynasty with the saints and sacred symbols of the church.

They popularized existing legends that associated the Habsburgs with the Eucharist, such as Rudolph I's gift of his horse to a priest who was on his way to perform the Last Sacrament, and Maximilian I's escape from death while climbing in the Alps because he was holding a sacramental monstrance. For his part Ferdinand helped perpetuate the association by participating in sacramental processions, such as Corpus Christi. The symbol of the Cross was no less prominent in devotional preaching and literature, associating the appearance of an illuminated, crucifix-shaped cloud with Rudolph I's use of a cross and Ferdinand's rescue from the Bohemian rebels to his kneeling and praying before one. Although veneration of the Virgin Mary was a common ritual throughout Counter-Reformation Europe, Ferdinand and his apologists helped to forge an especially strong and historic dynastic link with the mother of Christ. Hence their revival of the legend that Rudolph I never

undertook anything difficult without first appealing to Mary, and of true stories of Charles V's intense veneration of the Virgin. No Habsburg did more to strengthen the Marian cult than the emperor's son and successor, Ferdinand III (1637–57). His commissioning of a Marian pillar at Am Hof in Vienna at the conclusion of the war encouraged the erection of countless *Mariensäule* in town squares throughout the monarchy. He also began the lavish renovation of the pilgrimage church at Mariazell that soon became one of the monarchy's most cherished shrines. He even inserted allusions to the Virgin in the oaths of state officials. At Prague, so recently a hotbed of heresy and rebellion, university faculty annually swore to their belief in the immaculate conception.

Given the military superiority that Ferdinand II and his allies enjoyed after White Mountain, it is not altogether surprising that Bohemia, Moravia, and all of the Austrian lands meekly submitted to the inevitable triumph of the Counter-Reformation. The only overt opposition came in 1626 when the Upper Austrian peasantry revolted against the appearance of Ferdinand's Reformation Commissions and the heavy taxes levied by the Bavarian military administration. It was, however, quickly suppressed by Maximilian and the forces of the Catholic League.

This is not to say that everyone converted. In Bohemia and Moravia Ferdinand's triumph and the massive restructuring that followed inspired one of the great mass migrations in European history. Perhaps 150,000 people – including at least a quarter of the nobility – left during the 1620s, to escape either immediate retribution for the rebellion or extended religious persecution. Although Protestant noble exiles who had not been implicated in the rebellion were normally permitted to hold on to their estates, many ultimately decided to sell them, often at bargain prices. Between government confiscations and private sales, over half of the two crownlands' manorial estates changed hands by the end of Ferdinand's reign. The new owners were mainly native Bohemians, most notably the prominent Lobkovic family and the previously obscure clan of the great Habsburg general, Albrecht von Wallenstein, but also Slavata and Martinic, whose fall from the Hradcany elicited a corresponding rise in their fortunes. Ferdinand also rewarded a large number of loyal Austrian and Hungarian families, as well as foreign-born soldiers and courtiers. It was this last element that infused the new Bohemian nobility with non-Czech names from all over Europe, such as Conway (Ireland), Gordon (Scotland), Bucquoy de Longueval (Low Countries), Marradas (Spain), Metternich (Germany), de Souches (France), and Piccolomini (Italy). To accommodate these families, as well as the country's large German-speaking minority, Ferdinand even elevated German to equality with Czech as the official language of Bohemia and Moravia. Although many foreign families resold their lands or died out,

outsiders still comprised a large minority of the Bohemian and Moravian nobility at mid-century and lorded over perhaps 40 percent of their peasantry.

The turnover in the Austrian lands was much less extensive, but not insignificant. Several thousand Protestant nobles and townspeople left during the first decade of the reign. In Inner Austria alone, 754 noble families emigrated abroad during the three years following the belated removal of their religious freedom in 1628. Many Protestant Lower Austrian nobles chose exile, even though they retained the right of private worship. By mid-century, however, no fewer than 235 members of the Lower Austrian estates still identified themselves as Protestant. Although the government denied peasants the option of conversion or emigration, they were nonetheless well represented among those who left. At the end of the war came a final surge of perhaps 40,000 people from all social classes, including 20,000 Upper Austrians, once it had become clear that peace would not bring a restoration of religious freedom. Some resettled in Royal Hungary, but most migrated to Franconia, Swabia, and Saxony where whole towns sprouted up to accommodate Protestant exiles from the monarchy.

Of those who elected to stay, many secretly remained Protestant. Indeed, successful Catholicization depended heavily on the cooperation of the seigneurial nobility, whose participation in the Reformation Commissions and employment of the local clergy afforded them control over enforcement. Aside from those Lower Austrian nobles who remained Protestant there were Catholic nobles elsewhere who were less committed to implementing Ferdinand's policies. Moreover, many remote areas were beyond the effective control of government officials, nobles, and clergy alike. Indeed, clandestine Protestant communities survived for generations in remote mountain valleys, as well as in areas near the Saxon, Silesian, and Hungarian frontiers, over which passed a steady stream of itinerant Protestant preachers and prayer books. These exceptions cannot, however, obscure the extensiveness of Ferdinand's victory. By mid-century the overwhelming majority of his Austrian and Bohemian subjects had accepted his triumph and the restoration of Catholicism, a record of conversion without parallel in the history of the Counter-Reformation.

Hungary and the problem of Transylvania

While the Counter-Reformation made dramatic strides in Austria and Bohemia, its advance in Hungary was much more uneven. This was not because the Habsburgs made no attempt to convert the kingdom's Protestants. Rather, the key to the survival of Hungarian Protestantism lay in its continued ability to summon outside assistance. In the first half of the

seventeenth century that role was filled by Transylvania. As the rulers of a multi-confessional society that tolerated Lutheran Saxons, Calvinist Magyars, Greek Orthodox Romanians, and even a large community of Unitarians, the princes of Transylvania were sympathetic to the plight of their Protestant countrymen living under Habsburg rule. When Rudolph II initiated systematic persecution near the close of the Fifteen Years' War, Prince Stephen Bocskai (1604–6) invaded Royal Hungary and compelled the king to reaffirm religious freedom at the treaty of Vienna (1606). At his death later that year Bocskai's testament explicitly urged his successor to utilize Transylvania's pivotal position between the Turks and Habsburgs to intervene on behalf of the kingdom's religious and other liberties. Beginning with Gabriel Bethlen a series of ambitious and aggressive princes did just that, frequently in tandem with the Habsburgs' foreign enemies. Bethlen invaded the monarchy three times in the first decade of Ferdinand II's reign, both to guarantee Royal Hungary's religious and other liberties and to enhance his own position and territory. Hence, although Transylvania was too far removed and its power too modest to reverse Ferdinand's victories in Austria and Bohemia, it compelled him to act in Hungary with a moderation to which he had elsewhere been unaccustomed.

Notwithstanding his reputation elsewhere for religious fanaticism, the emperor abided by the promise of religious toleration to which he had sworn in his election oath of 1617. He reconfirmed these guarantees and even ceded seven Hungarian counties to Transylvania at the Peace of Nikolsberg (1622) in exchange for Bethlen's surrender of the Hungarian crown that had been offered him at Neusohl two years earlier. He was also content to renew these terms despite subsequent Transylvanian invasions in 1624 and 1626.

Given these guarantees of religious toleration, the initial stages of the Hungarian Counter-Reformation employed tactics aimed at the voluntary, rather than coerced conversion of Protestants. As it did in Silesia, the government relied almost exclusively on the use of missionaries to provide a steady regimen of preaching, education, and devotional practice. The cult of the Virgin evolved quickly with the foundation of Marian societies in many of the towns, as did that of various medieval Hungarian saints, most notably the kingdom's founder and patron saint Stephen. Although other religious orders, such as the indigenous Paulines, played an important mediating role, it was the Society of Jesus that once again had the greatest impact. No churchman anywhere in the monarchy was as influential as the Jesuit archbishop of Esztergom and (after 1629) Cardinal-Primate of Hungary, Péter Pázmány (1570–1637). Exiled from his diocesan seat by the Turkish occupation, the Calvinist-born, native Magyar worked tirelessly from the Upper Hungarian town of Tyrnau to provide an instructional infrastructure for the kingdom's reconversion. He helped create seven Jesuit

houses in Hungary (including two in Croatia), raised large sums of money to establish churches and schools, and in 1635 founded Hungary's oldest surviving university at Tyrnau. Writing in eloquent Magyar, Pázmány personally spearheaded an extensive literary campaign that reached his countrymen as no foreign-born cleric could. Even after his death the university press that he founded carried on his work with great effect.

Perhaps Pázmány's greatest contribution was his success in personally converting virtually all of Habsburg Hungary's hundred magnate families. Once converted, the kingdom's magnates generally exercised their prerogative to enforce the Catholicization of their peasants, whether by promoting the work of missionaries or by removing all Protestant churches and preachers from their estates. Given the choice between attending Sunday mass or no church services at all, many of them returned at least ostensibly to the Catholic faith. Not only did the magnates help propagate the faith, they also helped defend Royal Hungary against the dynasty's foreign enemies. With so much of the Habsburg military committed to fighting the Thirty Years' War, the magnates proved indispensable in raising and maintaining their own private armies against Turkish border raids and the constant threat of Transylvanian intervention. This was no mean accomplishment. For example, the 800-man garrison that the Batthyányi family employed at their main castle consumed 200,000 loaves of bread and 100,000 liters of wine each year. When added to the cost of the forces maintained by other magnate families, these expenditures saved the Habsburg king from paying considerable sums that would have otherwise been necessary for Royal Hungary's defense.

Toward a symbiosis of crown and nobility

After Ferdinand II's triumph and the changes that it brought in the Austrian and Bohemian crownlands, Hungary proper was in most respects the least typical component of the Habsburg dominions. Nevertheless, the role that its magnates played in introducing the Counter-Reformation and defending the country reflected the government's continued reliance on the landholding nobility throughout the monarchy. To a greater or lesser extent the central government still depended on local seigneurs to enforce religious uniformity, collect the Contribution, and administer justice in all three dominions. Given Hungary's easy recourse to externally supported domestic resistance, the Magyar nobility enjoyed the most control over local politics and, hence, the lives of the common people. But, this was still largely true not only in the Austrian lands and Silesia, but even in Bohemia and Moravia. After White Mountain, Duke Maximilian had urged Ferdinand to follow the example of Bavaria and install a centrally controlled bureaucracy

in Bohemia that would reach right down to the local level. The *Verneuerte Landesordnung* did, in fact, destroy the Bohemian nobility's ability to oppose the king by eliminating its control over royal elections, legislation, the army, and key government officials. But, not unlike monarchs elsewhere, Ferdinand stopped short of ending its dominance over local politics, justice, or the manorial economy. Instead, he contented himself with purging what he saw as rebellious Protestant Austrian and Bohemian nobles and entrusting the monarchy's future to loyal Catholics. By leaving local affairs in their hands Ferdinand avoided the risk of alienating loyal nobles who would have resented being lumped with those who had actually opposed the crown. He realized how difficult it would be to rule without their support and cooperation, especially since he needed their help in meeting the challenge to his authority within Germany and Hungary, and the foreign threats that lay just beyond their borders.

And the dynasty was willing to offer a great deal in exchange for what it interpreted as the inseparable attributes of Catholicism and loyalty. As we have seen, loyal Catholic nobles from all over the monarchy had shared in the redistribution of confiscated Bohemian and Moravian estates after White Mountain. In addition, appointments to key government positions fell almost exclusively to Catholic nobles. This use of patronage was especially effective in confessionally mixed areas such as Lower Austria, Silesia, and Hungary, where the competition for lucrative and powerful positions enticed otherwise recalcitrant Protestant nobles to convert. Indeed, it may help to explain the ease with which Cardinal Pázmány was able to complete his work among the Hungarian magnates, who now strengthened their stranglehold over that kingdom's highest offices. No less persuasive was the monarch's bestowal of princely titles that often followed years of loyal service by the most wealthy and powerful Catholic aristocrats.

The crown also helped to strengthen the economic position of the nobility as a whole. Ferdinand II and his successors routinely approved the use of primogeniture to preserve the wealth, power, and prestige of noble families against divided inheritances. They also did little to impede the ongoing expansion of the nobility's growing commercial advantage over the peasantry and free towns. During the war landowners throughout the monarchy continued to extend their demesne land, often at the expense of peasant or common land. To compensate for wartime population losses, seigneurs were also allowed to increase the *robot* obligations and even to enserf other, previously free peasants. These victims of this so-called second serfdom now had to perform *robot* as well. The crown also awarded landowners various commercial privileges, such as the right to levy bridge tolls and market fees, that often came at the expense of local bourgeois entrepreneurs. By 1625 the gentry who dominated Hungary's county assemblies had even gained the

right to set prices and wages. Noble seigneurs everywhere continued to exploit their peasants as both captive consumers and suppliers by compelling them to buy and sell from them, rather than neighboring free towns. These commercial advantages, plus the standard fruits of capitalist enterprise, helped to spur the growth of aristocracy throughout the monarchy. Thus, by mid-century just thirteen Hungarian magnates controlled 37 percent of the kingdom's villages, while the eighty-two aristocrats who sat in the Bohemian and Moravian diets controlled 62 percent of their crownlands' peasantry.

The tilt toward the landholding nobility – and the aristocracy in particular – was based both on traditional values that encouraged reliance on established elites and on the dynasty's perception that they could do it more good (or more harm) than the unprivileged orders. This spirit of accommodation came, however, at some cost to the monarchy's towns and peasantry. The towns progressively lost ground to the great landowners in the competition for both local consumers and foreign markets, most notably in Hungary, whose magnates gained a virtual monopoly over the country's livestock, wine, and grain exports. Their voice in the monarchy's diets eroded considerably during the war. The *Verneuerte Landesordnung* drastically reduced the number of towns represented in the Bohemian diet from forty to six, partly as punishment for their active role in the recent revolt. In the Bohemian, Moravian, and Styrian diets the towns were henceforth limited to a single collective vote, while in Carniola and Gorizia they were now excluded from participation in the powerful committees that helped govern each province. Frequently, they were not even allowed to take a seat, but were instead obliged to stand in the rear of the chamber for the purpose of receiving instructions from the representatives of the privileged estates. Indeed, as the Contribution necessary to finance the war soared, the crown permitted the noble and clerical majority to heap a disproportionate share of the burden onto the towns they represented.

It was the peasantry, however, that suffered the worst. By mid-century perhaps 90 percent of Hungary's peasants and virtually all of Bohemia's had fallen victim to the second serfdom. In Bohemia and Moravia serfs typically performed *robot* three days a week, with a quarter of them working the nobles' demesne land every day except Sundays and holidays. Contemporaries estimated that the combined discharge of labor service, rent, tithe and taxes consumed three-fifths of the average Bohemian serf's labor. Meanwhile the peasantry of rugged Upper Hungary may have suffered the heaviest labor services, given the relative scarcity of arable land and the large number of displaced Magyar nobles and border fortifications that they were called upon to maintain. Although the towns were scarcely in a position to do more than protest, the peasantry did resist *robot* by performing their compulsory chores in a desultory, almost mechanical fashion – hence the

modern-day meaning of the word. They would also sell their draft animals, flee the manor, or simply refuse to work. Indeed, numerous peasant uprisings that broke out all over the monarchy during the years after White Mountain – and their savage suppression – had rather less to do with the religious aftermath of the battle than with its socio-economic effects.

The Habsburg defeat in Germany

Ferdinand II's triumph in the Bohemian and Austrian lands and the new spirit of crown-noble accommodation that accompanied it were critical developments in the Habsburg monarchy's evolution as a great European power. In the end they more than compensated for the dynasty's ultimate defeat in the Thirty Years' War. Although the emperor was always ready to serve God's cause, he entered the war in Germany with no preconceived plan or objectives. Instead, he was thrust into imperial politics immediately after his election by his allies' military successes. Although he ultimately devised his own policies, it was his association with their agendas – Maximilian's desire for Frederick V's territory and electoral privilege, the Catholic League's campaign against Protestant princely power, and Spain's search for allies against the Dutch – that helped prolong the war beyond its Bohemian origins. By tying himself to Spain and the Catholic princes, Ferdinand II divided his attention and resources between the empire and the monarchy itself. Most important, his renewal of the Habsburg dynastic alliance aligned the monarchy against the growing coalition of countries that were eager to reduce the Spanish threat to the balance of power.

The impending catastrophe was, however, hardly evident in the decade following Frederick V's defeat and expulsion from Bohemia. As a result, Ferdinand II acted in Germany with the same determination that characterized his treatment of the defeated Bohemian rebels. In January 1623 he fulfilled his earlier promise to Maximilian of Bavaria by banning Frederick V and transferring both his electoral dignity and possession of the Upper Palatinate to his Wittelsbach cousin. In order to legitimize the transfers, Ferdinand took the constitutionally dubious step of disinheriting Frederick's innocent heirs, just as he had done to the Hohenzollern relations of the margrave of Jägerndorf two years before. At the same time he permitted the Spanish to remain in possession of the strategic Rhenish Palatinate following the resumption of their war with the Dutch Republic. Although the Evangelical Union was soon intimidated into disbanding its own forces, the advance of Ferdinand's allies prompted several minor German princes and then, in 1625, King Christian IV of Denmark, to take up the Protestant cause. They were, however, no match for the forces

arrayed against them. Although Spain's army was now committed to the war in the Netherlands, Ferdinand could still count on Tilly's Catholic League army. In addition, the emperor had raised a formidable army of his own on the strength of massive Papal subsidies and the resourcefulness of his own commanding general, Albrecht von Wallenstein, in tapping the wealth of the recently recovered Bohemian crownlands.

By 1628 the armies of Tilly and Wallenstein had scattered the renegade Protestant princes and compelled Denmark to make peace. With Germany at his feet Ferdinand II now availed himself of the opportunity to resolve the long-standing problem of those prince-bishoprics that had become Protestant since the Peace of Augsburg. In restoring them to the Catholic fold he doubtless felt that he was executing God's will. But he was also fulfilling his responsibility as emperor to enforce the compromise signed by Ferdinand I seventy-five years earlier. Not only did he seek the counsel of the other six electors. On the advice of the Privy Council Ferdinand II declined more radical requests by Mainz and Bavaria that he extend the decree to the confessionally mixed imperial cities and that he explicitly ban Calvinism.

The Edict of Restitution that he decreed on 6 March 1629 was no sinister master plan to destroy Protestantism or the imperial constitution. It was, however, a bold stroke that threatened to alienate many loyal Protestant states, most notably Saxony and Brandenburg, which had incorporated some of the bishoprics into their territory. Boldness was not a common attribute of the Habsburgs or their statesmen, but these were uncommon times in which they appeared to be firmly in control both at home and abroad. It was a measure of Ferdinand's sense of security that he unceremoniously dismissed Wallenstein and most of his 134,000-man army in 1630 in order to allay the widespread criticism of the general's ambitions and his troops' excesses. In naming Maximilian's general Tilly to replace Wallenstein, the emperor signaled once again his continued reliance on his allies.

Neither the emperor nor anyone else could have anticipated how quickly the situation would change following the intervention of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. Within six weeks of Wallenstein's dismissal the great Swedish soldier-king was able to secure Saxony's defection and crush Tilly at the battle of Breitenfeld (17 September 1631). By the following spring Gustavus controlled much of central and southern Germany, and had either enticed or compelled the desertion of several of the Protestant princes. Meanwhile, with Tilly having died during the retreat, Ferdinand suddenly found himself without an army or a general to command it. Swallowing his pride, he did what had to be done. He again turned to Wallenstein, whose entrepreneurial skills quickly raised an imposing 100,000-man army that fought Gustavus to a draw at the Saxon town of Lützen (16 November 1632). For Ferdinand

the best news was that the Swedish king had been killed on the battlefield. The worst was that Wallenstein had still not forgiven him for his earlier disgrace. In revenge this complex and intriguing figure purposely wasted the military opportunity raised by Gustavus's removal. Rather than drive an already wavering Saxony out of the war, Wallenstein withdrew his armies into Bohemia where his forces ravaged the lands of his sovereign instead. Worst of all he opened secret and treasonous negotiations with the emperor's enemies. Once confronted with proof of Wallenstein's treachery, Ferdinand rushed to remove him before he could secure the defection of the imperial army. A court faction headed by his son and heir, Ferdinand, finally persuaded the emperor to order Wallenstein's assassination, a sentence swiftly carried out by loyal officers on the night of 25 February 1634.

The monarchy had already lost the services of its best general months before the murder of Albrecht von Wallenstein. But, with his death, the emperor gained the use of two armies: the imperial army, whose loyalty he secured by appointing his son to command it, and a Spanish force of 15,000 men then marching north from Italy under the command of Philip IV's younger brother, the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand. The two Habsburg generals symbolized the essential chemistry in the monarchy's earlier successes, both in their combined representation of state and church, and in their renewed expression of Habsburg dynastic loyalty. Indeed, the emperor's son had actually married the Spanish king's and cardinal-infante's sister, Maria Anna in 1631. Now, fifteen years after Spain's pivotal intervention in the Bohemian revolt, the younger Ferdinand had helped to recommit his Spanish brothers-in-law to the monarchy's cause.

Neither side could have imagined that the cardinal-infante's march constituted Habsburg Spain's last meaningful contribution ever to the Austrian monarchy. The crushing Habsburg victory at Nördlingen (6 September 1634) did, however, bring the emperor everything that he could have expected. Saxony and virtually all of the Protestant German princes made their peace with him at the Peace of Prague (30 May 1635). Ferdinand II again demonstrated his capacity for compromise, most notably by consenting to return to the Protestant princes all church lands that had been seized after 1627. He also acceded to Saxon demands for Lutheran religious toleration in Lower Silesia, although he was successful in limiting it to the largely independent Piast and Podiebrad principalities, plus the city of Breslau (Wrocław). In agreeing to these and other concessions, he adhered to the advice of his son, his councilors, the Spanish ambassador, and the Catholic German princes, while rejecting the pleas of his influential Jesuit confessor, William Lamormaini.

Both the monarchy and the empire needed peace. Meanwhile, Spain wanted the emperor's undivided assistance against France, which had just

declared war eleven days earlier. Having long provided financial and diplomatic support for the dynasty's enemies, Louis XIII (1610–43) and his prime minister, Cardinal Richelieu, chose this moment to enter the war in order to keep the Swedes from following the Protestant princes to the peace table. France had long sought to weaken the emperor by supporting foreign enemies such as Denmark and Sweden, or domestic opposition from his German vassals. French intervention was, however, primarily aimed not at Austria but at Spain, whose destruction had been the main goal of French foreign policy ever since Richelieu's rise to power a decade ago.

For Spain and the monarchy alike the last phase of the Thirty Years' War is a dreary story of successive military setbacks. Once again it was Ferdinand II's good fortune to escape the consequences of his policies. With his untimely death his son, Ferdinand III (1637–57), inherited the difficult task of coping with the monarchy's impending defeat. The new emperor deserved a better fate. He was as austere, pious, and dedicated as his father, but more gifted. He spoke seven languages, and found pleasing diversions in reading philosophy, conducting laboratory experiments, and writing music. If history has denied him a modern biographer and identity of his own, it is because of his bad luck of reigning at a time when the dynasty enjoyed very few choices. He did, however, make the most of what little opportunity he had. His decision to extricate the monarchy from the war was quick, appropriate, and painfully ironic. Having done so much to revive the Spanish alliance over the previous decade, he now recognized that the monarchy's survival depended on cutting its ties with his Habsburg relations. His decision to open talks with the French and Swedes within his first year as emperor was hardly a courageous decision, but necessity often compelled the Austrian Habsburgs to choose pragmatism before heroism.

Peace did not come quickly, however, partly because Ferdinand III was reluctant to abandon Spain to its fate, but also because he was unwilling to accede to his enemies' attempts to dismantle his imperial authority within Germany. The increasing toll that the war now took on his own dominions changed his mind. By 1639 the Swedes had reappeared in the Bohemian lands, parts of which they would continuously hold for the rest of the war. They delivered the key blow six years later when they occupied virtually the entire kingdom following their victory over a combined imperial-Bavarian army at Jankau (5 March 1645). Having just traveled to Prague to oversee Bohemia's defense, the emperor was compelled to return hastily to Vienna, thereby drawing unflattering popular comparisons with Frederick V's flight from Bohemia after the battle of White Mountain. In the weeks that followed, the Swedes entered the archduchies for the first time in the war, with advance units actually firing on Vienna itself. Nor did they come alone. Two years earlier the Transylvanian Prince George I Rákóczi (1629–48) had

taken advantage of the dynasty's declining fortunes in Germany by demanding religious freedom for those Hungarian Protestant peasants who lived under Catholic seigneurs. Acting on cue, he now invaded Hungary and advanced on Vienna from the East for a possible joint siege. Although both the Swedes and the Transylvanians were soon obliged to withdraw – the latter at the behest of their Turkish overlord – the emperor now moved to save his own dominions from further destruction.

By the end of 1645 Ferdinand had capitulated to Rákóczi's demands at Linz by extending religious freedom to Hungary's Protestant peasantry and confirming the earlier cession of seven counties to Transylvania. At the same time, the dispatch of Austrian negotiators to the peace talks at the Westphalian towns of Münster and Osnabrück signaled Ferdinand III's willingness to surrender much of the remaining power of the imperial crown and to desert the Spanish Habsburgs. Although the German princes had been allied to the emperor since the Peace of Prague, they welcomed their impending triumph over imperial authority. Nor were they reluctant to abandon Spain to its fate. None of the princes had ever been comfortable with the emperor's Spanish ally, whom they still feared and blamed for over a century of conflict with France. In any event, by 1645, Bavaria, Brandenburg, and Saxony were all under enemy occupation and more than eager to end the war. For their part, the French, Swedes, and Dutch had no reason to regard the emperor as a threat once he had been shorn of meaningful power within the empire. Indeed, as Ferdinand's envoys signed the final articles on 24 October 1648 the Swedes were again knocking at the gates of Prague.

The Peace of Westphalia greatly reduced the emperor's authority in a number of ways. Above all it strengthened the position of Germany's Protestants. It undermined further the Edict of Restitution by restoring to the Catholic Church only those lands that had been conquered by 1624. It also guaranteed a confessional balance between the Protestant and Catholic princes by giving Germany's Protestant princely minority equal representation in the two imperial courts, as well as the right to veto all legislation by voting separately in the imperial diet on all religious matters. Finally, the treaty now recognized the rights of the Calvinist princes, who achieved equal status with the Catholic and Lutheran princes. Although their erstwhile leader had died in 1632, Frederick V's heirs were restored in the Rhenish Palatinate and given a new, eighth electoral vote to compensate for the one that had been transferred to Maximilian in 1623. Nor did the emperor necessarily derive comfort from the significant territorial gains of the three lay electors of Bavaria (the Upper Palatinate), Saxony (the Lusatias), and Brandenburg (eastern Pomerania and the bishoprics of Kammin, Halberstadt, Minden and, eventually, Magdeburg). Although they had remained

loyal to the emperor through most of the war, their growth enhanced their ability to oppose him in the future. Indeed the treaty undermined imperial authority by officially recognizing the right of every prince to keep an army and negotiate alliances with foreign countries. Finally, France and Sweden also created new vehicles for frustrating the Habsburgs in the future. As signatories of the peace they became guarantors of the revised imperial constitution with the right to uphold the rights of the princes against the emperor. Furthermore, Sweden acquired western Pomerania and the bishoprics of Bremen and Verden along the northern coast, while France obtained the last of the dynasty's ancient holdings in Alsace – strategic territories along the empire's periphery that could serve as bridgeheads for subsequent invasions.

The impact of the Thirty Years' War

History has afforded the Peace of Westphalia its proper, prominent place in German history. It essentially defined the constitution of a divided Germany and its relationship with the Austrian Habsburgs for the next two centuries. Although neither Ferdinand II nor Ferdinand III had ever expected to Catholicize or control Germany as a whole, the war's reaffirmation of Protestantism and princely power dramatized the meager potential that Germany held for the dynasty. Thus 1648 marks a point at which the Habsburgs necessarily focused their attention and energy on the management of their own dominions. Although they continued to play a leadership role in German affairs right up to their defeat by Bismarck in 1866, they henceforth realized that their future lay in the fortunes of the monarchy itself.

Unlike the Holy Roman empire, the monarchy had suffered only minor territorial losses. The emperor's own subjects had, however, paid a fearful price, especially over the last decade. Three Swedish occupations in 1631–4, 1639–41, and 1645–8 had devastated the Bohemian crownlands as much as any other part of Germany. By mid-century a prewar population of over 4 million people had fallen by at least a third. Bohemia proper had been hit hardest, losing nearly half of its 1.7 million. Meanwhile, both Moravia and Silesia lost almost a third of their prewar populations of 800,000 and 1.5 million. Although many people succumbed to the atrocities of an undisciplined soldiery, the great bulk of civilian deaths resulted from the epidemics that tended to accompany the armies as they marched through the countryside. The steep population decline was bad news for the kingdom's farms and villages, many of which were deserted at war's end, but it was even more devastating for the country's towns and industrial economy. Not surprisingly the combination of wartime atrocities, epidemics, and exactions

was felt hardest by urban dwellers, particularly males, whose weaker resistance to disease and eligibility for military service reduced them to roughly two-thirds of the female population. Thus, at one point in the war the Silesian town of Glogau had lost all but 122 of its 2,500 burghers. By 1648 both Prague and the principal Silesian city of Breslau had lost roughly 40 percent of their prewar population. Six years later 55 percent of Prague's buildings still lay in ruins. In Silesia, only 118 of Schweidnitz's 1,300 houses were left standing; the nearby textile center of Löwenberg counted only forty burghers and fourteen active textile workers from pre-war totals of 1,700 and 700.

The toll from the war was much lighter within the Austrian lands, where only those parts of the archduchies that lay north of the Danube had been exposed to foreign occupation. Nevertheless, perhaps 50,000 Protestants left the *Erblände*, including large numbers of artisans and miners whose departure dealt a blow to the Austrian economy. Although most of Hungary had avoided both the war and religious persecution, it did not escape wholly unscathed. Despite the half century of relative peace that followed the Peace of Zsitvatorok, Turkish raids had continued to spread devastation all across Hungary's exposed frontier, enslaving as many as 10,000 of the emperor's subjects a year and swelling the ranks of the country's *hayducks* to 100,000 strong. Yet even the simple herdsmen of the Hungarian plain were not immune from the ill effects of the Thirty Years' War. As the textile workers and miners of the Austrian and Bohemian lands had found out, the war had brought a general downturn in the central European economy that undercut the monarchy's export trade. Germany's demand for livestock had become so flat that Hungarian herders were sometimes obliged to return home with their animals from the Viennese fair. Finally, it is worth repeating that the *modus vivendi* that the dynasty reached with its nobles altered for the worse the underlying economic structures of the monarchy's free towns and peasantry.

Against the very real costs incurred by their subjects and their own ultimate defeat in Germany, the Austrian Habsburgs could measure the considerable progress that they had made in strengthening their position within their own dominions. By mid-century they had largely resolved the religious crisis that had sparked the Thirty Years' War. Whether by coercion, conviction, or simple expediency, the majority of the nobility had come to accept Catholicism. Aside from some Silesian and Lower Austrian nobles, only the Hungarian gentry remained Protestant. Moreover, the dynasty had helped to reestablish virtual Catholic religious uniformity among its Bohemian, Moravian, and Austrian subjects. The Peace of Westphalia had, in fact, confirmed the triumph of the Counter-Reformation there by reaffirming the emperor's right to enforce Catholicism in his own

dominions, in keeping with the principle of *cujus regio, ejus religio* first enunciated at the Peace of Augsburg. Much of the work of conversion had, in any event, been achieved by 1648, as evidenced by the spirited defense of the Charles Bridge against the Swedes by the people of Prague in the closing days of the war. By then only Silesia and Hungary proper retained significant Protestant populations. At the insistence of Sweden and Saxony, Westphalia confirmed Ferdinand II's earlier commitment to tolerate their coreligionists in Breslau and the semi-independent principalities, but also won limited rights for other Lower Silesian Lutherans living under direct Habsburg rule. Meanwhile, in Hungary the treaty of Linz and the constant threat of Transylvanian intervention protected an uneasy Protestant majority.

Hand in hand with the dynasty's strides in re-Catholicizing its subjects was its establishment of a symbiosis with the landholding nobles that secured their loyalty to state and church in exchange for the retention of their economic, social, and local political privileges. Moreover, this loyalty was reinforced by the strengthening of royal authority in the Bohemian lands which remained, despite the ravages of the war, the monarchy's wealthiest and most populous component. Just as Spain had marshaled the wealth of Castile and Richelieu's France had increased the level of taxation in the *pays d'élections*, the Habsburg monarchy had now established in greater Bohemia a firm foundation for the projection of its power on the international stage. While focusing his attention on Bohemia, Ferdinand II also made some progress in overcoming the constitutional and administrative diversity of his dominions. Simply by reuniting all of the *Erblände* in 1619 he had begun the process of recreating a single, composite state, or *Gesamstaad*, out of the dynasty's diverse dominions. He even drew up a testament in 1621 (and another in 1635) that declared the indivisibility of his dominions. Familial pressure obliged him to violate this principle just four years later by ceding the Tyrolean and Outer Austrian lands to his younger brother. Nevertheless, this new line of Tyrolean Habsburgs was destined to be shortlived. Ferdinand made another stride toward unifying his realm by creating an Austrian Chancery in 1620 and transferring the Bohemian Chancery to Vienna four years later. Together with the Hungarian Chancery, the highest administrative offices of the monarchy's three components were now concentrated in the same place. Ferdinand himself signaled his growing awareness that the dynasty's future lay with its own dominions, rather than with Germany, by beginning to shift the conduct and dispatch of foreign policy from the Imperial Court Chancery to the Austrian Chancery, a trend that would be continued by his immediate successors.

For all these achievements Ferdinand II clearly emerges as the most pivotal figure in the century since the monarchy's creation by Ferdinand I. It

is worth reiterating, however, that his successes stemmed not so much from his religious zeal as from his ability to work with geopolitical and diplomatic realities over which he had little control. His willingness to tolerate Turkish provocations on his eastern flank and to make concessions to his Protestant adversaries in Hungary, Transylvania, and Germany illustrate his sensitivity to these forces. Of course, Ferdinand III was also subject to these same factors and, although history has chosen to ignore him, he also made a crucial contribution to the monarchy's destiny. Whereas his father had survived the great crisis of 1619 by appealing to his allies, Ferdinand III insured the monarchy's recovery from the events of 1645 by deserting them. By concluding a separate peace at Westphalia, the emperor forced his brother-in-law, Philip IV, to fight on alone in an already hopeless struggle against France. His was the right decision. Spain was doomed to defeat no matter what the monarchy did. At least Ferdinand III – unlike the Habsburgs of World War I – had the good sense to dissociate himself from the threat that his loyal, but all-too-powerful ally posed to European security before it dragged the monarchy down with it. Indeed, given the monarchy's exposed geographical position, it never could have risen as a great power so long as it had an ally with as many enemies as Spain. If there was a virtue to be found in the monarchy's capitulation at Westphalia, it was that the dramatic reduction of imperial power in Germany and the isolation and imminent collapse of Spain made it possible for the monarchy to remove the fears of its former adversaries. Only after these apprehensions had been allayed could the monarchy ever emerge as a great power by the traditional Habsburg recourse to coalition diplomacy.

3 Facing east: Hungary and the Turks (1648–1699)

The Westphalian aftermath

Notwithstanding the triumphs and accomplishments of the previous three decades, the Habsburg dominions confronted a number of challenges following the Peace of Westphalia. Above all they desperately needed a period of peace to recover from the wartime devastation wrought by a combination of invading armies and royal tax collectors. Although the dynasty had forged a working relationship with its landholding aristocracy based on loyalty, patronage, and a common faith, the central government still had to convert its essentially disparate dominions into an integrated state; Hungary in particular remained administratively, constitutionally, and confessionally distinct from the rest of the monarchy. Outside the monarchy the renewed emergence of France, and lately Sweden, as powerful and aggressive adversaries compounded the traditional threat posed by the Ottoman empire in the east. Given the impending collapse of Spain and deep divisions that the Thirty Years' War had engendered among his German vassals, the emperor needed to meet these new challenges to the monarchy's security by reestablishing or reviving an effective alternative to the alliance system of the past century. Each of these problems would be resolved by the end of the seventeenth century. Success would not, however, come easily.

Foreign affairs: isolation and insecurity

The monarchy's international position looked especially bleak at mid-century. By itself the Peace of Westphalia had done little to check the continued growth of French and Swedish power, or the emperor's own diplomatic isolation. Once they had suppressed the revolt of the Fronde in the summer of 1653, the young Louis XIV (1643–1715) and his prime minister Cardinal Mazarin were able to devote their undivided attention to the final stage of their war with Spain. The cession of the Habsburgs' Alsatian lands to France had already cut the Spanish Road between the Low Countries and Italy; with the surprise entry of Cromwell's England into the