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NEW APPROACHES TO EUROPEAN HISTORY

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The Habsburg Monarchy 1618-1815

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6 Discovering the people: the triumph of cameralism and enlightened absolutism (1765–1792)

Had the monarchy won the Seven Years' War and regained much or all of Silesia, contemporaries and historians alike could have pointed to a number of factors in its success: Kaunitz's Diplomatic Revolution had forged a seemingly invincible coalition against Prussia; Haugwitz's dramatic restructuring of taxation and administration had supported a huge increase in the size of the army; finally, notwithstanding Daun's shortcomings as a field commander, his military reforms had improved the quality and equipment of those troops. Instead, failure prompted another round of introspection as the empress and her ministers now carefully scrutinized the system that they had created. The reconquest of Silesia was no longer their immediate objective; repeated setbacks on the battlefield had finally persuaded Maria Theresa to accept its loss. Rather it was the monarchy's security against the almost certain threat of renewed Prussian aggression.

A cause for immediate concern was the state debt, which had more than doubled over the past fifteen years from 124 to 280 million fl. In the first half of the century, Anglo-Dutch financial aid had helped the *Hofkammer* to avert bankruptcy. Although French subsidies were neither as plentiful nor paid as punctually, they were still considerable and had come with fewer strings attached. Indeed, whereas the British had abruptly cut off all aid to Prussia at a critical point in the conflict, Versailles continued to make good on its arrears for at least eight years after the conclusion of peace. Nevertheless, France's lackluster performance during the war and, ultimately, its signing of a separate peace revived bitter memories of the monarchy's dependence on unreliable allies and the subsidies they provided.

The Second Theresian Reform

Administration and finance

As had so many of her predecessors, the empress began by undertaking a new round of administrative reforms. If Haugwitz had been the author of the

first reform period, it was now the *Staatskanzler* Kaunitz who stepped forward from his foreign policy perch to restructure much of what Haugwitz had created. Even before the war's end there had emerged a consensus within the ministry that the Directory president's attempts to create a more rational administrative system had failed to eliminate the confusion that had long characterized Habsburg central government. Arguing that the monarchy still had no single central policy-making body, Kaunitz called for the creation of a United Chancery that would embrace all three of the monarchy's core lands, together with a Council of State (*Staatsrat*) to formulate internal policy for all of the Habsburg dominions. At the same time he recommended that finances be divided among no fewer than three offices: a reinvigorated *Hofkammer*, a Credit Deputation, and an Accounting Office (*Hofrechnungskammer*). Rather than wait for the end of hostilities, the empress implemented Kaunitz's system during the course of 1761. Both the Directory and the Internal Conference were abolished; of Haugwitz's creations only the Supreme Judiciary survived, although it was consolidated and made wholly independent.

The implementation of Kaunitz's reforms signaled his emergence as the monarchy's *de facto* prime minister. For Maria Theresa it was another long, but fruitful marriage of convenience. Like Bartenstein, Haugwitz, and so many of the Habsburgs' most gifted servants, Kaunitz was hardly an attractive personality. He was a prickly, sexually promiscuous hypochondriac who was so horrified of fresh air that he insisted on being carried to audiences in a closed sedan. He was also a committed proponent of Enlightenment ideas that the empress both feared and despised. Nevertheless, she now placed Kaunitz in near total command of state affairs. Not only did he remain in charge of foreign policy as State Chancellor, he also directed domestic policy as president of the newly created Council of State. Indeed, he successfully argued that no other Council member should head any other administrative body since that would foster administrative myopia and promote intramural jealousies between cabinet heads. The one exception was to be Kaunitz himself, whose continued control of the State Chancery would permit the government to coordinate domestic policy with the achievement of foreign policy objectives. Kaunitz also pointed out that, since the State Chancery enjoyed ultimate jurisdiction over the monarchy's outlying, "foreign" crown lands in Italy and the Netherlands, he was best equipped to represent them in the Council of State.

In fact, one of the goals of the second reform period was to induce Lombardy and Belgium to bear a larger share of the monarchy's tax burden. Kaunitz achieved considerable success in both crownlands by skillfully establishing a close, cooperative relationship with their ruling elites based on

respect for their constitutional individuality. Under his tutelage, both paid Vienna much more in taxation than they received. He needed less finesse in his dealings with the newly named “grand principality” of Transylvania, whose Chancery also reported directly to him. Nor did the central government miss the opportunity to flex its muscles in the other parts of southern Hungary that it ruled directly. From 1765 the Military Border underwent extensive administrative and military restructuring, once again in response to concerns raised about the *Grenzers*’ performance during the Seven Years’ War. Meanwhile, the *Illyrian Commission* continued to serve as an effective vehicle for controlling Greater Hungary’s Serb populations by reaffirming and protecting their religious privileges against almost continuous pressure from the kingdom’s Catholic nobility. Beginning in 1769 it even promoted regular meetings of the Illyrian Church Congress, albeit only after packing it with loyal delegates, including twenty-five soldiers from the Military Border. Moreover, the empress obliged the first conclave to approve a new decree (1770) that sharply limited the secular privileges that Leopold I had first granted the Orthodox patriarch in 1690.

Not surprisingly, the second reform period had the least impact on Hungary proper. When it met in 1764 the diet rejected the competence of either the Council of State or the United Chancery. Although the *Staatsrat* persisted in secretly deliberating the kingdom’s affairs, the empress reluctantly agreed to retain a separate Hungarian Chancery, alongside a renamed “United Austrian and Bohemian Chancery.” As it had in the past, the Hungarian *Kammer* did remain subordinate to the *Hofkammer*, although the diet officially classified the relationship as one of “correspondence” rather than dependency. But the funds it administered remained less than optimal, especially after the diet agreed to a Contribution of only 3.9 million fl. Maria Theresa had always held out hope that her unflinching benevolence would goad Hungary into accepting a closer institutional union and a fair share of the Contribution. After the diet of 1764 she finally gave up.

Although the new administrative system was largely in place by 1766, the government continued to make adjustments until the end of the reign, prompted as it was by the uneasy feeling that neither confusion nor inefficiency had been wholly eliminated. Nevertheless, Kaunitz’s system proved more durable than Haugwitz’s. It also helped to perpetuate the steady rise in state revenue, which increased from 35 million fl. in 1763 to 50 million by the end of the reign. The treasury actually produced the first two balanced budgets in the monarchy’s history in 1775 and 1777. Although the state debt also continued to mount, the growth in revenue ultimately made the government much less dependent on creditors and truly independent of foreign subsidies.

The government and the people

The latest restructuring of the central administration was a necessary first step in the Second Theresian Reform. Yet the most dramatic and revolutionary reforms involved a fundamental redefinition of the government’s relationship to the people it ruled. Having abandoned the peasantry, bourgeoisie, and non-Catholics over a century ago, the government now rediscovered and addressed their needs in a series of domestic initiatives that included not only the *Erblände* but Hungary as well. Once again this remarkable about-face was motivated by power politics, specifically by the Theresian regime’s awareness that the security of the state versus Prussia and other countries depended on its ability to promote and marshal the monarchy’s resources better than it had in the past. Beginning with Ferdinand II, her predecessors had employed and favored the nobility and Catholic church as their primary instruments for state-building, much to the benefit of the aristocracy and Jesuits, but certainly to the detriment of society’s less privileged elements.

Over the past half century cameralist authors like Schröder and Schieren-dorff had pointed out how this elitism limited the monarchy’s military power by handicapping productivity and the taxable wealth it created. It was only now, however, that the loss of Silesia convinced the empress that social reform was necessary if the monarchy was to survive and compete in the rough and tumble world of great-power politics. Led by the German-émigré Justi and the Jewish-born convert Joseph von Sonnenfels (1733–1817), the current generation of Austrian cameralists carried home the message that a society’s productivity – and its tax base – grew in direct proportion to the size, living standards, health, and happiness of its people. Moreover, they singled out agriculture and the peasantry for special attention, given the central role both played in defraying the Contribution.

By mid-reign Maria Theresa was totally committed to “sustaining the peasantry, as the most numerous class of subjects and the foundation and greatest strength of the state.” Yet, to a certain extent her and her ministers’ heightened concern for society’s less privileged elements was motivated by additional considerations. One was Maria Theresa’s genuine sympathy for her subjects’ suffering. During the last fifteen years of her reign, the empress was somewhat less interested in international affairs and more dedicated to serving her people. The unsatisfactory outcome of the war helped move her in that direction. So did the sudden death of Francis Stephen in August 1765. She was so devastated by the loss that she did not make a public appearance for eight months, during which time she expressed her grief by calculating the number of hours that they had been married (precisely

385,744), by giving away all of her jewelry, and by opting to wear only black for the rest of her life. As a middle-aged widow who had already outlived most of her court contemporaries, Maria Theresa was prepared to delegate power to the men around her and less willing to resist their proposals.

Hence another factor that now loomed especially large was her advisers' espousal of Enlightenment ideas. The deaths of Haugwitz (1765), Daun (1766), and Bartenstein (1767) had opened the door for a group of younger and more liberal advisors, led by Kaunitz. Francis Stephen's sudden demise also ushered in the empress's son and heir, the newly elected Emperor Joseph II (1765–90). Like so many monarchs of his generation, Joseph II was not only a committed cameralist, but was also influenced by Enlightenment ideas. As a youth he had already received instruction in the works of central Europe's more moderate Enlightenment figures, such as Pufendorf and Muratori. The empress was, however, unable to shield him from the more radical Anglo-French ideas that circulated within the ministry and the court aristocracy. Nor could she keep Joseph from sharing his contemporaries' admiration for Europe's foremost "philosopher king," her nemesis Frederick II, whose domestic achievements and martial exploits he was eager to duplicate.

Of course cameralism was hardly incompatible with the Enlightenment, especially the central European *Aufklärung*. Both extolled the advantages of a secular, rational, educated society, that enjoyed a "free hand" in pursuing material well-being. Admittedly cameralists like Justi strove to attain "the happiness of the state," while the *philosophes* focused on the people. Yet the two coincided more often than not, especially since cameralism regarded a monarch's subjects as the state's most important element. For this reason, the empress had a good working relationship with her advisers, despite some abstract philosophical differences. Nor were ideas at the heart of the empress's conflicts with her son, especially since most of his projects coincided with her own cameralist agenda. Rather, what exercised Maria Theresa most was her son's personality. Joseph II was no carbon copy of his father. On the positive side he was very intelligent, with a keen eye that enabled him to trace any problem quickly to its source. This perceptiveness, plus his boundless energy, made Joseph the facile advocate of daring and innovative ideas. It was, however, his awareness of these strengths that also made him an extraordinarily overbearing, persistent, and impatient individual who relished ridiculing those who did not share his gifts or ideas. Most important, his compulsive determination to carry out change as quickly and as thoroughly as possible conflicted with his mother's tendency toward moderation and compromise.

Nor was Joseph likely to wait patiently for his turn in the succession. He had no family of his own to divert his attention. His first, truly happy

marriage to Isabella of Bourbon-Parma ended after just three years with her death from smallpox (1763); nor did either of their children survive childhood. A second, arranged marriage to an ugly Bavarian princess brought out the worst in his talent for ridiculing those less fortunate than himself. He readily reminded her of her shortcomings and even refused to sire an heir by her, insisting that "I would try to have children if I could put the tip of my finger on the tiniest part of her body that was not covered by boils." When smallpox again made him a widower in 1767 he decided to remain single, fulfilling his need for female companionship through platonic relationships with gracious, but reluctant, ladies and more intimate accords with Viennese prostitutes. Meanwhile, he left the dynasty's perpetuation to his brother, Grand Duke Peter Leopold of Tuscany, who rose to the challenge by fathering sixteen children, including twelve archdukes.

After her husband's death the empress announced that she and her son would rule jointly in a co-regency, but in practice Maria Theresa retained the final say in virtually all areas. There were some exceptions. As emperor Joseph directed German affairs. His mother also indulged his claim as emperor to dominion over military matters. Joseph made the most of the opportunity, working closely with *Hofkriegsrat* President Daun and his successor, Field Marshal Lacy, to make several constructive innovations, including the introduction of inspectors general, new drill and exercise manuals, and a more rational organization of military units. By 1772 he and Lacy had instituted Daun's plan for a Prussian-style canton system that permitted the army to assume direct control of recruitment from the estates. Finally, as his father's principal heir Joseph inherited and administered a considerable financial estate. Indeed, although Francis Stephen had proven an obtuse statesman and incompetent general, he had always been a businessman of considerable acumen, building a personal fortune worth 31 million fl. It was in recognition of his fiscal talents that the empress had actually entrusted her husband with managing the huge state debt, which he promptly consolidated, lowering interest on government bonds from 6 to 5 percent. Joseph put his inheritance to much the same use. He immediately committed nearly 19 millions to retiring some of the state debentures, which were then set afire in a public bonfire, while using the rest to lower interest on the balance to just 4 percent. Thanks to Joseph's intervention, annual savings on debt service totaled 870,000 fl. per year.

Beyond these clearly defined areas, there was constant friction between the conservative, discreet Maria Theresa and her headstrong son. She often yielded on relatively minor issues, but rarely on major ones. Thus she agreed to adjust the court's lifestyle to Joseph's egalitarian instincts. The stiff Spanish court protocol was eliminated because Joseph hated its formality and felt that the expensive Spanish mantles were beyond the means of less

wealthy individuals. Gambling and hunting were also banned as wasteful manifestations of class privilege. By 1772 two of modern Vienna's most famous parks, the Prater and the Augarten, had been opened to public use for the first time. On the other hand the empress stood firm against her son's more far-reaching demand for an end to all tax immunities. Similarly, she agreed to streamline the central administration further by abolishing the essentially superfluous Transylvanian Chancery (1774), but she refused to consider his politically dangerous demand that Hungary, Lombardy, and the Austrian Netherlands be formally subordinated to the *Staatsrat*.

Joseph sublimated his frustration by devoting over 30,000 miles and a quarter of his time as co-regent to numerous fact-finding trips to virtually every corner of the monarchy. He often traveled incognito under the name "Count Falkenstein" in order to get a truer impression of how his subjects lived and felt about their government. His sympathy for the common people was no secret. When his presence was known he was invariably met by thousands of petitions. On at least two occasions he showed his support for agriculture and the peasants who pursued it by personally plowing the fields. This gesture quickly became a local legend among peasants, who presumably reveled in telling all comers that "Emperor Joseph II *schleppt* here." Although the empress also welcomed her son's absences from Vienna, he invariably returned to Vienna armed with first-hand knowledge that enhanced his influence and often obliged her to initiate additional reforms. The frequent confrontations led Maria Theresa to contemplate abdication and Joseph to consider exile in Italy. Yet they also helped push the empress toward a more progressive domestic agenda that served as a transition between the more traditionally Habsburg, aristocratic absolutism of the First Theresian Reform and the rather extreme form of enlightened absolutism that followed the co-regency.

If the empress and her advisers devised the Second Theresian Reform, it was empowered by a bureaucracy that was much more numerous and powerful than at the beginning of the reign, at least within the *Erblande*. The typical local *Beamte* was also much more concerned about his constituents' needs, thanks largely to Maria Theresa's earlier restructuring of elite education, which now paralleled most German institutions in its focus on the cameral sciences and exposure to the Enlightenment. Indeed, since 1755 Justi's lectures to future civil servants at the *Theresianum* had inspired him to publish central Europe's first and most influential textbooks on political economy. Eight years later, Sonnenfels became the University of Vienna's first professor of cameral science, a position he used to train future generations of Austrian officials. Indeed, by 1776 the cameral sciences had joined law as a required course of study for all civil service applicants. Nor was the acculturation of the monarchy's bureaucrats limited to the core lands. The

cosmopolitan outlook of Milan's urban patriciate emboldened Kaunitz to stack its government with a remarkable group of Italian reformers, including Cesare Beccaria and Pietro Verri. Under their direction Lombardy soon emerged as a testing ground for some of Maria Theresa's bolder domestic initiatives.

Agrarian reform

Like reformers elsewhere in Europe, the Theresian regime tended to initiate changes only after they became aware of specific problems, often from information they received from conscientious local officials. The first major attempt at social reform came at the beginning of 1767, in response to nearly two years of mounting peasant unrest in the Hungarian lands. As usual the source of the problem was the nobility's widespread abuse of the existing laws, especially along the kingdom's relatively populous western frontier. The worst excesses involved *robot* service, which was still officially set at only fifty-two days per year for peasants working a standard plot, or "hide" (or 104 days if they employed no draft animals). Since most peasants owned less than a hide, they were supposed to perform proportionally less labor service, while landless cottagers were limited to as little as thirteen days' labor per year. In reality landlords had been extracting excessive levels of *robot* from all of their serfs since the onset of Habsburg rule. After appointing a commission to investigate the abuses, the empress promulgated a new *robot* patent for Hungary in January 1767. The *urbarium* (as *robot* patents were called in Hungary) was basically modeled after one she had given Slavonia in 1756, the year after its most recent peasant revolt. It prohibited landlords from adding to their demesne at their peasants' expense, while limiting the peasants' obligations to the standard fifty-two days per hide, together with the customary fees and tithes. Much as it had done in the *Erblande*, the government endeavored to strengthen enforcement by registering the peasants and their obligations, together with the breakdown between rustical and dominical lands.

In attempting to alleviate the suffering of the Hungarian peasantry, Maria Theresa was likely motivated primarily by humanitarian considerations, if only because the central kingdom was the one Habsburg dominion where the Contribution would not have increased significantly, even with an increase in the population's wealth or productivity. In any event, this first serious attempt at *Bauernschutz* in Hungary proper had little immediate impact on the peasants it was designed to protect: thanks to the shortage and relative powerlessness of royal officials there, it took eight long years before the government could fully implement the *urbarium*, which was then widely ignored by defiant landlords and the noble-dominated county assemblies.

Enforcement was, however, much less of a problem elsewhere in the monarchy. Once she had been aroused by conditions in central Hungary, the empress promptly turned her attention to the rest of the monarchy's core lands. In November 1769 she issued an *urbarium* for Transylvania, largely in response to Joseph's reports from the grand principality that "whole villages" of serfs were fleeing to Turkish territory in order to escape their Magyar landlords. Indeed, the *urbarium* helped to reduce *robot* service from four or more days, to a still considerable average of three days per week (156 per annum). By 1771 the government had also issued a new *Robotpatent* for Austrian Silesia after an extensive, three-year investigation conducted by local crown officials had ascertained that abuses were even worse there than in Hungary.

The government was eager to issue a similar patent for the rest of the Bohemian lands. The need for action was sharply underscored by the devastating central European famine of 1770–2, during which a quarter of a million Bohemian peasants starved to death while their landlords amassed huge profits exporting grain to Prussia and Saxony. Yet intense lobbying by the estates managed to divide the ministry and delay implementation until 1774. By then Maria Theresa was so frustrated and desperate to alleviate conditions that she actually proposed abolishing serfdom altogether. If such a dramatic step found no echo among her advisors, it was because they feared that it would reduce state revenue by undermining the Bohemian nobility's ability to pay taxes. Instead, Joseph persuaded her to employ the estates' counterproposal, by which peasants would negotiate individual contracts with their landlords; the government would impose a settlement only if the two parties failed to reach an agreement. Although the ensuing April 1774 patent appeared to be an equitable compromise, it failed to anticipate the superior leverage that landlords enjoyed in direct negotiations with their serfs. Nor did it meet the rising expectations of the Bohemian peasantry, which launched a massive revolt in the following spring.

The unarmed peasants were quickly dispersed by a 40,000-man field army. Nevertheless, given a second chance the empress now addressed their needs in the *Robotpatent* of August 1775. It established eleven, graduated levels of *robot* service, with the heaviest obligation set at three days per week. Although it was only intended for Bohemia, a virtually identical patent was soon issued for Moravia. Nor did the empress stop here. Over the next two years she sponsored a pilot project on two of her Bohemian estates that was designed to replace *robot* with free labor. The empress was driven by more than humanitarian considerations. State officials like the project's director, Franz Anton Raab, argued that compulsory labor service "violated the laws of nature." They also realized that free peasants would have the incentive to work harder and more efficiently, thereby producing more taxable wealth for

themselves, their landlords, and the state. Indeed, the so-called Raab System released the peasants both from their personal subjection to their royal landlord and from the need to perform *robot* on her demesne lands. The demesne was then divided up among the peasants, who were free to farm it as free laborers in return for cash rents commensurate with the size of their holdings. As an added incentive peasants received long-term or hereditary leases on the land they worked. The pilot project was an unqualified success, with Raab reporting an immediate, 50 percent increase in the production from both estates. By the beginning of 1777 the empress felt sufficiently confident to extend the Raab System to other crown estates.

The government had somewhat less cause for alarm in the Austrian lands, which were neither as wealthy as greater Bohemia nor as oppressed by manorial obligations. Austrian peasants were not enserfed, as they were in the other core lands. *Robot* service was also less extensive. Lower Austrian landlords were less prone to exceed the customary limit of two days service per week, even before it was reconfirmed by a 1772 *Robotpatent*. Meanwhile, labor services were negligible in Upper Austria (fourteen days per year) and non-existent in the Tyrol and the western *Vorlande*. The exception was Inner Austria, where labor services were officially set at a crushing four days per week, growing to as many as six days during harvest. It was only at the end of 1778, after six years of difficult negotiations, that all but one of the Inner Austrian estates agreed to reduce *robot* to an average of three days per week (156 days per year). Even then Carniola held out. Once Croatia had received an *urbarium* in 1780, Carniola was the only Habsburg crownland in need of a *Robotpatent*. When it was finally issued in 1782 it conceded Carniola a limit of four days per week (208 days per year) – the highest in the monarchy.

The Theresian regime never seriously contemplated eliminating labor services altogether, if only because it was unwilling to deprive landlords of their property rights without compensation. Nonetheless, in reducing *robot* it turned back the clock on a century and a half of illegal encroachment by the landed nobility. Additional decrees addressed other age-old abuses. For example, many peasants regained the right to purchase and market goods independently of manorial businesses. Some also reacquired rustical land that had been seized by their landlords. Of course, the key to their improved position *vis-à-vis* their landlords was often better enforcement of existing laws rather than the implementation of new ones. Under Maria Theresa seigneurs were scrutinized as never before by crown officials as they exacted labor services, administered patrimonial justice, or conducted other manorial enterprises.

The empress did, however, sponsor several new initiatives that reflected the emphasis that the cameral sciences placed on developing a large and

industrious population.¹ Thus she directed local officials to supervise pregnant girls to safeguard against infanticide or abandonment. She also offered marriage incentives – except to unemployed drifters, whom a March 1766 decree expressly forbid to wed. Lest newlyweds forget their obligation to work, another edict cut wedding celebrations from the customary three days to just one. The new emphasis on personal fertility and industry inevitably led the regime to place several restrictions on the Catholic church. The driving force behind them was the fiercely anti-clerical Kaunitz, who had already introduced several edicts in Lombardy that the empress now agreed to extend to the rest of the monarchy during 1771–2. At his instigation the government raised to 25 the age at which an individual could take monastic vows. It also placed a cap on the number of monks allowed in individual monasteries – sometimes at levels lower than the current membership. At the same time, laymen were discouraged from diverting work time to popular devotion through a further reduction in the number of religious holidays and pilgrimages. It even forbade a further increase in the thousands of religious brotherhoods that organized various devotional activities for their members.

Public education

Maria Theresa worked diligently to raise living standards among the monarchy's common people largely because she discerned a direct, causative link between peasant living standards, productivity, and state revenue. She was initially less convinced of the masses' need for an education. Although she established an Educational Commission (*Studienhofkommission*) for the *Erblände* in 1760, she gave it little attention during its first decade. Meanwhile, she entrusted the Hungarian school system to the ageing archbishop of Esztergom, to whom educational reform meant little more than closing down some Protestant academies. The impetus for action only came in 1769, when the bishop of Passau reported that his Austrian parishioners were not only woefully ignorant, but included significant numbers of crypto-Protestants. The vision of large numbers of heretics in the *Erblände* aroused the empress almost as much as an invading Prussian army.

It also gave the *Studienkommission* an excuse to pursue its own agenda for public education. Calling themselves the "Party of Enlightenment" (and their adversaries the "Men of Darkness") the commission was dominated by progressive minds like Swieten, Martini, and Sonnenfels. One of its newer members was Johann Anton von Pergen, a Kaunitz protégé on the *Staatsrat* and *Staatskanzlei* who had recently assumed the directorship of the Oriental

¹ An approximate population breakdown (in millions): Hungary, 9.7 (central Hungary, 6.5, Croatia, 0.7, Transylvania, 1.5, the Military Border, 1); Bohemia, 4.5; Austria, 4.3; Galicia and the Bukovina, 3.4; Belgium, 2.4; Lombardy 1.5.

Academy. In August 1770 Pergen submitted a lengthy memorandum to the empress that called for a thorough reform of the monarchy's educational system. Most radical was his proposal that lay teachers immediately replace all Jesuits and other clerics before the latter could inflict more cultural damage on future generations. Though Swieten convinced the empress to consider Pergen's proposal, she ultimately rejected it because it would have necessitated the importation of large numbers of Protestant teachers from Germany. Even those sympathetic to Pergen's proposal, like Swieten and Emperor Joseph, recognized that such a massive purge of the schools was far beyond the monarchy's financial and cultural resources.

Yet three years later Pope Clement XIV forced this very task on the monarchy when he dissolved the Society of Jesus. The suppression came in response to pressure from the Bourbon powers and Portugal, who resented Jesuit meddling in their national politics. Nevertheless the dissolution momentarily left the monarchy's *Gymnasien* and other secondary schools without teachers or administrators. Fortunately it also left the central government in control of the Jesuits' extensive wealth, which could now be used to defray the cost of a new, state-run educational system.

By 1773 the Theresian regime had a good idea of what the public schools' mission and methods should be. Once again the monarchy's leadership looked to neighboring lands for its cultural sustenance, this time by adopting the pietist teaching system employed in Prussian Silesia. To the pietists both schooling and literacy were instruments of social control. They reasoned that people would more readily obey authority if they did so out of inner conviction rather than out of fear of punishment. Of course, the monarchy's political and religious leadership was hardly inexperienced in the use of media to mold popular culture. Since the Counter-Reformation it had successfully impressed its values on the people not only through coercion, but through various forms of propaganda. Given the masses' illiteracy it had heretofore employed visual media, such as devotional display (religious processions, relics, art, and architecture) and the didactic plays staged by the Jesuits. Yet, as James Van Horn Melton has pointed out, the government was now prepared to use compulsory public education "to reconstitute popular culture on a more literate basis."

The projected school reform had a lengthy cultural agenda. Maria Theresa and clerical leaders like Archbishop Migazzi were eager to use mass literacy to reinforce Catholic orthodoxy. Their parallel concern for Christian morality was shared by others, like Sonnenfels, who had banned Vienna's bawdy popular comedies after becoming theater censor in 1770. Meanwhile, the ministry was primarily interested in enhancing the people's productivity by strengthening their sense of social responsibility. Once again it took its cue from the German pietists, who regarded the fulfilment of one's obligations to

society and the state as a “moral imperative” that could be discharged by greater self-discipline and a stronger work ethic. Indeed, some officials even hoped to replace the subsistence mentality of the typical peasant with a profit motive that would incline him to work beyond the levels necessary to survive. Everyone also appreciated the vocational advantages that education offered. Finally, they valued instruction as a tool in preventing civil disobedience, although the threat of popular insurrection was hardly uppermost in their minds.

These objectives were embodied in two General School Ordinances that were issued for the *Erblände* (1774) and Hungary (1777). Their author was the Silesian bishop of Sagan, Ignaz Felbiger, who had already introduced pietist methods in the Catholic schools of his diocese and whom Frederick II now graciously granted leave to reform the school system of his Habsburg adversary. The ordinances established a three-tiered system. A compulsory elementary school, or *Trivialschule*, would give everyone basic instruction. In the countryside the focus would be on teaching peasant children religion, morality, and vocational skills; only urban elementary schools would stress the three R's. After that a middle school, or *Hauptschule*, in every district capital would give all burgher children a choice between vocational training and advanced academic preparation for the *Gymnasium*. Atop the system stood the *Gymnasium*, which remained an elite preparatory school for the university.

The Ordinances imposed an unprecedented degree of uniformity on the public schools. All instructors were required to receive training and certification at a specially dedicated normal school (*Normalschule*), one of which was established in the capital city of every Habsburg crownland. Each normal school also prepared teachers to employ standardized subject matter, teaching methods, and textbooks published on its premises. The curriculum included several pietist innovations. For example, teachers were expected to ask students to use reason and judgment to understand material, rather than to memorize it. Since not all students could be expected to progress at the same speed, they were divided into groups according to proficiency. Teachers were also expected to employ hourglasses in the classroom in order to instill their students with a sense of time and pace.

The General School Ordinances incurred considerable resistance from outside the ruling elite. Peasant parents resented sending their children to the schools instead of to the fields to work. Many lower clergy suspected that the pietists' curriculum and teaching methods would make people ungodly. Hungary's Protestant communities actually refused to adopt the ordinance in their schools because their leaders feared that a standardized curriculum might ultimately be used to undermine their faith. Nevertheless, the Theresian school reform proved an almost unqualified success. Although an

initial shortage of lay teachers necessitated the retention of former Jesuits and other clergy, the number and percentage of secular teachers increased quickly as the normal schools turned out a steady stream of graduates. By 1780 the combination of new teachers and wealth acquired from the Jesuits had supported the establishment of 500 new schools within the *Erblände*. The gains were even more dramatic in the Hungarian lands, where half of the country's communities were without schools and only a quarter of all children in attendance. The most impressive strides came in relatively backward areas like the Banat, which more than doubled the number of schools from 183 in 1776 to 452 by 1782. Indeed, by the end of Maria Theresa's reign the monarchy boasted well over 6,000 schools and 200,000 students. By then it had passed its Prussian model in both the availability and quality of public education.

Sources of conflict: religion and the law

Maria Theresa's efforts to protect and educate the peasantry proceeded with a minimum of conflict within the government because there was a coincidence of interest between her, her son, and her ministers. Much less was accomplished, however, in those fields where the empress's conservatism precluded a consensus within the government. One such area was religious toleration. Thanks to men like Kaunitz and Joseph II, she was aware that intolerance hurt the economy through emigration and gave foreign countries like Protestant Prussia and Orthodox Russia unwelcome influence among her subjects. As a result both she and provincial authorities quietly tolerated Protestant businessmen and their dependants in places like the Austrian Netherlands, Trieste, and even Vienna, where as many as 2,000 resided by 1761. In 1778 she finally permitted the first Protestant to receive a degree at the University of Vienna. She made her most dramatic concession one year earlier, upon discovering a community of 10,000 Protestants in northern Moravia. With her son threatening to abdicate unless she granted them full toleration, she ultimately accepted Kaunitz's call for compromise by quietly granting them private worship. Repercussions were limited to the expulsion of a few ringleaders and the establishment of a new bishopric and forty Catholic churches.

Notwithstanding these concessions to “discreet tolerance,” the empress remained resolute in her abhorrence of religious toleration. She continued to see it as a catalyst for disunity, telling her son that “he is ‘no friend to humanity’ who allows everyone his own thoughts.” Indeed, she afforded the *Erblände*'s smaller, less important Protestant communities the same rough treatment that they had received earlier in her reign. Within the *Erblände* adult male heretics were sentenced to hard labor, drafted into the army, or

expelled to Transylvania, which remained the one crownland where religious minorities could worship freely. Within Hungary proper, Lutheran towns were sometimes forced to observe Catholic holy days and elect Catholic magistrates. Even as she carried out her revolutionary education program, the empress withheld funding for Calvinist Latin schools, thereby forcing many of them to rely on private Swedish, Dutch, and British donations.

Even economic benefit was not sufficient to stay the empress's persecution of the Jews. With the support of the Croatian *Sabor*, she steadfastly rejected her son's and ministers' petitions to allow Jewish merchants to develop local trade within the Military Border. She also ordered that Vienna's Jews be placed in a ghetto, like their co-religionists in the monarchy's other cities. Five years of intensive lobbying and the passive resistance of her own ministers spared the community from relocation. Even then, however, the empress refused their petition to relax existing restrictions with the well-known retort that "I know of no greater plague than this race, which on account of its deceit, usury, and hoarding of money is driving my subjects to beggary."

Nor could Maria Theresa and her ministers agree on a program of legal reform. In 1766 she established a commission to codify the morass of edicts and regulations that comprised the monarchy's system of laws. She was, however, interested only in streamlining the existing code, not in making it more humane. That she refused to eliminate torture was most ironic, considering the enormous influence that her Milanese minister Cesare Beccaria had had on other governments, following the publication of his treatise *On Crime and Punishment* (1764). By 1767 the empress felt obliged to suspend work on the *Nemesis Theresiana*, after Kaunitz had objected to the code's explicit, illustrated procedures by which convicts could be impaled, broken on the wheel, or burned alive. Over the next decade her son led Sonnenfels, Martini, and Kaunitz in a determined lobbying effort against the retention of torture. The empress finally agreed to abolish it in 1776, although the criminal code was still not complete at the time of her death.

Foreign policy during the co-regency

Like domestic reform, Habsburg foreign policy during the co-regency represented the largely parallel but sometimes conflicting agendas of the empress, her son, and Kaunitz. Always the opportunist, the *Staatskanzler* was generally on the lookout for territorial acquisitions, especially if they could be achieved primarily by diplomatic means. Like his mother, Joseph II was largely driven by fear of Frederick II, and particularly by the prospect of a combined Prusso-Turkish attack on the monarchy. Yet his agenda for enhancing the monarchy's security included not only domestic reform but

territorial expansion. As a result, Joseph and Kaunitz generally pursued a more aggressive foreign policy. The empress was not necessarily opposed to their activities or objectives, but she was the least motivated, especially when it involved unprovoked aggression. Yet none of the three envisioned armed conflict as a desirable or necessary extension of diplomacy.

One reason for this was the dearth of committed allies. Although France was still bound by a defensive alliance, its focus was almost exclusively on its overseas rivalry with Great Britain, rather than on continental affairs. Meanwhile the monarchy had lost the traditional constellation of countries that had assisted it militarily over the past century. The Diplomatic Revolution had ended not only the Anglo-Dutch alliance, but also the monarchy's credibility as a champion of the balance of power. The subsequent death of Tsarina Elizabeth had also terminated the long-standing Russian alliance and, with it, the chance of overwhelming Prussia in a future conflict. Finally, Prussia's emergence as the monarchy's virtual equal within Germany had all but eliminated the imperial crown as an instrument of Habsburg *Realpolitik*. By allying with France and continuing to persecute her non-Catholic subjects, Maria Theresa actually enhanced Prussia's pretensions to leadership among Germany's Protestant princes. The end of nearly a century of imperial resurgence was not lost on the co-regents. Although they still considered themselves German, they no longer identified with the Reich as a national political entity. Indeed, neither visited the empire or used its central institutions, except as transit points to other, more vital objectives.

Admittedly, the Second Theresian Reform had finally freed the monarchy from its former reliance on foreign allies. As the next conflict would demonstrate, the monarchy was fast approaching a wartime military establishment of well over 300,000 men. Nevertheless, when combined with the huge state debt, the cost of mobilizing such an army made it a financially prohibitive choice of last resort. Thus it remained more suitable as a deterrent to invasion than as an instrument for aggression. Notwithstanding Joseph's residual fear of Prussia and the Turks, the monarchy was, in fact, essentially secure from foreign invasion. Frederick II's central European agenda remained focused on defending his earlier conquest of Silesia, not in extending it deeper into the monarchy. Meanwhile, the Ottoman empire's steadily declining military power and French influence in Constantinople rendered the Turks less of a threat than at any time in the monarchy's history. The French alliance also gave the westernmost Habsburg possessions in the Netherlands, southwest Germany, and Italy an iron-clad guarantee against attack. Moreover, Maria Theresa quickly strengthened this security by concluding five marriage alliances with all of the Bourbon powers: she secured Spanish *infantas* for Joseph (1760) and her second son, Leopold, upon his succession as grand duke of Tuscany (1765); she also

wedded three of her daughters to Ferdinand IV of Naples (1768), Ferdinand of Parma (1769), and the future Louis XVI of France (1770). In 1771 the empress fortified the dynasty's position in Italy still further by marrying her third eldest son, Ferdinand, to the heiress of the duke of Modena; when Ferdinand's son succeeded as duke in 1814 it was the first time in nearly three centuries that an Austrian Habsburg had inherited a foreign crown. In the meantime, frequent family conferences and Maria Theresa's voluminous, weekly correspondence with each of her dynastic surrogates ensured that the monarchy enjoyed considerable leverage wherever a Habsburg or Bourbon sat on the throne.

With the monarchy's western and southern frontiers thus secured, foreign policy during the co-regency focused on maintaining or improving the balance of power to the north and east *vis-à-vis* its Prussian adversary – and its former Russian ally. Ever since Peter the Great's victory over the Swedes at Poltava (1709) the monarchy's policy-makers had realized that Russian expansion might someday eclipse the fading Swedish and Turkish threats. Only Russia's eagerness to cooperate in Turkish and Polish affairs had assuaged those fears. All that had changed with Catherine II. The tsarina not only accepted Prussia's emergence as a third great power in eastern Europe, but decided to exploit the Austro-Prussian rivalry to achieve her own aggressive designs. Just one year after the end of the war she induced Frederick II to support her lover Stanislaus Poniatowski's election as king of Poland. By 1767 Catherine's progressive interference in the kingdom's affairs had led to a civil war in Poland, followed one year later by a Turkish declaration of war.

Vienna now saw Catherinian Russia as a loose cannon that might destroy its protective bastions in Poland and the Balkans. With Catherine's armies advancing deep into Turkish territory, Joseph and Kaunitz even entertained the notion of forming an unprecedented Austro-Prussian-Ottoman coalition against her. Both men met with Frederick II in a futile attempt to present a united front against Russian expansion. At their behest, Maria Theresa actually concluded an agreement with the Turks in 1771, by which she undertook to limit Russian territorial gains in exchange for the return of Little Wallachia to Habsburg rule. To overcome Austrian opposition, Catherine ultimately accepted Frederick II's proposal that Russia satisfy its territorial expectations at least partly at the expense of Poland; to counter-balance Russian inroads there, Prussia and Austria would also be compensated with Polish territory.

Maria Theresa's sense of justice initially inclined her to reject a plan that would victimize the totally innocent Poles. Only after it became clear that Frederick and Catherine were going to partition Poland with or without Austrian participation did she agree to accept territorial compensation. Even

then she tried in vain to pressure Frederick into ceding part of Silesia, to which she felt the monarchy still had a legal right. She protested to her ministers that the impending partition was a "violation of every standard of sanctity and justice" and later told her son that it had taken ten years off her life. The thought of despoiling the Poles even brought her to tears. Yet, in the words of Frederick II, "the more she cried, the more she took." Not only did the partition help to limit Russia's march into the Balkans, it also rewarded the monarchy with Polish Galicia, which was easily the most valuable territorial award of the First Partition of Poland (1772). With 2.6 million people, Galicia was more populous than the combined acquisitions of Prussia and Russia. Nor was it the monarchy's only territorial gain. Following the Russo-Turkish peace of Kuchuk-Kainarji (1774), Joseph II enforced the monarchy's claim to compensation from the Turks. Instead of annexing Little Wallachia he chose the Bukovina, a small but strategic territory that enhanced communication between Hungary and the new Habsburg kingdom of Galicia. (see Map 4)

Admittedly, neither territory was a Slavic Silesia. Although they contained valuable minerals and rich farmland, both were extremely backward. Moreover, Galicia's wealth lay firmly in the hands of an oppressive nobility that had long since seized all of the Polish crown's domains and mines, and raised *robot* service to a crushing five days per week. Despite Roman or Greek Catholic majorities, both Galicia and the Bukovina contained sizeable Orthodox populations. To the empress's horror, Galicia's 225,000 mostly impoverished Jews more than doubled the monarchy's Jewish population; even Joseph remarked that the capital of Lemberg (Lvov) was a "new Jerusalem" whose 14,000-strong Jewish community was twice the size of Prague's and larger than the entire Jewish population of the Austrian lands. Nevertheless, the two new crownlands represented the monarchy's first net territorial gains in over half a century and provided a valuable buffer against Russia's westward advance. With the issuance of a new *Robotpatent* (1774) and the dispatch of large numbers of principally Czech-speaking officials, Galicia was gradually introduced to the benefits of the central European bureaucratic state.

Having successfully maintained the balance of power in the East, Joseph and Kaunitz were soon emboldened to strengthen the monarchy's position *vis-à-vis* Prussia within Germany. The occasion was the death of the childless Bavarian Elector Maximilian III Joseph on 30 December 1777. His cousin and successor, the Elector Palatine Charles Theodore (1742–99) had little desire to move his court from Mannheim to Munich, especially since he too had no legitimate sons to whom he could bequeath Bavaria. Even before Maximilian's death, Charles Theodore had offered to exchange his prospective inheritance for the much closer Austrian Netherlands. The

Habsburgs had also previously contemplated the strategic advantages of acquiring Bavaria, especially after its occupation by Austrian troops during the Wars of Spanish and Austrian Succession. At the end of the Seven Years' War Kaunitz had proposed a Bavarian–Belgian exchange as a way of compensating for the monarchy's failure to regain Silesia. With Maximilian's death Joseph argued that he could simply seize Bavaria as an escheated fief without compensating Charles Theodore in the Netherlands. Yet the empress decided that Kaunitz's plan for a formal exchange would be much less controversial and more likely to succeed without war. On 16 January the first Austrian troops entered the electorate, immediately after the chancellor's conclusion of a provisional accord with Charles Theodore.

Once again the monarchy held Bavaria within its grasp, this time with the approval of its legitimate ruler and the likelihood that it would become an integral part of the Habsburg monarchy. Unfortunately, Kaunitz's and Joseph's overconfidence now led them into a series of blunders. First, Kaunitz rejected reasonable Prussian demands that it be compensated with the eventual acquisition of the Hohenzollern duchies of Ansbach and Bayreuth; he then refused to take Frederick II's threats of armed intervention seriously, even after the king had ordered a general mobilization. Meanwhile, Joseph alienated his new subjects with his arrogance, as he did Charles Theodore by refusing to cede more than part of the Low Countries. By June 1778 Frederick had decided to intervene, ostensibly as the champion of the next Wittelsbach heir, Duke Charles of Zweibrücken. As he had so many times in the past, he made his point by entering Bohemia at the head of a Prussian army. This time Maria Theresa was ready for him. Despite months of maneuvering he failed to force his way past a 160,000-man Austrian field army, competently directed by Lacy, Laudon, and Joseph himself. Unable to enter the Bohemian plain, Frederick was forced to winter his forces in the Sudeten Mountains, where supply problems soon reduced both sides to fighting over frozen patches of potatoes.

By now, however, Maria Theresa was eager to end the so-called Potato War. She promptly accepted a Franco-Russian offer of mediation and concluded peace terms without even consulting her son. In the treaty of Teschen (13 May 1779) she relinquished all of Bavaria, except the right bank of the Inn River valley; she even recognized Frederick's eventual succession in Ansbach and Bayreuth, a concession that would have enabled the monarchy to keep all of Bavaria had it been granted one year earlier. Nevertheless, the empress now marked the conclusion of peace by holding a thanksgiving service at Vienna's St. Stephen's cathedral. She certainly was not celebrating the acquisition of the *Innviertel*, whose 100,000 inhabitants and 500,000 fl. in annual revenue were hardly worth the 100,000,000 fl. that the war had cost.

It is not difficult to appreciate Maria Theresa's decision to relinquish Bavaria. As in 1763, neither she nor Kaunitz wanted to fight Frederick II alone. If anything, the monarchy was more isolated now than it had been at the end of the Seven Years' War. Although the other great powers were officially neutral, none wanted to see the monarchy expand its frontiers. Even France secretly worked against its Austrian ally, despite public affirmations of support. Most of the German states also stood in opposition, Saxony to the point of assisting Prussia militarily. Yet, it is also possible that the empress could have succeeded in her long quest to redress the balance of power within Germany. Over the past four decades she had painstakingly built up the monarchy to the point where it could do so by making war on its own. Notwithstanding the crushing financial burden that it placed on the *Hofkammer*, the *Hofkriegsrat* was actually able to increase the army to the previously unthinkable level of 378,000 men for the 1779 campaign. And, like Prussia's army during the Silesian wars, it needed only to hold onto what it already possessed.

Joseph II and enlightened absolutism (1780–90)

The treaty of Teschen represented the latest, but also the last major humiliation that Joseph suffered at his mother's hands. Her death eighteen months later left him as sole ruler of the monarchy. Over the next nine years Joseph II put his stamp on it with an unprecedented barrage of domestic initiatives. Great reformer that she was, Maria Theresa had issued about 100 edicts per year during the co-regency; Joseph II now produced nearly 700 a year, or almost two a day. To some extent this flurry of activity stemmed from the emperor's pent up frustration after fifteen years as a figurehead co-regent; many of his reforms did, in fact, deal with residual problems that the empress had refused to confront. Several also reflected his desire to introduce Enlightenment ideas. Most notably, he embraced the utilitarian concept first expressed by Beccaria that the primary objective of government was to secure the welfare and happiness of the "greatest possible number" of its people. Yet Joseph II was not so much a "sorcerer's apprentice of the French *philosophes*" as he was a statebuilder bent on employing the often parallel strategies of the German cameralists. True to his central European pedigree, he was convinced not only that the state had a responsibility to help the people, but that the people had a reciprocal obligation to serve the state.

One thing that distinguished Joseph II from his predecessors was his compulsion for thoroughness. Previous Habsburgs had frequently resorted to half measures, and then only when they sensed that the monarchy's survival depended on it. By contrast, Joseph rarely distinguished between what was absolutely necessary and what was simply ideal. His aggressiveness went well

beyond the pale of consensus politics that had heretofore characterized the relationship between the dynasty and the rest of the ruling elite: the nobility and church might agree to make sacrifices if they were crucial for the monarchy's survival, but not if they merely intended to make it stronger. To his credit, Joseph usually consulted his ministers and provincial officials before initiating major reforms. But he was not perturbed by the absence of a consensus. Nor was he deterred by any corporate constitutional powers, which he dismissed as mere instruments of privilege.

If anything, conservative opposition aroused yet another distinctive Josephine trait, namely, his spiteful penchant for humiliating anyone who disagreed with him. The gratuitous hostility that often filled his remarks and directives also contrasted sharply with the measured responses of previous rulers. Yet the extraordinary domestic stability and powerful army that Joseph had inherited from his mother afforded him the luxury of dispensing with the "Austrian Clemency" of previous, weaker regimes. No less important was Joseph's conclusion of an alliance with Catherine II in May 1781, just five months after his succession as sole ruler. Immediately thereafter he visited Louis XVI in Paris to repair the breach caused by the Bavarian conflict. Fortified in the West by France and the East by Russia, Joseph had ample reason to feel invulnerable to opposition both at home and abroad.

The first reforms

In addition to visiting Paris, Joseph spent much of 1781 on a whirlwind tour of his dominions, including his first trip ever to the Austrian Netherlands. His travels did not, however, deter him from initiating a number of major reforms during his first full year as sole ruler. He wasted no time in easing restrictions on freedom of expression. In February he sharply curtailed literary censorship. Publications could still be banned if they blasphemed the Catholic religion, subverted the government, or promoted superstition or immorality. But by centralizing censorship in the hands of Gerhard van Swieten's son, Gottfried (1733–1803), the emperor guaranteed an unparalleled degree of intellectual freedom. In fact, the *Theresianum*-educated Swieten was himself a former Berlin literary agent with a well-developed taste for erotic literature and major French *philosophes* like Voltaire. Despite a virtual flood of new publications, his commission quickly reduced the number of prohibited titles from well over 4,000 to about 900 a year. At Joseph's insistence it even permitted personal criticism of the emperor himself, including one scurrilous attack, entitled "The 42-Year-Old Ape." Joseph is reputed to have justified its publication with the retort that he would allow anyone to *say* whatever he pleased – so long as he was free to *do* whatever he pleased.

Joseph was also ready to expand toleration for the monarchy's religious minorities. In May he broadened educational and vocational opportunities for the Jews. In October he began issuing patents for each of his dominions that also eliminated a number of other humiliating restrictions. Most notably, the Jews were no longer compelled to wear distinctive dress (or have beards), to stay indoors on Sunday mornings, or pay the infamous *Leibmaut*, a tax that was levied only on Jews and cattle. October also witnessed Joseph's proclamation of the Edict of Toleration for his Protestant and Orthodox subjects. Private worship was now granted them everywhere in the monarchy, as was permission to build churches and parochial schools in communities of at least one hundred families. Both Christian minorities were also permitted to buy and sell land, attend a university, join a guild, or enter the civil service.

Joseph had taken a major step toward giving his subjects a higher degree of literary and religious freedom than anywhere else in Catholic Europe. Yet he encountered opposition at virtually every level of society. The Edict of Toleration was so unpopular among Roman Catholics that provincial officials left their own names off the posted proclamations. Meanwhile, Christians of all persuasions derided Joseph as "emperor of the Jews." Despite his earlier support for educational and clerical reform, Archbishop Migazzi denounced the edicts, while many lesser churchmen and civil officials tried to sabotage them at the local level. Early in 1782 Pope Pius VI expressed his concern by visiting Vienna and meeting with Joseph and Kaunitz. Joseph proved a gracious host and made some minor concessions on religious toleration. He was, however, less flexible on other issues. Just before the pope's visit he had begun to suppress all contemplative monastic orders, preserving only those foundations that performed useful functions like farming, teaching, and charity work. Over the next five years he seized 738 of the monarchy's 2,047 abbeys, including 55 percent of those in the *Erblande* and a staggering 75 percent of those in Hungary; 27,000 out of a total of 65,000 monks and nuns were now obliged to choose between a more productive career or retirement on a government pension.

In seizing a third of the monarchy's monasteries, Joseph was merely continuing his mother's policy of converting non-productive religious activities and church wealth to more useful economic purposes. Much more original and radical was Joseph's decision to assert his control over the church hierarchy itself, with the intention of guiding its use of teaching and pastoral activities. The emperor was largely influenced by a sincere desire to improve the quality of religious instruction, perhaps with an eye toward countering the appeal of Protestantism. Yet what has come to be known as "Josephinism" (or "Josephism") was an inevitable step in the state-building process. During the Counter-Reformation the Habsburgs had given the church a free hand in its use of media, because their work reinforced its drive

for a culturally uniform and politically loyal society. A century later the more rigorous demands of state-building required a more rational and secular society. Since the church was unlikely to accept such a change in direction, state control became necessary in order to continue to use the church as an instrument of social control.

State control began at the top of the church hierarchy. Beginning in 1781 all bishops were required to give an oath of allegiance to the crown; those bishops who resided outside the monarchy were deprived of any diocesan jurisdiction within its borders. The pope himself was forbidden to issue bulls or even to communicate with the monarchy's churchmen without first submitting all documents for prior clearance. He even lost control over the remaining monasteries, which were now placed under the authority of the nearest bishop. Yet Josephinism also extended to the local level to the point of defining – and generally improving – the contact between priests and parishioners. Beginning in 1782 parish boundaries were radically redrawn in order to place people as close as possible to the nearest available church. Using the proceeds from the monasteries it had seized, the state assumed responsibility for all clerical salaries. Although high churchmen suffered a slight reduction in their princely salaries, common priests were paid far better and more regularly.

They also got a better education. In March 1783 Joseph decreed that all novices receive six years of instruction at one of half a dozen specially created general seminaries. To be sure the new curriculum emphasized religion and morality, but it also attempted to combat superstition by teaching math, natural sciences, and history, and even offered practical courses on agricultural and teaching techniques. When budgetary and enrollment pressures forced Joseph to shorten the curriculum to just four years, it was theological instruction in dogma, polemics, and the Bible that were eliminated. Indeed, Joseph's commitment to secularization extended beyond religious instruction to the sacrament of marriage, which now became a civil contract that could be entered into without the services of a clergyman; even the grounds for divorce were expanded to include impotence, adultery, criminal conviction, and desertion.

The professionalization of the clergy was actually preceded by a parallel reform of the judiciary. A September 1781 decree required that all judges and lawyers receive extensive legal training and pass rigorous qualifying examinations. Judges were also given much higher salaries, thereby reducing the temptation to accept bribes. By 1787 Joseph had completed the transition to a modern judicial system by issuing a new criminal code. The so-called *Allgemeines Gesetzbuch* upheld for the first time the Enlightenment concept of equality before the law; in practice noble-born offenders actually suffered stiffer penalties on the grounds that their wealth and upbringing gave them less excuse to break the law. The new code also eliminated the barbaric

vestiges of the *Nemesis Theresiana*. Suspects could no longer be tortured, or even threatened with physical punishment. Although whipping and branding were still assessed in exceptional circumstances, punishment of convicts was generally limited to imprisonment. Similarly, capital punishment was retained for its deterrent value, but was assessed only for the most gruesome crimes. Thus only one convict was executed within the Austrian lands during Joseph's reign, while the emperor actually removed a Hungarian judge who persisted in executing criminals.

The judicial reforms afforded special attention to the peasants, as befitted the indispensable role they played in producing taxable wealth. A 1 September 1781 patent awarded them free legal aid in any litigation against their lords; by contrast landlords had to bear their own expenses, as well as the costs of legal aid if the peasant won the case. The establishment of professional standards had the additional effect of excluding the seigneur from presiding over the manorial court except in the rare instances when he held the proper credentials. Even when they decided against the peasant, the 1781 patent prohibited manorial courts from levying fines or jail terms in excess of eight days, without review by crown officials.

The most important peasant legislation came exactly two months later, in the form of two patents issued on 1 November 1781. One was the so-called Emancipation Patent, which abolished serfdom in the Bohemian lands. It essentially awarded Bohemia's peasants the same rights already enjoyed by their countrymen in the Austrian archduchies: they could now leave the manor, buy and sell land, marry, or begin a new trade simply by notifying their landlord. The patent's extension to Inner Austria and Galicia (April–July 1782) left Hungary as the only Habsburg crownland where serfdom still existed. On the same day that he emancipated Bohemia's peasants, Joseph issued a Land Purchase Patent that gave the monarchy's peasants the right to secure hereditary tenure over the land they worked. Many a peasant had, in fact, already purchased this security from his landlord, only to be evicted anyway. The patent not only reaffirmed the tenure of such "bought-in" peasants, but gave anyone the right to buy-in for a modest price. Henceforth, landlords could evict only those peasants who were severely in debt – and then only with the permission of crown officials.

With the patents of 1781 Joseph took a decisive step toward establishing the economic freedom and security of the monarchy's peasants. Yet they represented only the first steps of the emperor's agrarian program. With the success of the Raab System it was only a matter of time before Joseph moved against *robot* service outside the crown's own domain lands. That time came with the Directive Regulation of March 1783. The monarchy's peasants were now given the option of commuting *robot* service in the fields by paying the landlord a regular sum in cash or crops. Having lost their captive work force, landlords were now directed to apportion their demesne land among their

peasant tenants, who could work it in exchange for a freely negotiated wage. Although peasants still performed other, relatively minor forms of obligatory service, the 1783 Directive eliminated compulsory fieldwork in every dominion except Galicia. Although Joseph opted not to confront his Polish nobles on this issue, he did issue a new patent one year later that reduced *robot* service in Galicia from five to three days per week.

The elimination of field *robot* proved a troublesome task. To no one's surprise, some landlords protested that the commutation fees were set too low. At the same time, however, many peasants suddenly stopped performing other forms of obligatory service because they were convinced that Joseph would soon eliminate them as well. There were also problems in administering the reform. To the peasants' dismay Raab's successor, Count Johann Paul von Hoyer, responded to pressure from the nobility by granting less favorable terms than those in effect on the crown's domains. Thus, he raised commutation fees, reduced the length of contracts to only three to six years, and restricted peasant access to those farm buildings and equipment that were located on former demesne land. Joseph finally replaced Hoyer in February 1785, in response to mounting peasant unrest and the insistence of his own ministers and local officials.

By then, however, an additional crisis had surfaced in Transylvania. In October 1784, as many as 30,000 peasants rose in rebellion. They raised the usual demands: the abolition of serfdom, a reduction in manorial burdens, and the redistribution of noble land among peasants. Yet, whereas they killed hundreds of nobles, the peasants were hardly in revolt against the crown. Their leader, Vasile Nicula Horia, had already visited Vienna three times, where he had sensed Joseph's genuine concern and commitment for the peasants' welfare. Hence he and his followers genuinely believed that they were merely carrying out the emperor's instructions against the nobility. Nor was Joseph eager to use force. Much as Maria Theresa had done in 1775, he attempted to resolve matters with a minimum of violence, to the point of having Orthodox priests accompany his troops as they marched through the countryside. Once Horia realized his error, he disbanded his forces. That did not save him or the other ringleaders, whom Joseph ordered broken on the rack, then drawn and quartered. The emperor did, however, appoint a special commission to investigate the peasantry's grievances. On 22 August 1785 a new *urbarium* addressed their needs by abolishing serfdom throughout the Hungarian crownlands.

The collapse of consensual politics

It is fair to say that the opening years of Joseph's reign had been a *tour de force*. Not only had he accomplished a great deal, but he had enlisted the support of

the great majority of his subjects. The monarchy's unprivileged elements had every reason to agree with Sonnenfels, who happily informed his students that all of Joseph's subjects were now "citizens." Indeed, the emperor had also captured the imagination of the monarchy's intellectual elite of academic and civil officials, regardless of social rank. Of course not everyone was pleased with everything that he had done. Religious toleration and the establishment of a state church rankled many Catholic clergy and laymen alike, while the elimination of serfdom and field *robot* worried the landed nobility. Yet public criticism and passive resistance only encouraged the emperor to intensify his relentless quest for a more perfect state.

Ever since the Rákóczi Revolt (1703-11), every attempt at administrative reform had stopped short of threatening the regional autonomy and diversity of the various Habsburg lands. Nowhere had this been more true than in Hungary. Despite the Magyar nobility's refusal to grant her fiscal requests, Maria Theresa had gone out of her way to disarm their lingering distrust by pandering to their personal ego and national pride. During the last half of her reign she had named several magnates to high military, diplomatic, and court positions, while creating a Royal Hungarian Bodyguard (1760) and Order of St. Stephen (1764) for the sole purpose of honoring individual Magyar nobles. She had even appealed to the diet's political sensibilities by placing Croatia's officials under Hungarian administrative oversight and by surrendering both Fiume (1776) and the Banat (1778) to direct Hungarian control. This policy of *douce violence* had, in fact, created considerable goodwill between the Magyar nation and its "benevolent queen."

Nor had Joseph damaged his own stock within Hungary when he reincorporated Transylvania into Hungary and transferred the royal capital from Pressburg to Buda in 1784. Both moves were, however, merely administrative efficiencies. By then he was ready to undertake radical administrative and agrarian reforms that all but destroyed the consensus and mutual trust that had heretofore existed within the monarchy's ruling elite. In 1784 he announced that German would be the official language for all government business within the monarchy's core lands. He gave civil servants up to three years to learn the language or lose their jobs. To facilitate the transition, German became the principal language of instruction at both the secondary and university level, as well as in the newly created general seminaries. At the same time Joseph began to draft wholly new administrative districts outside the *Erblande*. Once again efficiency was a factor, but even more important was his desire to circumvent those provincial authorities that had long used their position to block the crown's domestic initiatives. He turned first to Transylvania, where the privileged Saxon estates had successfully resisted his attempt to extend civil equality to the Romanian Orthodox peasantry. In July 1784 he abolished the special status of

Transylvania's three privileged nations and the counties that represented them in the diet. In their place he created eleven new administrative districts whose borders cut across existing ethnic boundaries. One year later he replaced Croatia's and central Hungary's counties, together with the elected officials who ran them. In their stead he created ten roughly equal administrative districts, each headed by a royally appointed commissar. Nor did Joseph have any use for Hungary's parliamentary bodies. Although his mother had already reduced the Croatian *Sabor* to little more than a ceremonial body, he disbanded it in 1785. Meanwhile he never convened the Hungarian diet, despite the Magyar nobility's appeals for a coronation diet and the confirmation of their constitutional liberties.

A similar fate awaited the monarchy's Italian and Belgian lands. In 1786 Joseph abolished Milan's council of state and senate, together with its numerous municipal privileges. In their place he created a unified Lombard administration for Milan and Mantua. At its head stood an all-powerful governing council that directed eight, newly created administrative districts, each of which was run by a crown-appointed commissar. Joseph completed his administrative coup in January 1787 by replacing the Low Countries' historic provinces with a system of nine districts, each of which was headed by an intendant and subdivided into smaller units run by royal commissars. He also deprived the estates and municipalities of their extensive legislative power, while compelling them to register all imperial edicts. Joseph's drive for conformity also included the introduction of conscription in the Netherlands, as well as the Tyrol, despite the latter's historic exemption from military service.

Whereas administrative restructuring deprived the nobility of its political power, the emperor's new agrarian initiatives promised to destroy its economic well-being. The physiocrats had long argued that, since agriculture was the sole source of a nation's wealth, governments should base all of their revenue on a single, uniformly assessed tax on arable land. Joseph had resolved to do just that. In 1784 he ordered a new cadaster of all of the monarchy's arable land, with the intention of making it the basis for future taxation. The earlier commutation of field *robot* had reduced the need to distinguish between rustical and dominical land, especially since Joseph intended to tax both at the same rate. Nevertheless the new cadaster proved an enormously difficult and time-consuming task. Although he compensated for the lack of experienced surveyors by employing army engineers and even peasants, the job dragged on through the end of the decade.

By then Joseph had issued another, even bolder edict. The Tax and Agrarian Regulation of 10 February 1789 decreed that, with the implementation of the new cadaster, peasants who farmed rustical land would pay no more than 30 percent of their income in taxes, including 12 percent to the

state and a total of 18 percent to the landlord, church, and community. This was a major windfall for those who were covered by the edict, since the typical peasant devoted over 70 percent of his crops to taxes. It also represented a significant sacrifice for those who had previously lived off their labor. Although the *Erblände's* peasantry had heretofore paid 42 percent of its income in state taxes, Joseph expected to make up most of the shortfall by taxing previously unsurveyed plots and by collecting higher levies from outside the hereditary lands. Of course landlords had less reason for optimism. Although rustical peasants were few in number in the Bohemian and Hungarian lands (only 20 percent in Bohemia proper), many landlords sensed that Joseph would later extend the Regulation to dominical peasants. If that ever happened, estate incomes would be cut in half.

In fact, the Regulation represented a significant departure from past initiatives. Like his mother and so many enlightened monarchs elsewhere, Joseph had heretofore endeavored to protect all of his subjects from the ill effects of his reforms, including privileged groups like the nobility, clergy, and Catholic laity. Even when he abolished serfdom and commuted field *robot*, Joseph had expected that landlords would be amply compensated by the higher productivity of a free and happier peasantry. Now several of his ministers objected to the Regulation because it expropriated the landlords' property rights without offering any hope of adequate compensation. One of Joseph's most strident critics was Karl von Zinzendorf, the president of the Tax Regulation Court Commission that was responsible for devising the new tax scheme. The stinging memorandum that he submitted in February 1788 not only spoke of the landlord's property rights but accused the emperor of acting too hastily in implementing the project before various problems could be ironed out. Although Joseph immediately removed Zinzendorf, the Austro-Bohemian Chancellor Chotek continued the fight until 5 February 1789, when he resigned rather than sign the Regulation into law. With its proclamation the scene shifted from Vienna to the countryside. The outcry was loudest in Galicia and Hungary, where the nobility stood to lose the most from a cap on manorial fees. Meanwhile the peasants did not help their case by withholding all tax payments for several months, because they were convinced that further reductions were on the way. The emperor finally agreed to delay implementing the regulation until the end of 1790, partly because the new cadaster was not likely to be completed much before then.

This briefly quieted noble opposition within most of the hereditary lands. But it did little to appease the ruling elite in peripheral dominions like the Tyrol, Lombardy, and Belgium. Here the burning issue was not peasant taxes but the restoration of political autonomy. Joseph's most recent administrative changes had greatly reduced the number of paid government officials, together with the formidable power they wielded. They had also

exposed him as a foreign despot, who acted arbitrarily without even consulting his own officials. Already in 1785 Pietro Verri had protested Joseph's disdain for Milan's separate identity by retiring from public service. Farther north Tyrolean officials pressed for the restoration of the county's traditional exemption from compulsory military service. True to their long tradition of unconditional loyalty to the dynasty, the Milanese patriciate and Tyrolean regime contented themselves with muted expressions of concern. The Austrian Netherlands was rather less restrained. By 1787 an alliance of clerics, nobles, and burghers had launched a massive display of civil disobedience. Seminary students demonstrated against the introduction of state-run General Seminaries. The estates of Brabant refused to pay taxes. Pamphleteers compared Joseph with ageless tyrants like Attila and Nero, as well as their old nemesis, the duke of Alba. Although Joseph's representatives initially gave in to the malcontents' demands, the dispatch of reinforcements permitted him to restore order and withdraw all the concessions that they had made. Yet many opposition leaders simply took refuge in the nearby bishopric of Liège, where they began to organize an armed insurrection.

The situation was just as explosive in Hungary, the one crownland where both tax reform and political autonomy were compelling issues. The Magyars were the one ethnic group within the core lands that seriously objected to the imposition of German as the official language of administration. Although they accepted Joseph's argument that Latin was a dead language, they now insisted that it be replaced by Magyar, rather than German. Taken together with the abolition of the kingdom's traditional governmental institutions, they charged Joseph with launching a systematic program of Germanization that would ultimately destroy them as a nation. In response the Magyar nobility quickly revived their county assemblies for the purpose of joining Belgium in an armed rebellion against Habsburg rule.

By themselves neither the Belgian revolt nor the budding Magyar conspiracy represented an insurmountable threat, especially given the imposing size of the Austrian army. As in the past, only foreign intervention on their behalf could threaten the monarchy's constitutional and territorial integrity. Yet Joseph's aggressive foreign policy had also exposed it to outside intervention. As with his domestic policy, the emperor committed his first missteps at mid-reign. Toward the end of 1784 he attempted to eliminate the remaining extraterritorial rights that the Dutch enjoyed in the Austrian Netherlands. He easily secured their withdrawal from the Barrier fortresses, which had become an anachronism in the aftermath of the Austro-French alliance. The Dutch stood firm, however, when he threatened war if they did not end their 200-year blockade of the Scheldt estuary and the once great port of Antwerp. By the treaty of Fontainebleau (November 1785) the Dutch paid Joseph an indemnity of 10 million fl., but the Scheldt remained closed.

Having failed to liberate Belgium's commercial lifeline, Joseph then made a second attempt to trade the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria. During 1785 he enlisted Elector Charles Theodore by promising him all of the territory except Luxemburg, which he offered to France in return for its diplomatic support. In addition Joseph pledged to raise the elector to the sovereign rank of king of Burgundy, a title that he hoped would also induce the support of Charles Theodore's troublesome heir presumptive, Duke Charles August of Zweibrücken. The whole project fell apart, however, when Joseph reneged on his promise to give Luxemburg to the French, who promptly withdrew their support and informed Prussia of the project. Frederick then used this new evidence to convince the leading German princes that Joseph posed a threat to the empire's territorial integrity. By July 1785 he had joined Hanover and Saxony in a League of Princes (*Fürstenbund*) dedicated to protecting the German states against the emperor's designs. Within a year the league had eighteen members, including Zweibrücken and the Catholic archbishop-elect of Mainz.

With these two projects Joseph had acquired the unenviable reputation of an habitual expansionist – and an ineffectual one at that. As a result Prussia not only was motivated to oppose Joseph's every move but could be certain of finding allies who felt that it was both necessary and possible to frustrate his plans for expansion. It was Joseph's misfortune that he was now perceived as an aggressor even where he had no aggressive intent. In August 1787 the Ottoman empire declared war on the monarchy's Russian ally. Although the Russian alliance represented a formidable weapon against the Turks, Joseph had little interest in acquiring their sparsely populated, disease-ridden dominions. He preferred instead to use the alliance to control Catherine the Great's advance into the Balkans, as well as to help deter another Prussian invasion. Yet, as in 1737, the Ottoman attack compelled him to go to war in the Balkans, despite the widespread domestic unrest within his dominions.

Although Frederick II had recently died, his successor Frederick William II (1786–97) did everything in his power to turn the conflict into a nightmare. First he induced Sweden to invade Finland, thereby preventing the main Russian field army from assisting Austrian forces in the Balkans. With over 200,000 of the monarchy's 350,000-man army at his disposal, Field Marshal Lacy had the tools to face the Turks alone. Yet, like Daun before him, Lacy was a good administrator but irresolute commander. During 1788 his failure to prevent the Turks from invading the Banat prompted Joseph to assume personal command of the army. Perhaps the emperor hoped to win for himself the epithet "the Great" that military conquests had bestowed on Frederick and Catherine. Instead, the marshy terrain of the lower Danube immobilized the army with dysentery, typhus,

and malaria, while ruining the emperor's health. In his weakened state Joseph soon contracted tuberculosis, which compelled him to return to Vienna.

His departure left the army in the hands of the gifted Field Marshal Laudon. During the course of 1789 Laudon captured both Bosnia and Serbia, including Belgrade, while a separate force occupied most of Moldavia. At the same time, a Russo-Austrian army under Marshal Suvorov conquered Wallachia and its capital of Bucharest. So rapid was the allied advance that Kaunitz now pressed Joseph to consider partitioning the Balkans with Russia, even though it meant replacing the Turks with a much more powerful neighbor. They need not have worried. With the Austrian army tied down in the Balkans, Frederick William now seized the opportunity to destroy his Habsburg adversary once and for all. At the beginning of 1790 he concluded an offensive alliance with the Sultan; with the spring thaw a Prussian army would invade Bohemia. Even before concluding the alliance he sent money and *agents provocateurs* to stir up trouble in Hungary and the Low Countries. Confident of Prussian help, many Magyar nobles began calling for a diet to dethrone the Habsburgs; Frederick William even suggested replacing them with the pro-Prussian duke of Saxe-Weimar. At the same time, the Belgian exiles in Liège re-entered the Austrian Netherlands at the head of a small army. By the end of 1789 they had expelled all Austrian forces from the western half of the country. Although Luxembourg remained under Habsburg control, the other estates now declared their independence as the *Etats belgiques unis*.

The emperor reacted to the first reports of trouble with a mixture of incredulity and determination. He could not understand how his subjects could oppose reforms that were expressly designed for their benefit. At the heart of his incomprehension was his inability to appreciate how people could prefer traditional ways over what was rational. Nor was he willing to tolerate such unreasonable behavior. At the end of 1787 the Belgian revolt prompted him to reimpose political censorship throughout the monarchy. Soon thereafter the public hangman was conducting book burnings in Brussels's main square. In May 1789 the emperor imposed a duty on all periodicals in order to limit the number and influence of his critics. Two months later he closed down one Viennese newspaper that had been particularly hostile. Joseph also gave considerable latitude to the industrious Count Pergen, who distinguished himself as secret police chief by spying on private citizens and feeding him weekly reports on the public mood.

Yet none of these measures addressed the underlying causes of political unrest. By year's end the rush of developments in Belgium and Hungary, as well as his rapidly failing health, inclined him to reconsider his course. To his brother and heir, Leopold, he confessed that "I am unfortunate in everything I undertake . . . I no longer dare to have an opinion and put it into effect." He

began modestly enough by announcing that he would convene the Hungarian diet for the purpose of hearing its grievances and being formally crowned; in the interim he promised to adhere to the kingdom's constitution. Yet once he had learned of the impending Prussian attack, Joseph's retreat became a rout. At the end of January he revoked his administrative reforms, thereby ending his crusade to convert the monarchy into a highly centralized *Beamtenstaat*. He also restored the Croatian *Sabor* and ordered the crown of St. Stephen returned to Buda after an absence of two and a half centuries. Meanwhile, to avoid a two-front war he resolved to seek an accommodation with the sultan and king of Prussia. Three weeks later death deprived Joseph of the opportunity to make further amends. From his deathbed he composed his own epitaph, "Here lies Joseph II, who failed in everything he undertook."

Leopold II (1790–2)

The "revolutionary emperor" left his successor with a monumental task. Belgium had already severed all ties with the monarchy, with Hungary threatening to follow suit. There was also considerable unrest in the hereditary lands, thanks primarily to the higher taxes and prices caused by the Turkish war. With most of the army tied down in the Balkans, there was little prospect of frustrating the Prussians or the domestic insurrections they had helped inspire. Nor could the monarchy expect any assistance from its Russian and French allies. With a two-front war of her own in Finland and the Balkans, Catherine II was in no position to send additional forces to Germany. Meanwhile, Louis XVI had been totally immobilized by the outbreak of the French Revolution during the previous summer. Like Maria Theresa half a century earlier, Joseph's successor needed to move quickly and adeptly if he was to keep his inheritance intact.

Once again, however, the monarchy was saved by its rulers' ability to adapt to the situations that they inherited. Like his late brother, Leopold was a child of the Enlightenment. During his twenty-five-year reign as Tuscan Grand Duke Peter Leopold (1765–90) he had established an enviable record as an enlightened reformer. He was, however, more like his mother in his willingness to compromise and accept constitutional checks on royal authority. Recently he had even devised plans to grant his Tuscan subjects a constitution based on that of Pennsylvania that would have limited his own law-making powers. Perhaps most important, Leopold was an adept negotiator, with a devious talent for playing one side off against another. He now wasted no time in undoing the damage done by Joseph's more controversial initiatives. He abolished the Tax Regulation Court Commission (22 March), thereby removing the 30 percent cap on peasant taxes before it could be

implemented. He also returned responsibility for raising and collecting of taxes to the estates. One week later he repealed military conscription in the Tyrol. He further mollified the Tyroleans and Catholic conservatives elsewhere by eliminating the general seminaries and even restoring a few monasteries. In May Leopold made his most important concession by giving landlords the right to refuse *robot* commutation; they and their peasants would now be left to negotiate (or refuse) contracts by mutual agreement, without the participation of government officials. Although Leopold urged the nobles to treat their subjects well, the decree guaranteed that they would once again enjoy an upper hand in dealing with their peasants. Except for its continuation of free legal aid, the crown now withdrew from the business of actively protecting the peasants to a more passive role of "refereeing" disputes that came to its attention.

Not surprisingly, the reinstatement of *robot* service was met by muted protests from enlightened officials and brief resistance from some peasants. Leopold's strategic retreat did, however, quickly reassure the monarchy's conservative and traditional elements. The resulting calm also gave him more room to maneuver in his negotiations with Frederick William II of Prussia. During March Leopold had informed the king of his willingness to renounce territorial gains in the Balkans. By July his diplomats had obtained at Reichenbach a Prussian pledge not to attack the monarchy or foment rebellion among his subjects. The convention also facilitated Leopold's election as Holy Roman emperor two months later. In exchange for these concessions, Leopold was obliged to conclude peace with the Turks on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum*. Although the peace talks dragged on for nearly a year, the resulting treaty of Sistova (August 1791) returned all of Laudon's conquests except for the Danube river town of Orsova, and a 450-square-mile strip of mountainous terrain along the Bosnian-Croatian border.

The Reichenbach convention and the impending peace with the Ottoman empire left the emperor free to confront his rebellious Hungarian and Belgian subjects. He was also able to strengthen his hand further by skillfully exploiting tensions within each country. When he convened the Hungarian diet in September, he had no trouble reforging the dynasty's traditional alliance with the magnates, whose privileges were being challenged by the more numerous gentry. He also secured the support of the Serbs by convening the Orthodox National Church Council and admitting the first Orthodox clerics and nobles to the diet. In his greatest coup, Leopold persuaded the Croatian estates to merge with the Hungarian diet, a move that enhanced both parties' influence in the diet's deliberations. When the diet adjourned he had conceded little more than the restoration of the constitutional relationship that existed at the death of Maria Theresa.

Moreover, in appointing his son Alexander to fill the long-vacant post of palatine, Leopold not only appeased the diet but assured himself of the loyalty of the kingdom's highest official. He was no less successful in the Low Countries, where the country's clergy and nobility had fallen out with more democratic elements inspired by the French Revolution. By exploiting this rift and his own repudiation of Joseph's decrees, Leopold was able to re-establish his authority by the end of 1790 – just twelve months after the estates' independence declaration.

In less than a year Leopold had rescued the monarchy from the specter of yet another life struggle. The price had been high. Gone was the 30 percent tax ceiling for peasants, *robot* commutation, the general seminaries, and military conscription in the Tyrol and Belgium. The prospects of an extensive Balkan empire had also disappeared. Nevertheless, by his deft handling of the crisis the new emperor had also saved much of his brother's legacy. The peasants were now personally free; the clergy was more committed to serving its parishioners' needs; religious minorities enjoyed greater toleration; the educational system and censorship had been secularized; the law had become more just and humane. Moreover, thanks to Leopold's intervention, Joseph's stature would attain mythic proportions among future generations of civil officials, intellectuals, peasants, and persecuted national and religious minorities.

Nor did Leopold rest on these accomplishments. Once order had been restored, he revived a number of enlightened innovations. He lifted most of Joseph's restrictions on free speech, including the duty on newspapers. He also ordered Count Pergen to release the handful of political opponents whom the police had detained and admonished them to afford due process to anyone accused of criticizing or conspiring against the government. When Pergen resigned in protest, Leopold replaced him with Sonnenfels, who promptly expanded police responsibilities for providing social services, while resuming the lengthy task of legal codification. Leopold also actively courted the monarchy's underprivileged elements. He made significant overtures to Hungary's Protestants and Serbs, for whom he promptly established an Illyrian Chancery. He also promoted an increase in burgher representation in the Bohemian, Styrian, and Hungarian diets. He even planned to resume the process of commuting *robot* service on the nobles' demesne as soon as his position had become sufficiently secure. Like his brother, Leopold realized that each of these innovations would anger that combination of nobles and Catholics that comprised the bulk of the monarchy's ruling elite; unlike his brother, he had the political skill to mobilize the country's unprivileged majority to strengthen his hand in any future confrontation with them.

The Habsburg monarchy at the end of the Old Regime

In just two years Leopold II had preserved the greater part of Joseph's legacy, while averting the very real prospect of internal rebellion and foreign invasion. Having escaped catastrophe, the monarchy and its people were in a much stronger position than at any time in the past. Quite aside from the political achievements of the past half-century, they had attained other attributes of the major states and societies of western Europe.

The economy had grown considerably, thanks in no small part to the government's policies. Just as the numerous urbarial reforms had helped increase agricultural productivity, more conventional mercantile initiatives had had a positive impact on manufacturing and commerce. The monarchy's transportation network had improved steadily, as Maria Theresa and her son continued Charles VI's devotion to dredging rivers and building new roads. They also strengthened native industries by continuously raising barriers against foreign imports, most notably with a 1764 tariff imposed against Silesian goods and a truly comprehensive list of prohibitive duties established by Joseph in 1784. The domestic economy also benefited from the concurrent adoption of more liberal mercantile strategies that reflected the growing influence of Joseph, Kaunitz, and other ministers during the final decade of the co-regency. Their most dramatic success came in 1775, when Maria Theresa eliminated all internal tolls within the hereditary lands, except the Tyrol (which still relied on the transit trade between Italy and Germany). The empress did, however, achieve a closer commercial union with the Austrian Netherlands in 1777, albeit after nine years of negotiations. When Joseph integrated Galicia into the customs union in 1784, he created one of Europe's largest free trade zones.

Nor was the customs union the government's only step toward free enterprise. In 1776 it contemplated eliminating virtually all guild privileges. Although the empress was still reluctant to take such a dramatic step, Joseph II ended their exclusive privileges immediately after his succession. He even abolished some guilds outright and converted their property to public use. The empress and her son also pushed the monarchy's new industries to compete in a free market, with a minimum of government financial assistance. Business subsidies were reduced from a peak of 1 million fl. in 1770 to a mere 250,000 by 1786. Although both monarchs still exempted new enterprises from taxes during startup periods, Joseph afforded them only minor tax breaks thereafter and refused to take over troubled concerns.

This eclectic combination of protection and *laissez-faire* appears to have benefited the monarchy's industrial enterprises. In Bohemia and Moravia the number of workers involved in manufacturing nearly doubled to 750,000 in the fifteen years after the creation of the customs union; one in every six

people in Greater Bohemia now worked at least part of the time for an industrial enterprise. The growth was even more rapid in Lower Austria, which quintupled its industrial workforce to nearly 100,000 in the first two decades after the Seven Year's War.

Although the *Erblände* was one of the continent's foremost iron producers and also exported glass, porcelain, and paper products, most of the growth in manufacturing was still concentrated in the textile industry. Indeed, the number of Bohemian and Moravian textile mills nearly quadrupled, from twenty-four to ninety-five, during the reigns of Joseph II and Leopold II. With over 10,000 workers, Linz possessed one of the continent's largest and most important wool factories. Lower Austria had become a major cotton producer; by 1790 a factory in Schwechat originally founded by Charles VI employed 3,306 workers. Even the Tyrolean town of Imst boasted a single concern with 7,000 wool and flax workers.

As usual Hungary remained the odd land out. After the Seven Years' War Maria Theresa rejected the advice of some of her liberal advisors, who urged her to promote new industries there, so long as they did not compete directly with those of the *Erblände*. She justified her position by arguing that industrial development would only benefit the same aristocrats who had defeated her request for a substantially higher Contribution in the 1764 diet. Hence, she excluded the kingdom from the Court Commercial Council that had been founded in 1762. She also refused to countenance a customs union with the other core lands, arguing that import and export duties were the only way she could legally compel the Hungarians to bear a more equitable share of the monarchy's taxes; it also made no fiscal sense to permit the lightly taxed Hungarians to develop industries that might undercut Austrian producers who were providing the *Hofkammer* with vital revenue. The hereditary lands' own manufacturers were, in fact, the primary beneficiaries. The customs union of 1775 not only protected their industries from Hungarian competition, but also lowered the tariff on their Hungarian exports to a maximum of 5 percent; at the same time, prohibitive export tariffs deprived the kingdom's grain, wine, and livestock producers of their traditional markets in Venice, Poland, Saxony, and Prussian Silesia, thereby compelling it to deliver its foodstuffs to the *Erblände*. Indeed, by 1790, 87 percent of Hungarian exports and 85 percent of its imports were with the Austrian and Bohemian crownlands.

By contrast the *Erblände* enjoyed considerable foreign outlets for its products. The expansion was especially noticeable in the south, which realized Charles VI's dream of a seaborne export trade. By 1769 the monarchy had no fewer than twenty-five consulates developing commercial relations throughout the Mediterranean world, including fifteen within the Turkish empire. Intercourse with the Ottoman dominions doubled from

1771 to 1788, growing to about 20 percent of foreign trade. Even the Hungarian crownlands were encouraged to trade with the Ottomans, either via the Danube or through Fiume, which was ceded to the kingdom and declared a free port in 1776. Of course, the Adriatic trade remained focused in Trieste, which boasted 20,000 people and fifty manufacturing concerns by 1786; fully a third of the monarchy's exports now passed through the port. Perhaps most remarkable were the monarchy's commercial ventures in the Indian Ocean. Though shorn of its imperial charter, the Ostend Company was revived by its private investors. Thanks largely to its efforts, there were a dozen Habsburg merchant ships sailing the East Indies by 1763. Over the next two decades still other enterprises briefly established colonies in Mozambique, India's Malabar Coast, and the Nicobar Islands.

Steady economic expansion had been accompanied by a corresponding increase in population, especially in the monarchy's towns. Thanks largely to the combined growth of industry and government, fully 15 percent of the *Erblande's* nine million people now lived in urban centers. Vienna itself housed over 200,000 people, nearly 300,000 counting its suburbs. Meanwhile, Prague's 80,000 inhabitants made it twice the size of any other city in the monarchy's core lands. Industrialization stimulated even greater population growth in the countryside, where there was less guild competition and an ample supply of cottage labor. Rural manufacturing had the greatest demographic impact on property-poor peasants, who could now support larger families with the wages they earned. Cottage labor also enabled their children to start a family at an earlier age, thereby further accelerating population growth. Nor should we overlook the positive effect of the Bohemian *Robotpatent* of 1775, which afforded the typical cottager more work time by cutting his labor service in half. Indeed, the combined effects of rural enterprises and urban reform help explain why Greater Bohemia's population rose by 50 percent after mid-century, compared to 10 percent in the Austrian lands.

Hungary's continued demographic resurgence demands a different explanation. Obviously, eight decades of peace had enabled the kingdom to recover from the unnaturally low population levels that obtained at the beginning of the century. During that period the towns tripled in size, partly because of the re-establishment of an artisan class, but also because many peasants chose to dwell in population centers. According to the 1787 census, central Hungary was the only Habsburg dominion with six cities of over 20,000 inhabitants. Pressburg still ranked first with 30,000 inhabitants, but Joseph II's transfer of the central government to Buda in 1784 soon boosted the twin cities of Buda and Pest to a combined population of 50,000. Yet, as in the *Erblande*, most real growth occurred in the countryside, which still held 95 percent of its 10 million people. By 1792 the century-long influx of half a

million colonists and an equal number of Balkan immigrants had repopulated the kingdom's southern and eastern frontiers. At 1.5 million inhabitants, Transylvania had nearly doubled in size since 1711. Meanwhile, the south central districts watered by the Tisza, Sava, and Lower Danube had grown tenfold over the same period to over 700,000 people, thanks in part to two more waves of settlers brought in by Joseph II and Leopold II.

With 26 million people and an expanse of 247,000 square miles, the monarchy was nearly as populous as France and larger than any other country, except Russia. Admittedly, population growth can be a mixed blessing unless it is accompanied by parallel increases in food supply. The century-long increase had, in fact, reduced levels of nutrition in densely populated areas. In Vienna bread prices had risen by a third between 1730 and 1780, while meat consumption declined substantially. Army recruiting records even suggest that the average height of Maria Theresa's Bohemian and Lower Austrian subjects dropped by two inches during the course of her reign. By then, however, the cumulative effect of the government's domestic policies had helped to overcome the subsistence crisis and insure the further growth of an industrial workforce. Improved working conditions helped the peasants to grow more food, just as better roads facilitated its delivery to urban centers. Meanwhile, Joseph II's abolition of serfdom and most guild privileges insured a continuous stream of workers for manufacturing jobs.

As it had in the past, wealth and prosperity manifested itself in cultural display. Maria Theresa and her sons played an important, if finite role in supporting the arts and letters. Although the empress finally completed Schönbrunn and patronized the court opera and ballet, she actually reduced the court and theatrical extravagances of her baroque predecessors by a quarter. She opted not to employ Johann Sebastian Bach because he was a Protestant and suggested that retaining the puckish Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart would be "unprofitable" and "degrading" to the civil service. Instead, the court served as a home for other important, though admittedly less gifted composers. The *Hofkapellmeister* Antonio Salieri (1750–1825) became one of Europe's most popular composers of comic opera. Although he initially hewed to the Italian operatic forms and libretti of Metastasio, Court Composer Christoph Willibad Gluck (1714–87), soon remolded the medium by making it more theatrical and introducing French vaudeville elements. Meanwhile, the prolific son of Maria Theresa's court embroiderer, Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739–99), made his mark by introducing the light-hearted *Singspiel* to the European stage.

Even before the empress's death, Vienna had superseded Elector Charles Theodore's court at Mannheim as the European center of symphonic music. The triumph of the Vienna Classical Style was most readily evident in the music world's adoption of four-movement symphonies written in the sonata

allegro form. It was also instrumental in attracting Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91), after he had been literally kicked out of the employ of Salzburg's archbishop (or arch-boobie, as he put it). Arriving in 1781, he became Joseph II's court composer after Gluck's death in 1787. The young Ludwig van Beethoven arrived five years later, securing a position in the court orchestra. Admittedly, the dynasty had much less experience or interest in promoting literature, which was judged a less effective vehicle for enhancing the dynasty's prestige. Nevertheless, Joseph II deserves some of the credit for the accomplishments of Joseph von Sonnenfels, whose state-sponsored efforts to improve German prose contributed to the development of modern German. Although Sonnenfels never achieved the prominence of German writers like Lessing and Goethe, he became the undisputed standard bearer of the Austrian *Aufklärung*.

Despite these achievements, private patronage remained the key to discovering and developing artistic expression within the monarchy. Thus the Bavarian-born Gluck had begun his music career in the service of the Bohemian Lobkovic, whom his father served as a forester; both he and Ditters were later introduced to court circles through the patronage of the prince of Saxe-Hilburghausen. In addition to valuable introductions, the Princes Lobkovic and Lichnowsky provided Beethoven with free lodging and start-up funds. Until the end of the century most concerts were performed in the salons of the city's aristocrats, such as the Princes Lichnowsky and Rasumofsky, who staged them on a weekly basis. Nor was the aristocracy alone in its patronage. During Joseph II's reign many of the city's untitled nobles, wealthy commoners, and government officials like Gottfried van Swieten hosted concerts in their homes. At Swieten's instigation a group of two dozen music patrons formed a Consortium of Associated Gentlemen (*Gesellschaft der Associierten Cavaliere*) that sponsored numerous concerts, including an oratorio performed each winter by members of the court's orchestra and chorus.

The monarchy's contribution to the arts was, of course, not limited to Vienna. In Hungary alone Maria Theresa's long reign witnessed the construction of 200 noble palaces, most of them in the new classical and rococo styles. Moreover, it was at the Esterházy family's massive new palaces at Fertöd and Eisenstadt that their *Kapellmeister* Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) composed and performed most of his work. Only after three decades in their service (1761–91) and two subsequent concert tours of London did he become a dominant figure in Vienna's music circles. Haydn's triumphant London performances underscore a major evolutionary step in the monarchy's history: whereas it had traditionally adopted the religious, political, mercantile, and philosophical systems of other societies, it had now emerged as a major contributor to European cultural heritage. Admittedly the visual

arts of the Austrian high baroque had spread to Catholic central Europe, but the music of Gluck, Salieri, Haydn, and Mozart was being performed all over Europe. And the best was yet to come.

Moreover, the monarchy's artists were appreciated not only by foreign audiences but also by a broader segment of its own population. For example, in Hungary prosperous nobles who had previously rejected the magnates' opulent lifestyle as a foreign threat to their nation's culture, now imitated them in constructing palaces, complete with theaters and music ensembles. Wealthier towns also founded their own orchestras and German-language theaters that offered the first secular alternative to the crudely improvised performances that were popular among the masses. Thanks to the advent of public education and Joseph II's removal of censorship, the last two decades of the century also witnessed a surge in the number of newspapers and reading clubs. There is even some evidence that the growth of mass literacy may have created a reading audience among the more prosperous elements of the peasantry.

That the political and philosophical discourse had also changed was evident by the foundation of scores of freemason lodges that served as a meeting place for reform-minded civil, academic, and military officers, as well as for private nobles, burghers, and clerics. Within the Austrian lands as many as 80 percent of higher public officials were masons. By 1780 Hungary boasted thirty lodges, with about 900 members. Unlike most central European rulers, Joseph II never warmed to their presence since he regarded them as a potential source of domestic opposition. In 1785 the exposure of the so-called Illuminati conspiracy in neighboring Bavaria inspired him to place limits on masonic activities. Nevertheless, Joseph's policies enjoyed broad support, within both the lodges and the intelligentsia as a whole. Most fell into one of two categories. One shared Sonnenfels's faith in the populist absolutism of Joseph's highly disciplined *Beamtenstaat*, even to the point of challenging the crownlands' feudal constitutions. While supporting the emperor's objectives, a second group felt that his unwillingness to heed advice or tolerate institutional checks on his power had led the monarchy to the verge of despotism. One of its spokesmen was Joseph Richter, whose satiric journal, the *Eipeldauer Briefe*, offered sympathetic, but critical commentary of his methods and policies. That Richter spoke for a broad and influential cross-section of the ruling elite is evident from the subsidy that he received from Pergen's secret police following the succession of Leopold II. Whereas both groups essentially supported the government, they were flanked by more hostile elements: large numbers of conservative nobles and clergy who had never accepted enlightened absolutism, especially in Hungary, Belgium, and Galicia, as well as a tiny number of republicans who envisioned eliminating the monarchy altogether. There is no question,

however, that fifty years of bureaucratization, secular education, and populist reform had reshaped the greater part of the monarchy's ruling elite in its own image.

By the end of the century that image had begun to include a common "Austrian" identity, a "corporate soul" that transcended different regions and ethnic groups. To a great extent, the emerging sense of a Habsburg commonwealth stemmed from the end of the dynasty's hegemony in the Holy Roman empire. Almost overnight Maria Theresa, her sons, and their German-speaking subjects had been forced to distinguish between their German roots and their loyalty to a separate Austrian state. The massive bureaucratic and military establishment that they created to defend it served as a powerful vehicle for integrating the monarchy's other ethnic groups, including the Magyar nation, which readily began dispatching its forces to conflicts fought well beyond its own frontiers. That the monarchy's military commanders, civil officials, merchants, and public affairs journals communicated in German did not overly concern the other language groups, which accepted its utility as an instrument of communication and social mobility. The evolution of a common elite culture that leaned heavily on German did not forestall the parallel development of other national cultures. Indeed, the government's promotion of public education in the vernacular helped pave the way for several "national awakenings," most notably among the Magyars and Czechs. Yet these movements operated primarily on an aesthetic plane that did not undermine their loyalty to the dynasty and the state it had created.

Having weathered the turbulence caused by the opposition to Joseph II, the Habsburg monarchy had fewer unresolved problems than at any time – either in its past or in its future. As a result it was well prepared to face the formidable military, economic, and cultural challenges of the next generation. Thanks to the industrial infrastructure in the *Erblände*, Lombardy and Belgium, it was economically comparable to the continent's other major states and was poised to enter the industrial revolution. Its intellectual life had rejoined the western European mainstream for the first time since the advent of the Counter-Reformation. Its systems of education and justice were models for the rest of the continent. Although its political and administrative system still did not approach the ideal envisioned by Joseph II, it was far more efficient, honest, and responsive than most other European governments. It had also become a strong vehicle for raising large amounts of revenue. The 87.5 million fl. that poured into the *Hofkammer's* coffers in 1788 was nearly twice that of its Prussian rival and almost equal to the 12 million collected by the British exchequer at the height of the War of American Independence. If the government was still mired in debt, it was no longer because of an incompetent administration system, but rather because

of the *Hofkriegsrat's* talent for pushing the military's size beyond the *Hofkammer's* ability to pay. With a wartime strength of roughly 400,000 men, it now had the largest standing army that Europe had seen since the age of Louis XIV.² Relative to the other states and societies of the continent, the Habsburg monarchy was neither weak, nor backward, nor in decline. But, then again, the world around it was about to change.

² The numbers tabulated by P.G.M. Dickson suggest about 315,000 front-line troops, 75,000 *Grenzer*, and 20,000 artillery, engineer, and other special units. Its interwar level of 300,000 (1791) was also considerably higher than the peacetime military establishments of Prussia (195,000), Russia (224,000), and France (182,000).