

## CHAPTER II

### THE AUSTRIAN SYSTEM OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Generally speaking, the whole public instruction in Austria was permeated by the old dynastic and patrimonial conception of the state. Austrian history was described, almost exclusively in all the textbooks as a history of the dynasty and its war lords. After the perusal of the accepted textbooks in civics and history, one has the impression that all the events were personal acts of the Emperors. The whole history as it was taught was a glorification of the dynastic force, a kind of a vast *dynastic epopoeia*. All the chapters of the widely spread texts, all their pictures emphasized and extolled the same point of view. One has the feeling that the peoples were only mute personages in the anational drama of the Habsburgs, purposeless instruments in the hands of the Emperors, their war lords, and ministers. The school festivals were celebrations of the birthday of the Emperor and of other important family events. All patriotic songs were the glorification of the Sovereign or of the exploits of his successful generals. It is quite characteristic that the only Austrian song which could be called patriotic in a popular sense, the song glorifying the memory of Andreas Hofer, is not an expression of an Austrian solidarity but of the loyalty toward "the good Emperor Francis" and of the love "of the holy country, Tyrol."

This tendency to describe Austrian history as the personal work of the Habsburgs; to extol all their military exploits, even the smallest; to eliminate as far as possible the memory of their defeats, errors, or faults; to qualify all movements opposed to the Imperial Majesty as pure crimes or rebellions was a constant feature of all the popular textbooks. They are permeated with the spirit of a nauseating Byzantinism. Some few examples will elucidate the extreme morbidity of the whole atmosphere. For instance, Dr. Emanuel Hannak, former director of the Teacher's Seminar in Vienna gave the following instruction to his pupils under the heading "Formation of Character and Will":

The rapturous feeling of love and esteem clings primarily to the leader of the state, whose picture is already known to the child from his earliest infancy by the money in circulation and by its presence in a dignified place both in the home and the school. He learns to venerate him as the father of the fatherland and extends this reverence to all the members of his majestic family. . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Methodik des Unterrichtes in der Geschichte* (2d ed., Wien, 1907), pp. 14-15.

When the minds of the children were filled with a great amount of useless details and servile adulations, the most important economic, cultural, and national connections of Austrian history were entirely neglected. For instance, concerning the Viennese revolution of 1848 an extensively used textbook narrates that "for such troubles the too benign Emperor felt himself not a match, he left Vienna and went to Olmütz, to his residence. . . ." On the other hand all the results and achievements of a period are exclusively portrayed as the personal work of the sovereign. A popular little textbook, for example, though containing only seventy-nine small pages, enumerates under the title "What Emperor Francis Joseph Did for His Peoples" in a long series of items all the creations of this great emperor, beginning with the granting of a constitution and finishing with the water-supply of the capital.<sup>2</sup> Naturally all the new universities or hospitals were a personal present of the magnanimous sovereign to his beloved nations.

But in spite of the exuberance of this dynastic patriotism, the real results of the system were very small. Especially in the non-German regions the dynastic enthusiasm spread by the schools was only "a cold lip-service of the teachers," whereas in an unofficial manner they extolled and cherished the national aspirations of their respective peoples. This growing chasm between dynastic and national patriotism could not be bridged by the anxious efforts of the official administration. So for instance it became a system, especially in the non-German regions, to have the students write so-called "Patriotic Tests," an endeavor to bring into harmony the regional patriotism with the Habsburg patriotism. The better teachers, however, felt always the futility of such an attempt. What could the poor school do against the impetuous flood of national dissatisfaction, against the acrimonious criticism of the popular leading articles of the daily press and against the continuous national scandals in the Diets and in Parliament? The more serious teacher, therefore, avoided as far as possible these patriotic experiments because they were perfectly aware of the fact that such and similar artificial worship of the dynastic state was useless and could only debase the moral character of the pupils. At this juncture I remember a characteristic episode. A new governor of Dalmatia, dissatisfied with the growing Slav spirit of a high school, asked somewhat bitterly the director of this institution why its moral atmosphere could not be as good and patriotic as that of a *Kadettenschule* (colleges for the education of future officers). To which this acquaintance of mine replied: "Sir, if you were capable of putting all

<sup>2</sup> Al. Swetina, *Das Wichtigste aus der Österreichischen Geschichte* (5th ed., Sternberg, 1908), pp. 56-57.

the children of this province under the same conditions as your cadets, separated from their family, in the dynastical hothouse of a secluded college, we could obtain exactly the same results. . . .”

This courageous answer gives really the true key to the problem of civic education in Austria. The only institution of the monarchy, as has been already emphasized in another connection, which was really successful in creating for a long period a type of man in whom the idea of a dynastic patriotism and of the interests of the super-state was stronger than the national aspirations of his race, was the imperial army. Why? Because it constituted a real state within the state, a dynastic island in the sea of the growing national and social struggles. Upon this island there was quite an artificial cultural vegetation. And the chief textbook of the *K. K. Armee* (Imperial-Royal Army), the famous *Dienstreglement* (Rule of Service), was a real Bible of Habsburg patriotism. It is highly characteristic that the traditional oath taken by the soldier was purely and simply an oath of vassalage toward the Emperor and his official officer staff, without a single word of any duty of the soldier toward his fatherland, people, or constitution. On the other hand, a very scrupulous and tactful care was maintained that the members of the imperial army should feel themselves as equals not disturbed by national rivalries or chauvinistic particularisms. Thus, for instance, paragraph 5 of the *Dienstreglement* emphasized in a solemn and resolute manner that

the destiny of the army, uniting many thousands in a lofty purpose, demands a common spirit and unity both in the singular organized bodies and in the totality of the armed force. This common spirit is rooted in the feeling of solidarity and in the realization of the necessity of subordinating private interest to the well-being of the whole. It creates the professional feeling (*Standesbewusstsein*), fosters a severe self-denying accomplishment of duty, and develops the highest military virtues. . . .

But this very definition of the dynastic patriotism shows its fragility for the modern times. It created not a state consciousness but a professional consciousness for the imperial service. Therefore, any progress in national and cultural development of the various peoples lessened this professional solidarity and strengthened the national, strictly opposed to the imperialistic super-state. The leading circles were perfectly aware of this situation and it became a kind of governmental maxim to keep the “loyal army” as far as possible aloof from the general population infected with the bacilli of a more liberal and national public opinion.

In this dilemma only a new type of civic education could have found a way out: a civic education convincing the various peoples of the monarchy of the necessity and advantages of a mutual, economic and cultural co-operation under the patronage of a free federal state.

But nothing was done in this direction. The ten nations of the monarchy and its various nationalities were total strangers to each other, and the whole system of public education was entirely incapable of closing this gap. Discussing this problem retrospectively with some outstanding educators of former Austria, their opinions converged on the point that the whole system of public education never faced this problem in its real importance and seriousness.

The chief interest of Austrian history—so a former educational leader wrote—was not concentrated upon Austria as a state of various nations but it was always directed upon the Habsburg state under the hypothesis of the political and cultural preponderance of the Germans. . . . Though this spirit was far less chauvinistic than that of the Western nation states, it was also devoid of any genuine enthusiasm, and the idea of a general reconciliation of the nations was never considered. . . . There was scarcely the opportunity and still less the desire to learn the languages of the non-German peoples and a mutual intellectual penetration, therefore, was out of the question. Especially the distance between Austria and Hungary became more and more unbridgeable; the general Austrian student left school with the impression that beyond the Leitha an entirely foreign country began. . . . Though a certain amount of political geography concerning the various nations was taught, this teaching was entirely a dead letter, giving no impetus toward a better mutual understanding and co-operation. The strangeness of the people to each other was the cause of the downfall of the old Austria and our school system did nothing to prevent it.

Another eminent expert emphasized to me that the purely dynastic accent of Austrian history was detrimental to a state idea and even in the nationally mixed territories the German students rarely learned the non-German languages. Besides, the most important chapters of modern Austro-Hungarian history were treated in a very summary way, giving to the students very slight opportunity to understand the essence of those changes which led to the dualistic remolding of the constitution. All the actions and movements against the Habsburg dynasty were naturally portrayed as riotous upheavals without any real justification.

Speaking generally, however, one might say that public education in Austria committed sins of omission rather than commission. In the cool dynastic and bureaucratic atmosphere of this system everything was omitted which could have led to mutual hatred among the students and to the artificial fostering of national and racial antipathy. Unfortunately the other great factors in civic education, political life, and local administration, the daily press and the social organizations of the citizens worked in quite another direction. In all these fields of public life the spirit of an intolerant nationalism grew stronger and stronger. In so far as national consciousness permeated more and more all the various ethnical elements of the monarchy, the emphasis and fostering, the lip-service and adulation of this feeling

became a springboard for all business politicians and demagogues. National feeling in its vagueness, elasticity, and traditional sentimentalism gave an excellent opportunity for building up a united national front against the "common enemy," for canalizing all economic and social dissatisfaction of the masses, and for hiding class antagonism and cultural differences for the benefit of a loud, confused national demagogy. The dynamics of this process have already been described elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> At this juncture I would like only to emphasize that neither the state nor society tried to counterbalance, on the basis of a constructive policy, these dissolving tendencies. The immense majority of the Austrian newspapers, especially the most powerful German capitalistic press, found it excellent business to promote the wave of national paroxysm. The same was done by the so-called national and cultural associations, an extended network of which covered all the countries of the monarchy. Each nation had its own national-cultural associations motivated by the necessity of safeguarding its national rights against the aggressive tendency of another nationality by fostering national consciousness; by organizing the still apathetic strata; by founding schools, choirs, libraries, and other cultural organizations in order to strengthen the nation as a whole. No one can deny that these associations were an important factor in the development of national consciousness, especially among the more backward nations of the empire. But from the point of view of a state-solidarity their effect was strictly detrimental because they soon were transformed from an instrument of self-defense and consolidation into a demagogic apparatus, a chauvinistic machine for the benefit of the political bosses and of sinecure officials, shouting the most envenomed slogans of national hatred. The political parties and the local administration, and later, as we have seen, the state administration itself, came more and more under the sway of the hypertrophy of the nationalistic feeling created by these pseudo-cultural associations.

<sup>3</sup> Compare pp. 284–87 of this book.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HUNGARIAN SYSTEM OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Just the opposite was the situation in Hungary where, after the Compromise of 1867, all Habsburg administration was completely eliminated and the time-honored Hungarian state reassumed its complete internal sovereignty. The ruling Magyar classes, triumphant against the centralizing Viennese administration, regarded as their only historical mission the building up of a unitary Magyar state. The acknowledgment of the other nations as not only agglomerations of individuals but as distinct political units of the country was repudiated as an offense against the very idea of the Hungarian nation. Though a cold lip-service was paid to the dynasty by the official circles, by the high clergy and aristocracy, as long as the sovereign did not interfere with the claims and interests of the ruling class, this dynastic loyalty did not permeate the vast strata of the population of the Magyars who combatted through centuries Habsburg absolutism and Germanization. Therefore, this dynastic religion which determined to a large extent civic education in Austria was almost entirely lacking in the Magyar nation and animated only certain circles of the nationalities which, owing to the traditions of the past, continued to regard the Habsburgs as a kind of potential bulwark against the growing tide of Magyar nationalism.

The main features of this nationalism, its tendencies toward an artificial, if necessary, even forcible Magyarization of the non-Magyar nationalities, were described elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> In this connection I would like only to emphasize that in opposition to Austria the Hungarian state had a very systematic, even highly dogmatic conception of a civic education devoted exclusively to the conception of a Magyar national state. The leading circles of Hungary regarded the Hungarian state, in spite of the small Magyar majority of the country, as a united national state, entitled to this dignity by the same historical reasons by which the English, the French, the German, and the Italian nations have a right to build up a completely homogeneous national state, disregarding any other ethnic elements as constituting parts of state sovereignty. All the moral and spiritual energies of the state were devoted to this unique aim of national assimilation, centralization, and consolidation. The entire educational system of the state served, almost with a religious fervor, this supreme dogma of national unity. In the absence of a bourgeois class in a Western sense and in the absence of an organized peasantry and an efficient labor movement, this

<sup>1</sup> Compare pp. 327 ff. of this book.