

## CHAPTER II

### THE DYNASTY

What was said in the historical part has already put into sufficient light the fundamental rôle (both from the point of view of initiative and of conservation) of the Habsburg dynasty in the whole drama. In the given historical constellation the political aspiration of the Habsburgs was strictly determined and this ideal remained almost unchanged for four centuries. However different individualities, in value and in capacity, may have been the possessors of the Habsburg throne and however different their method was in the realization of their aims, their purpose in its fundamental character remained the same from Maximilian I until the passing of the last Habsburg. Every keen observer who was occupied with the problem of the monarchy has felt that there was something rigidly constant in the intellectual and moral structure of the Habsburg dynasty. Under the sway of this predominant impression it became a habit to speak of the monarchy simply as of Habsburg: Habsburg did this or that; that was the will of Habsburg; that was the fate of Habsburg; so was the decision of Vienna, etc. Above the single individual, however tyrannical a despot he may have been, there hovered always the spirit not only of the biological but of the social inheritance: the *Habsburg structure* as a quintessence of all those traditional values which led and directed the dynasty and the supreme military, diplomatic, and bureaucratic organizations combined with it (the Austrian *camarilla*, as it was called by its exacerbated enemies, the Hungarian leaders for independence). These almost constant elements of the Habsburg structure from which all the others can be easily deduced are religious mysticism, Catholicism, militarism, and the universalism of the Habsburg dynasty.

In his religious *mysticism* each Habsburg felt himself connected by a special tie with divinity, as an executor of the divine will. This explains their almost unscrupulous attitude in the midst of historical catastrophes and their proverbial ungratefulness. *Der Dank vom Hause Habsburg* ("the gratitude of the Habsburg family") became a widely spread slogan. They broke their most solemn promises very often and cast away their most loyal and self-sacrificing men as squeezed lemons, if, in so doing, they could somewhat alleviate a transitorily difficult situation. When, for instance under the pressure of revolutionary Vienna, Metternich was dismissed and was compelled to flee, nobody in the whole court asked him where he would go and how he could live. Naturally, in the robust naïveté of their dynastic mys-

ticism, they could not even face the problem of whether the interest of their peoples and countries would coincide with the interest of their patrimonial possessions. It was well said by a Slav statesman of the monarchy that the key and the deepest spring of the Habsburg policy was at all times and under all circumstances the eager instinctive desire for *plus de terres*. Beginning with the immense land hunger of Rudolph until the occupation and annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, that was always their leading motive, disregarding not only the national interests of the peoples but even the problem of the unity and cohesion of the state. The principle of the *l'état c'est moi* remained until the end the exclusive maxim of the monarchy unmitigated by any other consideration.

This mystical imperialism was completely welded with the ideology and aspiration of Roman Catholicism. After a brief hesitation, Habsburg adhered with his entire force to the cause of the counter-reformation and became its leading power. The spirit of Protestantism emanating from a popular soil, making concession to critical reason, emphasizing at least *pro foro interno* the rights of the individual, hurt instinctively the Habsburg soul in its absolutist and transcendentalist impatience. This attitude was strengthened and matured by the political constellation. In Germany the reformation became the ideological support of the estates and other particularist interests fighting the imperial power, whereas Habsburg in this vehement controversy could not miss that big religious and historical force which his connection with the papacy bestowed upon him. Besides, the Protestant movements (as in Hussitism) often became a religious background for the nationalistic tendencies, giving for the first time to the great masses of the population the Bible in their mother-tongue. And such a conscious national spirit would have endangered the work of political unification which was the chief endeavor of the Habsburgs.

This endeavor had the character of a political universalism. Among their immense conglomeration of peoples and countries the Habsburgs would not suffer political or religious divisions. All which was local, autonomous, or determined by a particular popular entity appeared suspicious and antipathetic to them as a sign or danger of feudal rebellions. As a matter of fact the Habsburgs felt and thought in a supra-national manner as a consequence of their extremely complicated blood-mixture,<sup>1</sup> of their Catholicism, and of the exceedingly variegated ethnic composition of the monarchy. It is not true as we have already demonstrated that the Habsburg dynasty appeared as

<sup>1</sup>In a curious document concerning the pedigree of Francis Ferdinand his 2,047 ancestors are carefully enumerated. Among them are German 1,486, French 124, Italian 196, Spanish 89, Pole 52, Danish 47, English 20, and four other nationalities. *Ahmentafel Seiner Kaiserlichen und Königlichen Hoheit des durchlauchtigsten Herrn Erzherzogs Franz Ferdinand*. Bearbeitet von Otto Forst (Wien u. Leipzig, 1910).

a consciously and consequentially Germanizing power. They were really remote from such a tendency. There were Habsburgs who did not even speak German. Even those Habsburg emperors who sometimes fostered a policy of Germanization were not led in their efforts by any nationalistic point of view, but their measures were dictated by the interest of unification and universalism of their empire.

The spirit of militarism in the Habsburg empire was far more than in the western states an instrument for the maintaining of inner cohesion than of a defense against foreign aggressors. Indeed, from its beginning until its last hour, the solidarity of the monarchy was based on the imperial army and in the case of any serious crisis the Emperor acted with the consciousness that he would always be capable of cutting the Gordian knot of political troubles by the sword of his military power. In two things the Habsburgs never understood a joke, for which they always cast away the mask of the pseudo-constitutionalism of the later epochs, whenever popular will became opposed to them; the one was their autocratic disposition with the army, with *meine Armee*; the other was the direction of the foreign policy which put *faits accomplis* before the so-called "Delegations" of the two parliaments, devoid of any serious sanction. The Habsburg monarchy remained until the end the model state of military absolutism, beside Russia and Prussia, even its power being perhaps more conspicuous here because the feeble force of public opinion, divided in continuous national struggles into eight or ten parts, could not counteract in any serious manner the exclusiveness of the imperial will.

This unchecked force of the dynastic idea found its final and solemn formulation when Emperor Francis sensing the growing fragility of his German-Roman empire took up the title of an Austrian emperor. This state act and two years later in 1806 his final abdication from the German imperial dignity were emphatic formulations of the patrimonial state and of the fatal conception that the idea of the state is identical with the person of the monarch. The whole empire was simply regarded as the extension of the former *Hausmacht*, the patrimonial possessions of the dynasty.

This purely dynastic conception of state found its psychic expression and political incorporation in the Viennese imperial city, the unique splendor of which was more than the center of a sumptuous court life. It was, in a certain sense, the moral synthesis of the whole empire. The most various ethnic and cultural elements met here in the furnace of the imperial life and the old German culture obtained under very strong Slav, Italian, and Magyar influences, a special Austrian color. This cultural synthesis called *Alt-Wien* carried out its effects on the whole monarchy; it became the basis of a general bourgeois culture which attracted into the sphere of its influence the higher nobility and the richer middle classes of all the countries and provinces. Vi-

enna became everywhere the chief leader of fashion and elegant social forms and its unrivaled sway found expression in both the architecture of the churches and public buildings and the castles of the Hungarian, Czech, and Polish nobility. The two most characteristic aesthetic manifestations of this typical Austrian culture, the *Baroque* and the *Biedermeier*, were vivid expressions of the artistic sensibility of two distinct social types: the heroic and the police absolutism. The brilliancy and the grace of the court remained the chief conductor of every talent and ambition for generations. The distribution of nobilities, dignities, orders, this application of the *divide et impera* principle in the social and family field was quite an important support of the Habsburg rule. In addition, it became a custom to establish in the more conspicuous countries and provinces *branches of the imperial court* by the location there of some archdukes who assumed a certain local and national hue, used the language of the country, and became moderated protectors of the local patriotisms. These local Habsburg exponents exercised a smoothing and reconciliatory influence on the recalcitrant national nobility and administered, one might say, *per procura*, the imperial grace.

Beside the homogeneous culture of the higher classes, there emanated from Vienna another powerful factor of spiritual cohesion, the literary German language which had the function of a *lingua franca* among the different nations of the monarchy. From the Czech mountains to the Adria, from Innsbruck to Czernowitz, anyone could travel unhindered with the help of the German language. There were everywhere some officers, officials, merchants, or intellectuals who spoke this language fluently and there was not a single hotel or inn where the traveler would not have been understood in this language. This effect of the German language and culture radiated far into the Balkans and that gave the impression to some superficial observers of a conscious Germanization. But what made the process so general and more and more extended was not a constrained or artificial propaganda but a deep economic and cultural necessity which could only be satisfied by the intermediary of the German language, as a consequence of its historical contacts. As a matter of fact German became the language both of science and of capitalism. The connecting force of the Viennese university which, during generations, had educated the best lawyers and physicians for the monarchy, was very marked until the end as a species of spiritual solidarity. The German language was a veritable bridge which connected Slavs, Magyars, and Rumanians with the Western culture. This unifying force of the German language would have become without doubt even more general and intensive if it had not had attached to it the conception of the Habsburg state coercion, and the struggles of the awakening peoples against German centralization. The truth of this assertion is demon-

strated by the fact that many of the leaders of the national *risorgimento* in the various countries of the monarchy began their literary career in the German language. Also the example of Bukovina strengthens this argument, where the Rumanian and Ruthenian masses were not confronted by larger German settlements and by an artificial German hegemony. Under such circumstances the world-language nature of German could gain prevalence without hindrance and one could witness the interesting situation of the two rival nations adopting spontaneously German as the language of internal administration.<sup>2</sup>

Especially for the more backward peoples of the monarchy who lived under Turkish rule, the Austrian imperial connection was, through long periods, almost the only source of a cultural initiative and social organization. It was the imperial center which introduced the first elements of European agriculture, school, and administration into the barter economy of feudalism, and which erected the first ramparts against the merciless exploitation of the peasant masses. The struggles among the various nations of the monarchy even strengthened the force of the absolutist monarchy. The national idea pushed back in the Austrian half of the monarchy the idea of constitutionalism.

This situation created the atmosphere of a hypocritical loyalty in the whole monarchy. Each nation, even the most rebellious, tried to emphasize continuously not only its legal fidelity to the dynasty, but even its enthusiastic devotion to it. We witnessed very often real outbursts of loyalty paroxysms and loyalty competitions which undermined both civic consciousness and individual honesty. A characteristic little episode will illustrate the situation. In 1909 the official Hungarian paper wrote the following in connection with the seventy-ninth birthday of the Emperor:

The often severely tried Hungarian nation stands in its fidelity to its crowned Master without example and above all comparisons. No other nation of the universe can surpass the sons of the Hungarian people in their loyalty coupled with self-sacrifice.

This Byzantinism was the more nauseating for all sincere men because a few years previously, if not the Hungarian people, at least the feudal parliament continued the most exacerbated struggles against the king in the so-called military questions, and this beloved king did not hesitate to drive asunder this hyper-loyal representation by armed force. Not only the Magyars but also the Czechs and Italians uttered very often expressions of an exaggerated loyalty after vehement and exasperated criticisms when they saw a chance for imperial power to

<sup>2</sup> For details see the highly interesting book of F. Kleinwaechter, *Der Untergang der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* (Leipzig, 1920), pp. 171-73.

help or promote their national aspirations. No one had better characterized this basely servile atmosphere than Louis Mocsáry, a close adherent of Kossuth and a brilliant leader of Hungarian independence saying: "In this vast conglomerate called the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on both sides of the Leitha, countries, provinces, nations, denominations, social classes, groups of interests, all being factors in political and social life, put up to auction their loyalty for the grace of the court."

This tendency, demoralizing public opinion at large, was strengthened by another which was the system of protection and distribution of posts and dignities which the members of the imperial family often exercised for the compensation of their own gang. The recommendation of the smallest archduke had a greater influence in awarding public services than the work and result of a whole life. The luck of the archducal instructors and godchildren became proverbial. This archducal influence was not seldom a derivatory one exercised by certain officials, even lackeys, of the archdukes. There circulated many anecdotes in this connection emphasizing the fact that sometimes the word of an old lackey was more influential than the determination of a state minister.

In spite of all these tendencies, slackening the force of cohesion of the monarchy, one cannot deny that the prestige of the imperial family was until the end more than a purely military or power position but it was based on very widely spread mass feelings in many more traditional parts of the monarchy under the influence of the school and the church.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ARMY

The most powerful pillar of the Habsburg fortification which from its beginning until its breakdown represented the chief supporter and maintainer of the monarchy was the imperial army. This army from the beginning until the end—however masked it may have been by constitutional veils—was and remained under the autocratic disposition of the monarch uninfluenced in the really important issues by the parliamentary system. This army was the most individual creation of the dynasty, and it was further strengthened and developed from generation to generation. Especially the genius of Eugene of Savoy was a powerful influence in replacing the old feudal and mercenary spirit of the army by a more modern one. However, the patrimonial character of the army continued even in more recent times when the system of general conscription was introduced, carried on by feudal administration. Almost until the constitutional era the procedure of levying remained untouched, especially in Hungary where the conscription could not have been effectuated without the concurrence of the country administration very often in a fight against Vienna. This levying was not at all apt to promote any kind of civic consciousness. So writes the historian of the Austrian state administration:

In the levying places the levymen chose as their headquarters an often frequented inn or an isolated tavern. When a man came in who seemed suitable for military service, he was invited to drink and they tried to make him intoxicated. If he could be seduced to put on a soldier's uniform for the sake of experiment or to wear a military helmet or to pronounce a *vivat* to the emperor he was immediately considered to be enrolled.<sup>1</sup>

It is manifest that such and similar procedures could not augment in the people its love toward the Habsburg army. Especially in the soul of the Hungarian people this practice appeared both as foreign domination and social oppression which popular songs carried further from village to village. One of these plaintive rhymes I heard personally in my childhood from the lips of the peasantry: "Now among us they enlist with a rope. . . . The poor fellow is carried away by force. . . . Five or six sons of the rich are undisturbed. . . . An only son of the poor is captured. . . ."

But even when the army was put under the semblance of a parliamentary control by the introduction of universal military obligation,

<sup>1</sup> Ignaz Beidtel, *Geschichte der Österreichischen Staatsverwaltung: 1740–1848* (Innsbruck, 1896), I, 64–65.