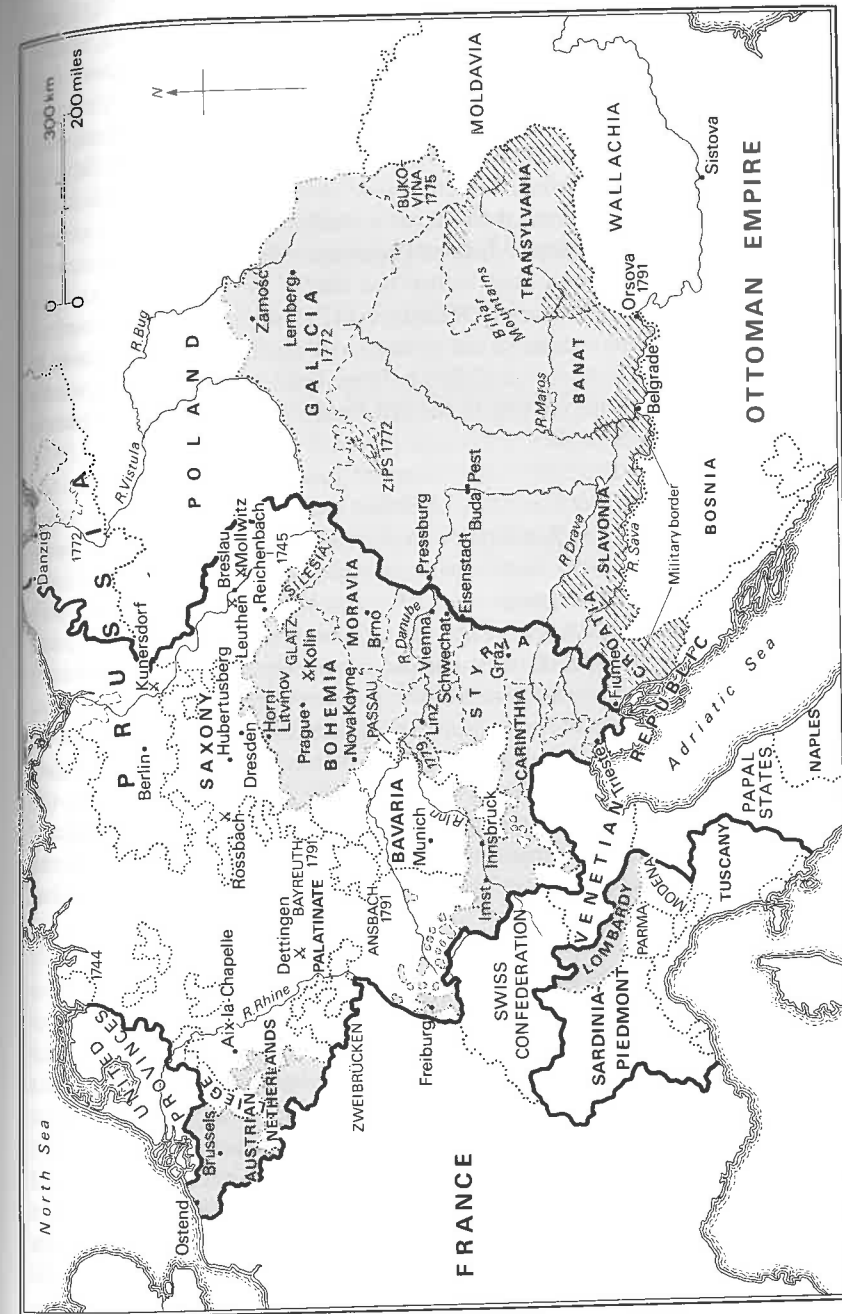


5 The Prussian challenge: war and government reform (1740–1763)

It is one of the paradoxes of Charles VI's reign that he expended so much effort securing recognition of Maria Theresa's rights to the throne, yet did virtually nothing to prepare her for the awesome challenges that she would face. Her Jesuit education had been wholly bereft of instruction in the elements of statecraft. Her father had even excluded her (though not her husband, Francis Stephen) from the councils of state. Whereas she had no government experience, the ministers she inherited from her father had too much: at ages 67, 69, 70, 71, and 77, the five permanent members of the Privy Conference averaged more than three times Maria Theresa's 23 years. State finances were no less decrepit. Charles VI's last wars had obliged the *Hofkammer* to pawn nearly half of its annual cameral revenue of 10 million fl., with the result that part of the Contribution had to be diverted from the military to debt service. So severe was the fiscal crisis that barely half of the monarchy's supposedly 160,000-man army was actually under arms. With only 87,000 fl. of cash on hand and a 103 million fl. state debt, the archduchess was in no position to fight a major war.

The consequences were predictable enough. With the emperor's death Elector Charles Albert lost no time in presenting Bavaria's fraudulent claim to the *Erblande*. He was, however, in no position to act without the outside assistance of more powerful countries that had already recognized the Pragmatic Sanction. Although Cardinal Fleury immediately supported Charles Albert's candidacy for election to the imperial throne, he had every intention of respecting Maria Theresa's succession to all of the Habsburg dominions to the point of rejecting the French war party's call for the monarchy's final destruction. Surprisingly, it was the new king of Prussia who started the momentum toward a war of partition (see Map 4). Although he did not challenge Maria Theresa's succession, Frederick II (1740–86) pledged to help defend her against all enemies in exchange for Lower Silesia. The young queen and her ministers realized that the king's offer of protection was little more than extortion, since it implied that he himself would attack the monarchy should she decline his offer.

Frederick soon represented his claim to Lower Silesia as just compen-



4 The monarchy in 1792

sation for the Habsburgs' earlier escheatment of Jägerndorf (1621) and Liegnitz, Brieg, and Wohlau (1675). His actions were, however, firmly rooted in recent history and *Realpolitik*. Austro-Prussian relations had deteriorated steadily since the beginning of the century, after Emperor Leopold I belatedly realized that the acquisition of a royal crown had heightened, rather than satiated, Hohenzollern ambitions. With the help of their imperial vice chancellor, Friedrich Karl von Schönborn, Joseph I and Charles VI had transformed their father's disillusionment into a comprehensive policy of opposition to further Prussian expansion within Germany. The final insult had come just before the deaths of Charles VI and his Prussian counterpart, Frederick William I (1713–40), when the emperor broke a long-standing commitment to support Prussia's legitimate claim to the prosperous Rhenish duchy of Jülich-Berg. Frederick William reputedly greeted this betrayal by pointing to his son Frederick, exclaiming "There is the man who will avenge me!"

The 28-year-old Frederick was certainly more inclined to deploy the formidable army and war chest that his father had left him. In contrast to his father's timidity and residual loyalty to *Kaiser* and *Reich*, Frederick was a brilliant opportunist who combined a youthful quest for glory with the realization that the Habsburgs were the principal obstacle to Prussia's continued expansion. Nor was he ignorant of the monarchy's recent displays of military incompetence, or of its current estrangement from the Maritime Powers. The new government in Vienna also knew how vulnerable it was. Although it had slightly more men under arms than Prussia, almost all were stationed far away from Silesia, having been committed to defend Hungary from the Turks, Italy from the Spanish, and the Low Countries from the French. For this reason several of Maria Theresa's advisors joined Francis Stephen in advising her to strike a deal with Prussia. In the end, however, the archduchess was so repelled by Frederick's crude attempt at blackmail that she rejected his overtures.

The War of the Austrian Succession

On 16 December 1740 Frederick led his army across the lightly defended Silesian frontier. By the beginning of January he had captured Breslau and virtually all of Lower Silesia. In Vienna, Maria Theresa pieced together an army to recover the duchy in the spring. It was a measure of the military's unpreparedness that she was obliged to entrust it to the hapless Count Neipperg, who had only recently been pardoned and rehabilitated for his role in the surrender of Belgrade. Neipperg performed better at the fateful battle of Mollwitz (10 April 1741), where his outnumbered forces came so close to defeating Frederick that the king fled the battlefield on horseback. A victory,

followed by Frederick's expulsion from Silesia, might have preempted further attempts to contest the integrity of the Habsburg lands. Instead, the narrow defeat at Mollwitz opened the floodgates for a war of partition. At the end of May, France and Spain concluded the treaty of Nymphenburg with Bavaria, whereby they pledged not only to support Charles Albert's candidacy for the imperial throne, but also his claim to most of the *Erblände*. For their efforts, France and Spain would acquire Belgium and Lombardy, thereby stripping Maria Theresa of everything but Hungary and Inner Austria. By mid-June Prussia completed the coalition by adhering to the treaty.

Once again an ambitious German vassal posed a threat to the monarchy's existence. Twice in the past – at White Mountain and Blenheim – the monarchy had met the challenge with the timely assistance of foreign allies and loyal elements of its own ruling elite. But conditions were different in 1740, and for two reasons. First, the monarchy's allies were less convinced of its usefulness as a great power. Whereas its survival had been judged crucial by the other Catholic powers in 1620 and by the anti-French coalition in 1704, no one feared for the balance of power in 1740. Hence the German electors readily accepted French subsidies and agreed to support Charles Albert for emperor. Aside from promising Vienna a meager £300,000 subsidy, the British opted to remain neutral, both because the Walpole ministry wanted to focus on overseas expansion and because George II was reluctant to jeopardize Hanover's security by taking up arms against his long-time Prussian ally. Britain's decision preempted any chance of Dutch intervention. Indeed, both countries were quite willing to see Prussia strengthened, especially if it emerged as a useful, Protestant counterpoise to France. Second, Prussia's triumph at Mollwitz and the Nymphenburg coalition persuaded most of the monarchy's former allies that Maria Theresa and her monarchy were likely beyond help. The only exception was Russia, which offered substantial military assistance, but was then diverted in July 1741 by a French-inspired attack from Sweden. Indeed, news of the treaty of Nymphenburg and the diversion of Russia prompted Augustus III of Saxony-Poland to switch sides and join in the coming partition. Despite having concluded an alliance with Vienna in April, he now repudiated the Pragmatic Sanction and joined the Nymphenburg coalition in exchange for the promise of Moravia.

The same lack of commitment and confidence was also evident among Maria Theresa's own subjects. Here too Charles VI was partly responsible. By excluding Maria Theresa from governmental affairs and most public ceremonies, he had kept her an obscure figure among her own subjects, who now felt little obligation to support her. There also remained residual doubts about her legitimacy, especially in Bohemia, where many nobles continued to see the Josephine line as more legitimate and the German Charles Albert as a

more appropriate consort than the French-speaking Francis Stephen. Nor was the archduchess helped by her colorless and unpopular husband, who had proven a mediocre *generalissimus* in the ill-fated Turkish War and had failed to father a male heir during the first five years of their marriage. Moreover, like the monarchy's former allies, many of her subjects were disinclined to support her so long as her cause seemed lost. Even among her father's advisors, only her Privy Conference Secretary Bartenstein and the 77-year-old Gundaker Starhemberg remained steadfastly loyal, while the rest were content to wait and prepare for a possible Wittelsbach succession.

Those prospects loomed larger during the summer of 1741, as the coalition's forces made swift progress through the *Erblande*. By October a Franco-Bavarian army had seized Upper Austria, whose estates promptly met at Linz to swear allegiance to Charles Albert. Two months later a combined Franco-Saxon-Bavarian force under the French Marshal Belle-Isle took Prague, where nearly half of the Bohemian nobility convened to pay homage to their new Wittelsbach king. As Joseph I's widow Wilhelmine Amalia contemplated Charles Albert's impending triumph, she urged her son-in-law to spare the Austrian countryside since "it is to your advantage that this country is not ruined." If the onset of winter temporarily saved Vienna itself from occupation, it could do nothing to prevent Charles Albert from breaking three centuries of Habsburg control of the imperial crown. It was a sign of Maria Theresa's isolation that the Electoral College's 24 January vote was unanimous, with even George II casting Hanover's ballot for the new Emperor Charles VII (1742–5).

By then, however, the tide was beginning to turn. Any explanation of the monarchy's miraculous recovery must begin with Maria Theresa. Unprepared as she was for the position into which she had been thrust, the Habsburg archduchess was blessed with several key character traits that would serve her well during her forty-year reign. She possessed great common sense, particularly the ability to identify those problems that afflicted the monarchy and find practical solutions for them, even when they contradicted her own rather traditional personal values. If her pragmatism helped save the monarchy, it was her sense of justice that made her the most beloved of all the early modern Habsburgs; her sense of fairness, ethics, and empathy for the unfortunate disarmed even adversaries like Frederick II. She was also an almost infallible judge of talent, capable of promoting and taking the advice of men like Bartenstein, while carefully withholding political responsibilities from less talented individuals, including her own, much beloved husband. Finally, Maria Theresa was more than willing to exploit her position as a female to manipulate the powerful men around her. Her ability to get her way by alternatively displaying her charm, vulnerability, tears, or anger was yet another weapon in her formidable arsenal of guile and grit.

The embattled archduchess had received some good news in March 1741, with the birth of her first son (after three daughters). Vienna had acclaimed the birth of the future Joseph II with a week of tumultuous popular celebrations. One banner declared boldly that "The enemy has lost his chance, for Austria now wears pants." Admittedly, the provision of a male heir somewhat strengthened popular support for the Habsburg-Lorraine succession, but that had proven of little consequence in preventing the conquest of much of the *Erblande*. In desperation Maria Theresa now sought relief from two unlikely sources. First she turned to Hungary. The decision was not taken lightly, given the government's traditional suspicion of the kingdom's loyalty. The Magyars did have their grievances. After having carefully observed the country's laws for the first two decades of his reign, Charles VI had not called a diet since 1729 and had permitted the palatine's office to remain vacant since 1731. His subsequent appointment of Francis Stephen to the extra-constitutional position of viceroy had helped neither man's popularity within the kingdom. Nevertheless, having survived a somewhat contentious coronation diet during June, Maria Theresa now recalled the diet to Pressburg with the intention of seeking their assistance. Nothing was left to chance. She carried with her the same crucifix that Ferdinand II had venerated during the darkest hours of the Bohemian insurrection. When she first appeared before the diet on 11 September, she played the role of damsel in distress to the hilt, imploring its aid with her four-month-old son in her arms and tears in her eyes. The Magyar nation did not disappoint its young queen. Before adjourning at the end of October, it pledged to raise an army of 55,000 which, together with troops raised by Croatia and directly by the crown in Transylvania, the Banat, and the Military Border, would raise Hungary's contribution to 100,000 men.

In pledging their support, the assembled Magyar nobility drew their swords and proclaimed their "life and blood" for their queen in one of Europe's last and most dramatic resorts to the feudal levy. The full story is somewhat less glamorous. The diet's declaration followed several weeks of hard bargaining and royal concessions, among them confirmation of the nobility's "eternal" exemption from taxation and eventual reintegration of the separately administered southern lands with the rest of the kingdom. For all their chivalry the Magyar nobility ultimately raised no more than 10,000 men, a force that was both smaller and slower to mobilize than the *Grenzer* and other troops raised along the kingdom's southern periphery. Hungary's declaration of support did, however, play a tremendous role in building confidence in Maria Theresa's prospects of success, especially within the *Erblande*. It also represented a major catharsis in the Magyar nobility's attitude toward the monarchy. Before 1740 its perspective had been dominated by its humiliating subservience to the dynasty's "German" lands.

The crisis of 1741 reminded it that Hungary also benefited from the larger, more powerful state that the *Erblände* helped provide and therefore had a definite interest in its preservation. In dispatching Hungarian forces outside the kingdom for the first time the Magyar nation endorsed the notion of a Habsburg *Gesamtstaat* as it never had before.

No less important than Hungary's intervention was Prussia's withdrawal from the Nymphenburg coalition. Frederick was eager to spare his army and war chest from further exhaustion. Yet he never would have come to terms with Maria Theresa had he not been convinced that she could prevent a total partition in which he would have certainly wanted to participate. One year ago Maria Theresa's sense of honor had kept her from acceding to Frederick II's demand for Lower Silesia. Now expediency compelled her to cede it in the secret convention of Klein-Schnellendorf (9 October 1741), so that she could concentrate her forces against Charles VII.

Nor did she wait for spring before striking back. During January the newly appointed Field Marshal Khevenhüller led a mixed force drawn from the Silesian front, Hungary, and Italy in the recovery of Upper Austria; Linz itself fell on 23 January, one day before Charles Albert was elected emperor. Then Khevenhüller took the Bavarian capital of Munich on 12 February, just as he was being crowned Emperor Charles VII in Frankfurt. Alarmed by the extent of the Austrian successes, Frederick temporarily re-entered the war by seizing most of Upper Silesia. Yet, despite this latest act of treachery, Maria Theresa bowed to necessity and accepted a British-brokered truce on 11 June that left Prussia in control of almost all of Silesia, as well as the Bohemian county of Glatz; when a formal treaty was signed at Berlin on 28 July, the monarchy retained only three Upper Silesian duchies: Teschen, Troppau, and, ironically, Jägerndorf. The peace did, however, permit Maria Theresa to resume the offensive, especially after Saxony's withdrawal from the war on 17 September. By year's end she had expelled Bavaria's French "auxiliaries" from Bohemia. Her coronation as queen of Bohemia in Prague in May 1743 confirmed her recovery of the kingdom's loyalty – and its all-important Contribution.

In recovering all but her Silesian lands, Maria Theresa had removed any doubt about her succession or the monarchy's survival as a great power. Thus, by the beginning of 1742 she had already reestablished the conditions under which the monarchy might again attract its old allies. In the past that had hinged not only on its being too weak to threaten the balance of power, but on its being strong enough to serve as an effective ally in maintaining it. Now that happy medium had been achieved. In February Sardinia agreed to cooperate in defending northern Italy from an impending invasion by France, Spain, and Naples. Together with the Sardinian army and the British Mediterranean fleet, Austrian forces were at least initially able to check the

Bourbon powers' advance. Whereas Sardinia proved to be an important factor in the peninsula, Britain's belated intervention was decisive everywhere. The Walpole ministry had fallen in February 1742, largely owing to popular pressure to join the war against France. By the beginning of 1743 George II and his new prime minister, Lord Carteret, had left for the continent to join what ultimately became an Anglo-Dutch-Austrian army reminiscent of the coalition armies that had once fought Louis XIV. The so-called Pragmatic Army's victory at Dettingen (27 June) – the last battle ever fought by a British king – virtually completed the expulsion of the French from Germany.

No less crucial was the reappearance of British financial aid. When combined with the monarchy's own resources, a very substantial £5 million subsidy quickly reestablished the military might that it had enjoyed earlier in the century. By the summer of 1744 Austrian forces had gone on the offensive by invading both Naples and Alsace. Maria Theresa's rising fortunes prompted Frederick II to attack her yet again, this time by invading Bohemia and seizing Prague. For the first time, however, she was able to repel the invasion, albeit at the price of recalling her forces from Alsace.

Yet another opportunity opened with the sudden death of the Wittelsbach Emperor Charles VII at the beginning of 1745. His 17-year-old son promptly concluded a peace treaty at Füssen by which he accepted the Pragmatic Sanction and pledged to support Maria Theresa's consort in the next imperial election, in exchange for the restoration of Bavaria. Despite the expected resistance from Prussia, Francis Stephen was duly elected by the electoral college on 13 September. Maria Theresa realized the significance of the imperial crown for a man who was grand duke of Tuscany, but had no authority within the Habsburg dominions. Hence she guaranteed that the coronation ceremony belonged to him alone, first by refusing to be formally crowned empress, then by limiting herself to watching his procession from a balcony as it wound its way through the streets of Frankfurt!

With Francis Stephen's succession as Emperor Francis I (1745–65), the house of Habsburg had regained control of the imperial throne, albeit through its Lorraine surrogate. Now only Silesia remained. Yet, Frederick prevented its recovery by defeating the emperor's equally incompetent brother, Charles of Lorraine, when he led an Austro-Saxon army into the duchy, first at Hohenfriedberg (4 June), then at Soor (30 September). Following Frederick's seizure of Dresden, Maria Theresa reluctantly acceded to British pressure and concluded a formal peace treaty at the Saxon capital on Christmas Day. In confirming the terms of the previous treaty of Berlin, the Peace of Dresden concluded hostilities in Germany.

For the rest of the war, she pursued the same strategic priorities that her uncle, Joseph I, had adopted four decades earlier by focusing primarily on

Italy, while entrusting Belgium's defense to the Maritime Powers. This did not prevent her from losing Parma to a late Spanish counterthrust. The British also obliged her to cede western Lombardy to Sardinia as compensation for its assistance against the Bourbon Powers. Nor was the Anglo-Dutch army able to prevent the brilliant French Marshal de Saxe from conquering the Austrian Netherlands and even the southern provinces of the United Provinces. In their separate peace talks with the French, the British made sure that the monarchy retained Belgium by compensating France with territories seized by its forces in the New World. But the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (18 October 1748) also confirmed Prussia's possession of Silesia and, less significantly, Parma's cession to Elizabeth Farnese's second son, Philip.

When seen from the vantage point of 1741, Maria Theresa had reason to welcome the peace. The monarchy had survived, with her at its head, and her husband had kept the imperial crown under the dynasty's control. Although the empress attributed the "miracle of the house of Austria" to the intervention of the usual Habsburg deities, she owed her success to a more mundane combination. Certainly her own determination and political skill were important. But so was the customary, though largely voluntary, assistance of the monarchy's estates and foreign allies. However tardy her domestic and international support may have been, it had come in the end once she had demonstrated that she was capable of preserving the monarchy as an instrument for serving their own interests. Indeed, although it is easy to laud Maria Theresa's distinctive contribution to the monarchy's survival, her predecessors' successes in weathering similar crises suggest that a less remarkable individual might have achieved comparable results with at least some display of pragmatism and determination.

But a price still had to be paid for the dynasty's continued reliance on consensual politics. Within her dominions Maria Theresa grudgingly accepted the Hungarians' desiderata. She also deemed it wise to be lenient with the fickle Bohemian and Upper Austrian nobles who had deserted her. To be sure both estates had acted out of expediency and self-interest: the choice between the Habsburg and Wittelsbach claimants generally depended on whether an individual nobleman's landholdings or government offices were in areas held by Maria Theresa or Charles Albert. Though she initially ordered the expulsion of Prague's Jews for advancing money to her Wittelsbach rival and welcoming the brief Prussian occupation of 1744, she readily ignored the nobles' trespasses because she needed their support.

The cost of her allies' support was higher still. In successive negotiations she had been obliged to surrender almost all of Silesia, much of Lombardy, and even occupied Bavaria in exchange for the continued payment of British subsidies. The empress was likely correct in believing that she could have

negotiated more favorable terms from Prussia, Sardinia, and Bavaria had she not had to depend on British negotiators. Indeed, they had even killed an Austro-Sardinian plan to swap Tuscany for Bavaria, because they feared that it would prompt Prussian re-entry into the war. Great Britain's stance was understandable, given its own interests. It was quite content to build up middle-sized states like Prussia and Sardinia as handy counterweights in the ever-changing balance of power; to earn its subsidies, its Habsburg ally would have to fight the common French enemy and no one else. The divergence between Austrian and British interests was clear enough to the empress, who protested her own diplomats' exclusion from the Anglo-French peace talks by exclaiming that "my enemies will give me better terms than my friends." In the end she refused to sign the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Instead, the empress viewed it and the earlier peace of Dresden as no more than an interim settlement that she was determined to overthrow.

The first Theresian reform, 1749–56

It is easy to understand her resolve. Within the past fifteen years (1733–48) three lost wars had cost the monarchy most of the conquests of the century's opening decades. What it retained – Belgium, the Banat, and most of Lombardy – was materially less valuable than Silesia, whose million plus inhabitants had been the most productive and heavily taxed of all the Habsburg lands. Admittedly financial resources had never been at the heart of the monarchy's success. One is reminded of Prince Eugene's lament at one point during the War of the Spanish Succession that "if the monarchy's survival depended on its ability to raise 50,000 fl. at once, it would nonetheless be impossible to save it." Of course, it *had* repeatedly weathered such crises by receiving last-minute infusions of funds from its allies, estates, and loyal aristocrats. Yet recent events had demonstrated that, in the absence of a genuine threat to the balance of power, the monarchy could no longer count on the intercession of such traditional allies as the Maritime Powers and the German princes.

The loss was especially ominous within the Holy Roman empire, where Frederick II was now in the position to block the exercise of imperial authority. It was a measure of Prussia's sudden emergence as a counterpoise to Habsburg leadership that Francis Stephen had been unable to induce the *Reichstag* to declare war against France after his election in 1745. Despite having strengthened its ties within the empire over the previous half-century, the monarchy now resumed its reluctant, incremental retreat from German affairs. Indeed, with the loss of Silesia, German speakers now comprised no more than a third of the monarchy's 16 million people, a demographic shift pregnant with consequences for the next century.

Of more immediate import was the strategic impact of Silesia's loss. Until now powerful enemies like France, Sweden, and Bourbon Spain had been obliged to fight the monarchy from a considerable distance; although the Ottoman empire shared a long border with the monarchy, its military staging area near Constantinople was nearly three months' march from the Hungarian frontier. For a generation the monarchy had enjoyed an especially broad *glacis* of weak and benign neighbors that gave it time to react to any foreign military threat. Not unlike Great Britain with its English Channel, the central government could expend the time necessary to reach a consensus with its ruling elite and foreign allies before going to war. Now, with one blow Frederick II had breached these defenses and placed his armies within a short march of what was left of the wealthy Bohemian crownlands.

To survive the monarchy would need a more assertive and efficient central government, one that was capable of raising sufficient funds and troops to defend itself without having to rely on voluntary domestic or foreign support. The aging mediocrities who composed Maria Theresa's first cabinet were hardly the men to carry out such a reform. Luckily, most of them had died before the war ended. Among those who remained, only the relatively young Privy Conference Secretary Bartenstein played a decisive role in convincing the empress of the need for change. Theirs was never a cordial relationship. The Catholic convert from the Swabian *Vorlande* was too "prickly, precise, and pedantic" to inspire personal warmth. Nor did the empress easily overlook his common origins and the part he had played in her husband's earlier renunciation of the duchy of Lorraine. Yet personal considerations did not prevent her from seeking his counsel. If Bartenstein convinced Maria Theresa to reform the monarchy's administration, it was a new minister, Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz, who actually devised the plan. Haugwitz was also a Catholic convert who had initially fled his native Silesia after the Prussian invasion. Ugly, unrefined, and colorless, he was nonetheless a perceptive, efficient, and tireless worker who first attracted attention in 1743, after he had doubled crown revenue within a year after being appointed governor of the three Silesian counties still under Habsburg control.

It was with the assistance of these two men that Maria Theresa now launched the first in a series of comprehensive administrative and constitutional reforms that are without parallel in the monarchy's history. Like all of her predecessors she began by recasting the central administration. None of the monarchy's highest offices went untouched. As early as 1742 a new State Chancery (*Staatskanzlei*), took over the formulation and dispatch of foreign policy from the Privy Conference and the rival Imperial and Austrian chanceries. Four years later the *Hofkriegsrat* relinquished all control over military supply to the General War Commissary, which now became a fully

independent and equal ministry. Indeed, the total elimination of the Inner Austrian and Tyrolean War Offices in 1744 assured the War Commissary of greater authority than the *Hofkriegsrat* had ever enjoyed. The most dramatic move came in 1749, when the empress entrusted the *Erblände's* affairs to a new Directory of Administration and Finance (*Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus*) headed by Haugwitz. In practice the Directory was little more than a parent body for a powerful Court Deputation (*Hofdeputation*), soon renamed the Internal Conference (*Conferenz in Internis*), and a Supreme Judiciary (or *Oberste Justizstelle*). Together with the State Chancery, they now reduced such previously preeminent offices as the Privy Conference, *Hofkammer*, and Austrian and Bohemian Chanceries to virtual oblivion.

Although these administrative changes may have rendered the central government more efficient, they could not hope to improve the monarchy's position as a great power without increasing state revenue and the military forces that it supported. At the end of 1747 Haugwitz presented a plan for increasing the army to over 200,000 men, to be apportioned as follows:

108,000	<i>Erblände</i>
25,000	Hungary
24,000	Military Border zones
25,000	Lombardy
22,000	Austrian Netherlands

His expectation that the *Erblände* would fill out over half of the army was consistent with the perceptions and policies of his predecessors. What was radically different was the means by which revenue would be increased. His model was Silesia, which had protested the weight of royal taxation just three days before Charles VI's death, but which was now paying twice as much to Frederick II. Unlike the new Prussian regime in Silesia, Haugwitz did not propose to abolish the estates' right to approve taxes or participate in their collection. He did, however, expect them to double the Contribution and to commit themselves for ten years at a time, much as Bohemia had done in the Decennial Recess of 1715. Rather than squeeze all of the increase from the peasantry, the nobles' own domain lands would now shoulder at least part of the burden. Until now only the Bohemian nobility had ever agreed to such a tax, and then only as a temporary, wartime measure during the reign of Joseph I. Indeed, although the clergy had always volunteered considerable sums in wartime, it too was now required to pay a share of the Contribution on an annual basis. Finally, once the estates had collected the taxes, they would immediately turn them over to crown administrators for safer keeping.

By inspiring the most dramatic fiscal reform in Austrian history, Silesia continued to serve as a conduit for new and innovative ideas, even though most of it was no longer part of the monarchy. But Haugwitz's proposal did not go unchallenged. The Bohemian Chancellor, Count Friedrich Harrach,

led the majority of ministers in opposing such a radical innovation. Yet the empress readily recognized the necessity for such a reform. Even as she overrode their objections she ridiculed their unrealistic conservatism by predicting that, "in fifty years, no one will believe that these were the ministers whom I alone created." When Harrach refused to present the proposal to the Bohemian estates, she sent Haugwitz in his place; Harrach resigned soon thereafter.

The question remained, however, whether the estates themselves would give their consent. Haugwitz had assured the empress that they would comply, if only to escape Silesia's fate of Prussian conquest and absolutism. That had doubtless been his experience during his brief term as governor of rump Silesia. This was one reason why the government approached the Bohemian estates first; another was that it realized that Bohemia would be eager to reassert its longstanding loyalty to the dynasty after having cavorted with Charles Albert early in the war. In the end both the Bohemian lands and the Austrian archduchies readily acquiesced to the government's requests.

Inner Austria and Tyrol proved more resistant, as befitted their relative remoteness from the Prussian threat. Carniola and Styria refused to commit themselves to a Decennial Recess, but they did agree to pledge taxes in three-year increments and regularly renewed them thereafter. Having already doubled its Contribution during the past war, Styria, was soon paying 1.1 million fl. annually, or quadruple its Contribution under Charles VI. Only Carinthia rejected Haugwitz's plan outright, despite Maria Theresa's repeated demands that it comply "voluntarily"; after 1750 she simply imposed and collected the duchy's share of the Contribution without bothering to consult its estates. Maria Theresa expected somewhat less from Tyrol, which agreed nevertheless to pay a regular, annual Contribution for the first time in its history. It also acquiesced in her separation of the Swabian lands from its jurisdiction, so that their taxes now flowed directly to Vienna, instead of Innsbruck.

Finally, although the crown never directly challenged the estates' right to collect the Contribution, Haugwitz established a system of crown deputations (1748) to monitor its local allocation and collection within the *Erblande*. Within three years the government had essentially coopted the estates' own agents, first by subordinating them to the deputations, then by assuming responsibility for their salaries.

Not surprisingly the empress and Haugwitz were less willing to challenge the existing privileges and corporate institutions outside the *Erblande*, where the collaborative relationship between crown and country was less firmly established. The empress did discard her father's delusions of a separate Spanish realm, first by renaming the *Consejo de España* the *Consiglio d'Italia*, then by subordinating it and the council for the Netherlands to the new State

Chancery. Otherwise she did nothing to infringe on the autonomy of her Italian and Flemish subjects. Nor did she attempt to subvert any of Hungary's governmental institutions. Thus, whereas she had emasculated the Austrian, Bohemian, and Imperial Chanceries, she left their Hungarian and Transylvanian counterparts intact, even though the latter was so insignificant that it conducted its business at a Viennese tavern.

The government's continued reliance on its Austrian and Bohemian lands increased the already unequal tax burden between the monarchy's German and Hungarian lands. Admittedly, Hungary was much poorer than the rest of Maria Theresa's other dominions. Nevertheless, by mid-century a prolonged period of peace and colonization had increased its population to over six million, making it far more populous than either the Austrian lands (3.9 million) or what was left of Greater Bohemia (3.1 million). Even when counting troops drawn from the Military Border, Greater Hungary was still expected to provide less than half as many recruits as the *Erblande*. Maria Theresa's acute sense of realism and her genuine gratitude for Hungary's crucial assistance in the recent war induced her to accept this disparity. Hence she abandoned the coercive and extra-constitutional tactics of the past in favor of a relationship based on greater trust and collaboration. She patiently endured one diet after another in which her Magyar subjects presented and vociferously debated hundreds of gravamina, while slashing her own requests for modest tax increases. Even after agreeing to half of the increase she requested, the 3.2 million fl. approved by the diet of 1751 implied a per capita tax rate of less than half that imposed within the *Erblande*.

The empress was able to compensate somewhat for the diet's niggardliness within those southern parts of the kingdom that were administered directly by the army. Thus, in Transylvania her military governor completed the process of emasculating that principality's diet at least a decade before it held its last meeting in 1761. By 1764 the principality's annual Contribution of 1,365,000 fl. was among the highest per capita collected anywhere in the monarchy. Perhaps the most important changes came in the Military Border. Here progress was measured not so much in money, as in the quantity and quality of troops provided. Indeed, the wartime performance of 45,000 *Grenzer* emboldened the empress to delay implementing her earlier promise to restore the kingdom's southern districts to the diet's control. Although she did return most of the Tisza-Mures Military Border to the estates, she devoted her energy elsewhere to improving and extending the entire system. Whereas the *Grenzer* had enhanced their reputation as ferocious fighters, inconsistent supply and pay by the Inner Austrian estates had sometimes reduced them to an undisciplined rabble. In 1750 the central government resolved the problem by assuming full responsibility for supplying, paying,

and staffing the Military Border. The replacement of native commanders with regular army officers soon completed their integration with the rest of the Austrian army. The government also extended the Military Border 500 miles eastward across the full extent of the Hungarian-Turkish frontier by creating new districts in the Banat (1742) and Transylvania (1762–4).

These innovations did not come without opposition. Quite aside from the futile protests of the Inner Austrian estates, the largely Orthodox *Grenzer* themselves initially opposed the appointment of Catholic German officers, fearing that it presaged the loss of their religious and other privileges. Their fears were allayed somewhat by a special “Illyrian” Commission (1745) that looked after the interests of all Orthodox Serb communities, even those that were situated within Hungary proper. Not surprisingly, the Commission’s extraterritorial rights inspired protests from the Hungarian and Croatian estates. Nor did the new Transylvanian Military Border gain ready acceptance among local nobles and free peasants, including several hundred Szekler who were killed in 1764 in a vain attempt to forestall its creation. Nevertheless, the Military Border, the Banat, and Transylvania constituted the few places in the monarchy where the Habsburgs could rule like absolute monarchs.

By contrast, Maria Theresa’s expectations were probably lowest in Milan and the Low Countries, principally because both dominions regularly financed their own administrative and military expenses with a minimum of acrimony. She also appreciated the large loans that Belgian and Milanese merchants regularly floated for the central government. Moreover, both provided modest increases in revenue without the need to introduce major constitutional changes like those carried out in the *Erblande*. Much of Belgium’s larger contribution stemmed from a rare Austrian success at the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, where the Dutch agreed to renounce the annual 1.5 million fl. subsidy that they had collected for the upkeep of its barrier fortresses. Meanwhile, Milan’s revenue also rose immediately after the war, following the first significant administrative and fiscal restructuring since the Renaissance, including a new land cadaster completed in 1755.

The fruits of Haugwitz’s project were both immediate and dramatic. By 1754 the Venetian envoy was reporting that total crown income had doubled from 20 to 40 million fl. within the past decade. Despite losing most of Silesia, Bohemia’s Contribution actually increased from 6 to 7.4 million fl. by 1763, while Austria’s more than doubled from 2 to 5.1 millions. Although the *Erblande* fell somewhat short of Haugwitz’s quota of 108,000 troops, the increased and more efficient levy of taxes and troops throughout the monarchy nevertheless raised the army to perhaps 180,000 by 1756. Of necessity, the growth of the military paralleled an equally dramatic increase in the army of civil officials who now administered the Habsburg

state. Within the core lands alone the central bureaucracy nearly doubled from 6,000 (1740) to 10,000 (1762); two decades later it would approach 20,000.

Not only did the military and civil services grow in size, they also evolved in ability and outlook. Led by Prussia, many of the German states had taken steps to professionalize their military and civil officialdom. By contrast the Habsburg army and officer corps had changed little from Montecuccoli’s day. Every regiment was trained and equipped differently by its commander. The officers themselves were still appointed and promoted by favor or purchase, rather than by merit. Deficiencies in the officer corps were most notable at the top, where both Francis Stephen and his brother, Charles of Lorraine, had recently assumed places in the long line of hapless commanders-in-chief that had followed Prince Eugene’s death. Beginning in 1748, the monarchy’s new *Hofkriegsrat* President, Field Marshal Daun, improved and systematized the army’s training and equipment by following the proven example of Prussia. All ranks received higher and more regular pay. Civil service reform began at the same time on the insistence of Haugwitz, who assured the empress that if divine intervention had indeed saved the monarchy in the past, it had done so by compensating for what had already been lost by incompetent ministers and bureaucrats. Civil officials were henceforth evaluated on merit and awarded better remuneration, including a comprehensive pension system that had long been common among their German counterparts.

If the Theresian regime was bent on professionalizing the military and civil services, it was also determined to make the entire ruling elite more secular in outlook. This dramatic break with the culture of the Counter-Reformation was partly motivated by a desire for greater autonomy from the Papacy and the rest of the Church establishment. Yet it stemmed primarily from the belated recognition that the monarchy’s close adherence to the values of the Counter-Reformation had retarded the evolution of the kind of rational political culture that had made Prussia such an imposing threat.

Whereas the empress heartily endorsed secularization as a practical necessity, the impetus for cultural reform came from elsewhere. Just as the Counter-Reformation had entered the monarchy from Italy, secular reformation now came from the peninsula’s great Catholic reformer, Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750). Not unlike the Theresian regime, Muratori had been inspired by the desire to counteract his country’s economic and cultural backwardness by restricting the church’s authority and influence to spiritual matters. He abhorred the lost productivity caused both by the large number of holy days and by the excessive devotion of religious confraternities and public ceremonies. He also blamed the prevalence of ignorance and superstition on the Jesuits’ scholastic methods, which relied heavily on

Latin and the rote memorization of impractical knowledge. By mid-century Muratori's advocacy of human knowledge and reason, as well as German theories of natural law, had had an impact on many of the monarchy's leading churchmen, most notably consecutive archbishops of Vienna, Johann Joseph Trautson (1751–7) and Christoph Anton Migazzi (1757–1803). Both men were eager to assist the government in reducing the power of the papacy and its Jesuit paladins. Other Viennese reformers had a more radical agenda. Half of the State Chancery's six ministers had been educated at Protestant German universities, where the rationalist doctrines of Christian Wolff had been instilled into a generation of future civil servants. Meanwhile, the empress's influential personal physician, Gerhard van Swieten, wanted to introduce an even more secular cultural regime similar to that of his native Flanders.

Whatever their agenda, the men around Maria Theresa focused most of their efforts on the Jesuits. They wasted no time stripping the Society of its century-long monopoly over censorship. Within a year of her succession they had already begun to shift the responsibility for non-religious works from the lay faculty of the Jesuit universities to civil officials. By the end of the decade they had stripped the Jesuit University of Vienna of its authority over the production and sale of books within the city. In 1751 censorship was formally in the hands of a new Censorship Commission (*Zensurkommission*) directed by van Swieten. Instead of aristocrats or high government officials, the commission was dominated by some of central Europe's most innovative thinkers, including the German cameralist J.H.G. von Justi (1720–71) and the political theorist Karl von Martini (1726–1800). Although the commission initially included two Jesuits, who were responsible for religious and philosophical works, their competence was progressively reduced until 1759, when they were expelled at the insistence of Archbishop Migazzi. At the same time the archbishop also induced the Censorship Commission to ban all Jesuit publications. The Commission did, however, encourage individual Jesuit writers to continue to publish independently by depriving their superiors of any editorial control over their work.

The Theresian regime also initiated the process of wresting control of the monarchy's educational system from the Jesuits and other religious orders. The first stage, which consumed the first half of the reign, focused only on the educational and vocational needs of the noble and professional classes. Led by van Swieten, the government quickly asserted control over the University of Vienna's curriculum by establishing new faculties for history, geography, science, civics, and natural law. It also reformed several existing disciplines. Van Swieten personally overhauled the medical faculty in 1749, after discovering that large numbers of medical students were enrolling in foreign universities in order to receive adequate training. By 1753 the

philosophy, theology, and law curricula had also been restructured to reflect the influence of German natural law theorists like Christian Wolff. Meanwhile, parallel curricular changes were instituted in the *Erblande's* other universities at Prague, Graz, Innsbruck, and Freiburg. No less important was the childhood preparation of the monarchy's elite, especially those intended for government service. Although the government did not yet have the resources to challenge Jesuit control of education below the university level, it did establish several preparatory schools. The most famous was the *Theresianum* (1746), an academy for future civil servants that was housed in the old Favorita palace. There was also a military school established at Wiener Neustadt in 1751 and a so-called Oriental Academy, which was dedicated in 1754 for the training of diplomats for service in the Balkans. Significantly, both the *Theresianum* and Oriental Academy were staffed primarily with Jesuit faculty, but soon provided a forum for a new generation of educational reformers.

By their very nature, Maria Theresa's early cultural initiatives did not bring immediate results like those effected by Haugwitz's tax reforms. Rather they constituted a long-term investment in the monarchy's future. To some extent the same could be said for the mercantile policies that she pursued during the opening three decades of her reign. After the war she redoubled her father's efforts to strengthen the economic base that supported the monarchy's taxes and troops. Above all, she intensified past efforts to make the economy more independent from foreign exporters – only now the competition included the former province of Silesia. Its loss had suddenly deprived the rest of the Bohemian lands of their major domestic outlet for finishing raw textiles, such as unbleached linen. The government hoped that the Bohemian lands could fill the gap themselves, thereby avoiding a most unwelcome dependence on Prussia, while also ruining the Silesian economy by depriving it of its Bohemian suppliers. Not surprisingly, the resulting postwar factory boom took place mainly in the Bohemian lands, with Upper Austria a close second. As in the past the state relied on private, mainly aristocratic entrepreneurs and investors, except when bankruptcies forced it to intervene. It also continued to provide subsidies and reduce guild restrictions, especially when they hampered the growth of export industries. In an effort to encourage new technology, the government imported foreign experts and awarded prizes for using the latest methods – while penalizing those entrepreneurs who failed to employ them. In addition to factory construction, the government also endeavored to protect new and existing industries from Prussian Silesia and other foreign competitors by erecting higher tariff barriers in Bohemia (1751), Hungary (1754), and Austria (1755). It also redirected the flow of commerce southward through the Adriatic and the Balkans, at the expense of the former northern route that passed through Silesia. As part of this strategy

it founded and nurtured new trading ventures, including a Trieste-Fiume Company, with the help of investors from the Austrian Netherlands and Italy.

The next two decades yielded some impressive results, especially in those cottage industries that dominated Bohemia's proto-industrial landscape. For example, the town-run concern of Nova Kdyne that was founded in 1769 employed 300 workers on site, but also 1,500 home spinners and weavers. There were, however, also major manufacturing establishments employing advanced production methods, such as at the textile mill at Horní Litvínov, where each of 400 workers performed just one step in a forty-five-stage wool production process. According to historian Herman Freudenberger, the Moravian town of Brno became "the Manchester of central Europe" following establishment of a large fine-woolen factory in 1764. To the south the Trieste-Fiume Company also flourished. Thanks to a monopoly for refining foreign sugar (1755), it was soon running a refinery that employed 700 workers. Indeed, the government's overall effort to redirect its trade routes away from Prussia was rewarded by impressive growth in the business of both Adriatic ports.

As before, the government's industrial strategy ignored Hungary, which was still valued only as a producer of food staples and a captive market for the *Erblande's* finished goods. A new Universal Commercial Directory that supervised mercantile operations even redefined its competence to exclude Hungarian affairs within just three years of its establishment in 1746. The only notable exception to this bias was the promotion of mining in the Bihar Mountains of Transylvania, which had now replaced Silesia as the monarchy's most mineral-rich province. Otherwise the Theresian regime limited its efforts to promoting agriculture, most notably by dispatching a second and, ultimately, much more successful wave of 43,000 German colonists to southern Hungary.

The limits of reform

By 1756 Maria Theresa had already earned an honored place in Austrian history. In less than a decade she had virtually doubled state revenue, restructured the administrative and military system, and begun the process of entrusting it to a more competent, professional elite. Yet another contribution was Maria Theresa's solution of the succession crisis that had nearly destroyed the monarchy. Her marriage with Francis Stephen was unquestionably the greatest conjugal love-match in the dynasty's history. Together they had sixteen children during their first nineteen years of marriage (1737–56), a period during which the empress was pregnant two-thirds of the time and the Hofburg itself assumed the appearance of a

nursery school. Only the onset of menopause ended the constant parade of new archdukes and archduchesses.

Yet, with the notable exception of her offspring, Austria's last baroque ruler contributed very little to the monarchy's development that was conceptually new. Admittedly, many of her early initiatives represented an advance in the government's application of the cameral sciences, which now extended beyond mercantile strategies designed to promote economic growth to assume more radical administrative and cultural dimensions. Yet historian Grete Klingenstein has shown that the ideas behind many of her reforms had already surfaced during her father's reign. What she provided was superior energy and determination that translated those ideas into action, together with a flexible pragmatism that always knew exactly when and where to push for change. Of course, like many of her predecessors (*except* her father), she was blessed with a motivation born of desperation. Not unlike a Martin Luther, Winston Churchill, or Abraham Lincoln, she was pushed to greatness by a crisis of survival that demanded nothing less; without a Frederick II to confront her, Maria Theresa would have probably done much less to change the monarchy's existing balance of domestic political forces or its cultural orientation.

However dramatic its results, the First Theresian Reform was hardly revolutionary in the tactics it employed. Although the central government had become much more assertive and efficient, it nevertheless continued to seek the consent and cooperation of the monarchy's estates, whenever possible. Generally speaking, the ruling classes responded, out of both a shared appreciation of the Prussian threat and a desire to retain the dynasty's favor, together with the patronage that stemmed from it. Where a consensus was not possible, such as in Hungary, Maria Theresa relented, thereby entrenching further the double standard that already existed between it and the *Erblande*. Only in Carinthia and the militarized districts of southern Hungary did she demonstrate a capacity for the methods of absolutism. There was, of course, some grumbling by the estates, displaced corporate officials, churchmen, and even peasants and townspeople who resented reductions in religious holidays. The British minister Keith found popular criticism of her clerical reforms so intense that "it would not be tolerated in the most free government in Europe." At one point an angry mob expressed its displeasure by pelting Haugwitz's residence with stones and excrement. Yet such manifestations of discontent paled by comparison with France, Spain, or Brandenburg-Prussia, where military force had to be employed at various stages of the centralization process. In the end Maria Theresa retained the trust, loyalty, and cooperation of ruling elites and their corporate bodies by seeking their cooperation, rather than their subjection.

Another reason for the muted opposition was that the empress pursued a

limited agenda that conformed to her own conservatism. For all their intensity and success, her mercantile strategies deviated little from those employed under her father; she was as yet unexposed, or at least unsympathetic, to the free market ideas that had already begun to emerge elsewhere in Europe. Similarly, her secularization of censorship and elite education was driven by reason of state, not by the Enlightenment ideas that inspired some of her advisors; far from opposing censorship itself, she and her ministers actually strengthened the extensive, but characteristically ineffective system that had existed under Charles VI. For her the written word was primarily an instrument of social control rather than public enlightenment. Hence the Censorship Commission scrutinized textbooks to insure that they disseminated the proper moral and religious values. She even refused to create an academy of sciences because she feared that it might promote heresy. Nor did the recent curricular reforms persuade her to allow Protestants to receive degrees at any of the monarchy's universities.

Maria Theresa was, in fact, determined to use all available means to impose her rather rigid standards of Christian morality and religious orthodoxy. One example was her creation of a "chastity commission" to curb prostitution; she even insisted on denying promotions to army officers who visited brothels, despite her *Hofkriegsrat* president's retort that he would still be an ensign had the ban been in effect at the start of his career. The empress's decision to expel Prague's (and later all of Bohemia's) Jews was an early, but hardly isolated example of her religious intolerance. Although she eventually commuted their sentence to the far more constructive assessment of a fine, she did so only after the Bohemian estates had persuaded her that their expulsion would devastate the kingdom's economy. Her anti-Semitism was also evident in the sharp reduction in the government's patronage of Jewish financiers. Their exclusion compelled her to turn to foreign, largely Protestant creditors, but she apparently regarded them as the lesser of two evils.

Indeed, soon after the conclusion of peace she resumed her predecessor's efforts to eradicate the remaining pockets of Protestantism within the Austrian lands. In a scene reminiscent of past Reformation Commissions, she established a *Religionskommission* in March 1752 that levied heavy fines on anyone caught in possession of Protestant books; ultimately, it set up Conversion Houses (*Konversionshäuser*), to which all but the most elderly Protestants were committed for re-education by Catholic priests. Three months later a *Transmigrationpatent* ordered the forcible relocation of recalcitrant Protestants to Transylvania. The subsequent transfer was so badly handled that a quarter of the 2,664, mostly Upper Austrian, Protestants died in transit.

If Maria Theresa still adhered to the values of the Counter-Reformation,

she was also a committed champion of feudal society. Although she felt obliged to place the military and civil service on a merit system, she did so reluctantly, preferring instead to base the appointment and advancement of officials solely on class rank. She was under no such constraints in the countryside, where she initially did nothing to stem the widening gap between the landed aristocracy and lesser nobility. In Bohemia the aristocracy continued to expand its control of the land; by mid-century it had bought out so many gentry families that only one hundred remained of the six hundred that had existed in 1620. In Hungary the diet went so far as to make a legal distinction between propertied and landless gentry, with the poorest nobles losing their tax exemption, county assembly seats, and office-holding rights. Nor was there any reason for the empress to inhibit the centuries-long transformation of the Bohemian and Hungarian landscape into great latifundia, run by a small group of aristocrats. If nothing else, it was far easier for her to enlist the support of a few powerful aristocrats through royal favor than to control an unwieldy and faceless mass of insecure gentry.

Admittedly the Theresian regime did prove somewhat more sensitive to the fate of the *Erblande's* peasants, if only because it now subscribed more fully to the German cameralist notion of *Bauernschutz*, which sought to preserve them as the primary source of taxable income. Hence, the recent increases in the Contribution were divided equally between peasant-held "rustical" land and the heretofore untapped revenue from the nobles' demesne. New decrees forbade the nobility from resorting to its past habits of shifting its share of the Contribution from dominical to rustical land (1748), or from incorporating peasant plots into their demesne (1751). To prevent them from doing so, the government commissioned sophisticated land surveys that distinguished between rustical and dominical land. To ensure that each peasant household maintained what it judged a minimum living standard, it carefully calibrated the tax assessments for each plot of rustical land according to size, type (arable, pasture, gardens, vineyards, woods, even fishponds), and proximity to market; it was a measure of the cameralist penchant for precision that arable land was classified into nine discrete categories, according to fertility. By 1753 the government's new commitment to *Bauernschutz* also prompted it to begin inventorying the extent of *robot* labor.

Yet, having induced the *Erblande's* nobles to shoulder roughly a quarter of the new Contribution, Maria Theresa was still unwilling to press her luck by confronting them directly over their continued abuse of the peasantry. When a royal commission reported that nobles were still shifting taxes, seizing rustical land, and increasing manorial obligations, she merely reissued new, equally unenforceable edicts. Then, in 1756 she ended the embarrassment by

disbanding the commission itself. The fact remains, however, that neither Haugwitz's higher Contribution nor continued manorial oppression caused any major peasant uprisings within the *Erblände* during the first three decades of Maria Theresa's reign. As peasant revolts in southern Hungary (1753), Slavonia (1755), and Transylvania (1751, 1759) demonstrated, the worst forms of noble exploitation could still be found in the lands of St. Stephen.

The Diplomatic Revolution and the Seven Years' War

However much or little Maria Theresa undertook during the first reform period was determined not so much by Enlightenment notions of human freedom, equality, or justice, as they were by her perception of what would be necessary to win back Silesia. No sooner had she initiated her reforms, than she began contemplating renewing her struggle with Frederick II. During the spring of 1749 she convened the Privy Conference to consider the likely balance of forces in the next war with Prussia. She could be certain of support from Tsarina Elizabeth II (1741–62), who had concluded a defensive alliance with her in 1746 because she too feared the Prussian "usurper" and was unwilling to accept him as an equal player on the east European stage. The same could not be said for the Maritime Powers. After their humiliation in the last war, the Dutch were likely to remain neutral in any future conflict. Meanwhile the Conference recognized that the British would be unwilling to support the recovery of Silesia, especially if it detracted from the fulfilment of their own goal of reducing France. Of course, this was nothing new. Over the past half century her British ally had limited the monarchy's territorial acquisitions at Ryswick (1697), Carlowitz (1699), and Utrecht (1713), had failed to come to its assistance in the War of the Polish Succession (1733–8), and had recently forced it to give up valuable territory in Silesia, Milan, and occupied Bavaria. Nevertheless, of the seven men present, only the youngest and newest Conference member favored dispensing with the British alliance. Having been the chief Austrian negotiator at Aix-la-Chapelle, the brilliant 37-year-old Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz had witnessed "perfidious Albion" in action. The empress now backed Kaunitz, doubtless in the expectation that her domestic reforms would enable her to do without the subsidies that had previously held the monarchy captive to British interests.

There was, however, a second problem. Although Maria Theresa was prepared to dispense with her British ally, neither she nor her ministers felt that the monarchy could recover Silesia while making war with both France and Prussia. True Lorrainer that he was, Francis Stephen urged his wife to forget Silesia and to reconcile with Prussia for the purpose of attacking France. Instead the empress supported Kaunitz's proposal to seek a

rapprochement with France. Kaunitz was, in fact, advocating a long-overdue revolution in Habsburg grand strategy that forsook the old battlegrounds of Italy and the Low Countries for the more proximate threat posed by Prussia. Like so many of Maria Theresa's innovations, her predecessors had contemplated an Austro-French alliance since the diminution of the French threat to the balance of power. Joseph I's ministers had first broached the idea in 1710, shortly after discovering Britain's impending desertion in the War of the Spanish Succession. During his brief alliance with Spain, Charles VI had encouraged Madrid to recruit France for a Habsburg-Bourbon pact against the Protestant powers. The empress herself had first mulled over that prospect in secret talks with the French in 1745, at a time when the British were forcing her to give up Silesia and Bavaria. Yet it was Maria Theresa who transformed abstract notions into concrete action by dispatching Kaunitz to Paris in the summer of 1750.

Although Kaunitz had won over the empress, he still had to convince the French that the two countries were no longer enemies. France too faced a new reality. It was no longer encircled by the Habsburgs and their clients, as it had been in the previous century. Furthermore, Frederick II had recently destroyed the prospect of a Habsburg-German monolith that it had feared since the sixteenth century. Great Britain was the real enemy and the battlefield was overseas, not in central Europe. Yet the need for a *renversement des alliances* was less urgent for Louis XV, whose ministers turned a deaf ear to Kaunitz's overtures. With her usual persistence Maria Theresa continued to encourage Kaunitz to the point of raising him to the new rank of state chancellor (*Staatskanzler*) and entrusting him with control of foreign policy. In the end it was her old British ally and her new Prussian enemy who pushed France into her arms. With the outbreak of fighting between French and British forces in America, George II concluded the Westminster Convention with Frederick II (16 January 1756). In return for helping to protect Hanover from French attack, Prussia gained British assurances that it would not fund an Austrian attack on Silesia. Frederick had effectively eliminated any remaining prospect of British help in recovering Silesia, but he had also enraged his French ally, which had not forgotten his numerous betrayals during the last war. Driven by anger and paranoia, Louis XV's ministers were now prepared to effect the Diplomatic Revolution that Kaunitz so ardently sought. They quickly concluded the First Treaty of Versailles (1 May 1756), a defensive alliance by which both countries promised to remain neutral in the event that the other became involved in a war and to provide 24,000 troops to defend it against attack by a third party.

Having secured French neutrality on such extraordinarily favorable terms, the empress now prepared to join with Russia in attacking Prussia in the spring of 1757. At the same time French, Russian, and Austrian diplomats

attempted to enlist Sweden, Saxony-Poland, and other German states for the expanding anti-Prussian coalition. As the deadline approached, Maria Theresa began taking unobtrusive steps to place her army on a war footing. Her Russian ally was, however, less discreet in mobilizing its forces. Sensing that an attack was imminent, Frederick II accused Maria Theresa of having concluded an offensive alliance against him and demanded her assurances that she would not attack him in the near future. Never one to lie, she replied coyly – but truthfully – that she had not concluded an offensive alliance against Prussia. The Prussian king drew the obvious conclusion, telling his advisors that “if the empress is pregnant with war, then I shall offer the services of a midwife.” Rather than await the attack he would strike first.

On 29 August 1756 Frederick II began the Seven Years’ War by invading Saxony. His main objectives were to scare Russia into neutrality and to punish Saxony, which he wrongfully assumed had joined the anti-Prussian coalition. Instead, his attack on a virtually defenseless neutral country greatly multiplied the number and self-righteousness of his enemies. On the first anniversary of the Diplomatic Revolution, Austria and France concluded a Second Treaty of Versailles (1 May 1757), an offensive alliance in which France now pledged 129,000 troops and 12 million livres every year until Silesia had been recovered; in return for this largesse, Maria Theresa agreed to the partition of the Austrian Netherlands between Louis XV and his son-in-law, Duke Philip of Parma, who would then return Parma to Austria. An offensive alliance with Tsarina Elizabeth enlisted an additional 80,000 Russian troops; Russia would also receive territorial compensation for its efforts: Poland would cede Courland in return for acquiring East Prussia. Frederick’s invasion of Saxony ensured that he would be placed under the imperial ban for breaking the peace, or *Reichsfriede*, within Germany. Over the next seven years the empire furnished 8 million fl. in taxes and fielded a 40,000-man imperial army to enforce the Regensburg Diet’s mandate of *Exekution* against Frederick. With French help even the monarchy’s old Swedish adversary joined the struggle in hopes of acquiring Prussian Pomerania. Against this overwhelming array of enemies, Frederick could only count on British money and auxiliaries from a few Protestant states like Hanover and Hesse-Cassel. Surely, Kaunitz had done his job well.

As had Haugwitz. Thanks to his interwar reforms, Maria Theresa’s subjects now supported a massive military that reached 250,000 men by 1760. By then the tax burden had become sufficiently intense to justify widespread reports of ruined nobles and desperate peasants throughout the *Erblande*. Although Hungary paid only 17 percent of the taxes raised in the monarchy’s core lands, contingents from the expanded Military Border more than doubled the kingdom’s annual military contribution to 70–75,000 men. Meanwhile, the Austrian Netherlands provided 30 millions in cash and 26

millions in credit for a sovereign who had secretly consigned them to Bourbon rule. In 1762, the government even resorted to printing 12 million fl. in paper money – the first such issue in Austrian history. After sacrifices such as these, Maria Theresa’s subjects surely must have appreciated that their country had become a great power at last.

With a half million men under arms, Kaunitz’s great alliance should have been able to achieve what had now become the empress’s ultimate goal of reducing Brandenburg-Prussia to its former rank of a middling German state. That Frederick II escaped the fate of the Winter King after White Mountain and Max Emanuel after Blenheim is partly attributable to his ruthless opportunism and military genius. Although he had misjudged Saxony’s role in Kaunitz’s pre-war machinations, he benefited enormously from the protection it offered his own dominions, as well as from the 50 million fl. that he extracted from its people. Following its conquest in the autumn of 1756, he even incorporated its troops (except officers) into the Prussian army. Operating from a compact geographical base formed by Brandenburg, Saxony, and Silesia, he had the advantage of interior defensive lines. By contrast, the Austrian, Imperial, French, Swedish, and Russian armies were literally scattered about the four directions of a compass. The Sudeten Mountains of northern Bohemia also posed a formidable obstacle to any Austrian descent on Silesia, while France and particularly Russia were hampered by their relative remoteness from Prussia itself.

Nor were the monarchy’s coalition partners particularly motivated. Notwithstanding Kaunitz’s genius for enlisting allies, the coalition was bound by little more than a common antipathy for Frederick II. The Habsburg monarchy was the only major country with a tangible interest in Prussia’s demise. France’s objectives lay primarily overseas and only remotely in Hanover, whose conquest might afford it a bargaining chip in peace negotiations. Once the French recognized this, they negotiated a Third Treaty of Versailles (March 1759) that cut their commitments to a still considerable 100,000 troops and 6 million livres in subsidies. Yet, the uninterrupted string of British overseas victories left them with little incentive to continue fighting. Admittedly, Tsarina Elizabeth was a devoted ally out of all proportion to Russia’s own national interest. Within a short time, however, she began a tortuous battle with cancer that everyone realized would lead to the succession of the ardently Prussophile Grand Duke Peter. As the end drew closer, her generals and ministers were at pains to protect themselves from the wrath of her successor. Finally, except for Saxony, the German princes and Sweden had cast their lot against Prussia because they saw an opportunity to gain territory and influence by being on the winning side. None of them were especially interested in a long, indecisive war in which they would have to bear a significant share of the burden.

Given these parameters, Maria Theresa's own commanders should have sustained immediate and unrelenting offensive operations against Prussia. Even in the absence of battlefield victories, Frederick's outnumbered forces could be overwhelmed by attrition alone. Yet once again the monarchy was failed by its generals. The commander-in-chief, Field Marshal Daun, was a proven master of defensive warfare who had saved Bohemia in 1757 by crushing Frederick's army at the battle of Kolin (18 June). Yet, from the very beginning of the war he stuck too closely to conventional eighteenth-century tactics that stressed maneuver and discouraged risking a country's main army in pitched battle. Although a small force of Hungarian and Military Border troops briefly occupied Berlin during October, Daun failed to press his advantage after Kolin. Within two months Frederick was able to recover and turn back a Franco-Imperial invasion of Saxony at Rossbach (5 November) and an Austrian thrust into Silesia at Leuthen (5 December). The following campaign brought additional allied victories as Daun defeated Frederick again at Hochkirch in Saxony (14 October 1758), the Swedes overran Pomerania, and the Russians permanently occupied all of East Prussia. Yet Silesia and almost all of Saxony were still in Prussian hands. One year later the great Russo-Austrian victory at Kunersdorf (13 August 1759) cost Frederick his main army and nearly his life, as a silver snuffbox in his coat pocket absorbed what would have been a fatal bullet. Yet, when Daun failed to assist the victorious Russians in administering the *coup de grâce*, they withdrew their own forces in disgust, charging that Daun was forcing them to do all the fighting.

Of course, Maria Theresa was partly responsible for failing to remove Daun at a time when the monarchy needed a more aggressive military commander. She later attributed her indecision to her "persistent loyalty" to a devoted and otherwise competent man who had served her well in the past. Although the demands and threats of her French and Russian allies soon forced her to give greater freedom to other commanders, she was never able to remove him from the field. Of course, even Daun's timidity could not prevent the ring from closing ever tighter around Frederick. The next two years witnessed the partial recovery of both Saxony and Silesia, including their capital cities of Dresden and Breslau. Berlin was again subject to a brief occupation, while the Russians and Swedes completed the 1761 campaign by occupying all of Pomerania.

By then, however, time had finally run out. The anti-Prussian alliance collapsed at the beginning of 1762 with the death of Tsarina Elizabeth II. The new Tsar Peter III immediately concluded peace with Prussia, then took steps to re-enter the conflict as Frederick's ally. Fortunately for Maria Theresa, Peter was overthrown and murdered in July in a palace coup headed by his own wife, Catherine. Nevertheless, the new Empress Catherine II

(1762–96) made clear that Russia would remain neutral. Russia's defection had already knocked Sweden out of the war. France's crushing defeats in Canada and India forced it to follow suit. When it concluded peace with Great Britain at the Treaty of Paris (3 February 1763), Maria Theresa had lost her last major ally. There was now no prospect of continuing the war. The Austrian army had already evacuated Silesia in the fall. The country itself was utterly exhausted from seven years of unremitting struggle, in which the empress's subjects had made sacrifices greater than at any time in the monarchy's history. In signing peace with Prussia at the Saxon hunting lodge at Hubertusburg (15 February 1763), Maria Theresa was obliged to recognize the *status quo ante bellum*. The only concession she won was Frederick's promise to vote for her son Joseph in the next imperial election. Never had the monarchy waged a war with so many advantages, so much to gain – and yet so little at risk. Its generals had even won most of the battles: only three of eight against Frederick himself, but all four major engagements fought against other Prussian commanders. Perhaps it was fitting that a state that had proven so well suited to defending itself against aggression should have made such an incompetent aggressor itself.