

# A Vulnerable Empire: the Habsburg Monarchy in the European Power System, 1815-1918

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Die Friedensordnung des Wiener Kongresses beendete 1815 mehr als zwei Jahrzehnte unausgesetzter Kriegführung gegen die Hegemonialansprüche Frankreichs. Um den Frieden dauerhaft zu sichern, erhielt Österreich die wichtige Aufgabe, nicht nur künftige Aspirationen der beiden Flügelmächte Frankreich und Russland zu zügeln, sondern innerhalb der zersplitterten deutschen Staatenwelt, in Nord- und Mittelitalien sowie auf dem Balkan Ruhe und Stabilität zu sichern. Wenngleich mit einer deutlichen Überforderung der österreichischen Möglichkeiten verbunden, verstand es die Habsburgermonarchie, ihre Verpflichtungen bis etwa 1850 im wesentlichen zu erfüllen. Die Unterstützung durch mehrere, wenn nicht überhaupt alle übrigen europäischen Großmächte erwies sich schon in dieser Phase als unverzichtbar.

Der Versuch Russlands 1853, den *status quo* in Südosteuropa grundlegend zu verändern, löste die bewaffnete Intervention Großbritanniens und Frankreichs aus. Österreich blieb neutral, verspielte jedoch gerade dadurch seine traditionelle Allianz mit Russland, ohne ein dauerhaftes Bündnis mit den beiden Westmächten zu erlangen. Schon wenige Jahre später, in den deutschen und italienischen Einigungskriegen 1859 und 1866, kämpfte die Monarchie auf sich allein gestellt und unterlag. Dem Rückzug des Hauses Habsburg aus Deutschland folgte die Errichtung des Deutschen Kaiserreiches 1871, mit dem sich Österreich 1879 im Zweibund zusammenschloss, einer Defensivallianz gerichtet auf die Abwehr eines russischen Angriffs.

Die um 1890 einsetzende, aggressive deutsche „Weltpolitik“ festigte zwar – mangels Alternativen für beide Partner – den „Zweibund“, führte jedoch in der Folge zur Herausbildung zweier Allianzblöcke in Europa. Österreich-Ungarn, seit 1867 als Doppelmonarchie reorganisiert, verlor dadurch jeden außenpolitischen Handlungsspielraum. Je länger desto mehr wurden die von Russland gedeckten Ambitionen der Balkanstaaten, allen voran Serbiens, als vitale Bedrohung der Monarchie empfunden. Der Wiener Entschluss, auf das von Serbien gelenkte Attentat auf den Thronfolger in Sarajewo am 28. Juni 1914 mit der Kriegserklärung an Serbien zu antworten, setzte einen Weltkrieg in Gang, in dessen Verlauf Österreich-Ungarn, geschwächt durch Niederlagen an den Fronten, zunehmend in Abhängigkeit von Deutschland geriet. Immerhin hatte die Auflösung des Vielvölkerstaates bis ins letzte Kriegsjahr hinein nicht zu den alliierten Kriegszielen gehört. Als jedoch im Herbst 1918 ein innerer Zerfallsprozess einsetzte und die nicht-deutschen bzw. nicht-ungarischen Völkerschaften ihre Loyalität gegenüber dem Staat aufkündigten, rührte sich bei den Siegern keine Hand, um dessen Existenz zu retten. Ein solcher Versuch hätte freilich keine Realisierungschance gehabt.

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## INTRODUCTION

In July 1849, when the revolutionary wave sweeping continental Europe during the previous year had been suppressed by the monarchical regimes concerned, British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston described the Austrian Empire's function within the European power system in a speech addressed to his parliament:

Austria is the most important element in the balance of European powers. Austria stands in the centre of Europe, barrier against encroachment on the one side and against invasion on the other. The political independence and liberties of Europe are bound in my opinion with the maintenance and integrity of Austria as a great European power <sup>1</sup>.

Seventy years later, when World War I came to an end, no politician in the Allied countries any longer shared Palmerston's opinion with which the Prime Minister's contemporaries would have widely agreed. At the end of 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy practically, if not legally, was dissolved and disappeared from the scene. No attempt was made to restore the Austrian Empire – however reshaped due to the upheavals of the Great War – as a factor in the new political order to be established after the armistice. Nor did the ruling Habsburg dynasty and the political, economic and military elites attached to the monarchical regime resign without noteworthy resistance. And no less astonishing, the British government – eager in past centuries to keep the balance of power on the continent intact – saw no need to interfere in favour of the Dual Monarchy.

It is the aim of this chapter to survey briefly the reasons both for the fundamental changes that occurred in public opinion at the time as well as in the views of the leading statesmen in the countries belonging to the winning side. Why did the attitudes towards the Monarchy change so fundamentally that Austria was no longer regarded as a key factor in maintaining peace and stability, but rather a mere, if not even a dangerous, assistant to German imperialism? This chapter will further examine whether the shift of views was a consequence of Austria's own behaviour or the result of the upheaval which the European system of states underwent during the 19th century.

## AUSTRIA'S EUROPEAN POSITION AFTER 1815

The peace settlement installed by the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15, after the final defeat of Napoleon I, put an end to more than two decades of permanent warfare among the Great European Powers. The French attempt to establish a continental hegemony had failed disastrously. The enormous human losses and vast devastation caused by the Napoleonic wars, unique as they were for the period in question, motivated the monarchs and statesmen assembled in Vienna (and even the representatives of defeated France) to strive for a long-lasting, and thereby peacekeeping, balance among the powerful states. The main goal to be achieved was the erection of a massive barrier against any future repetition of a war likely to devastate the whole continent. The primary target of the peace conference was not to win, but to prevent a future war. The focus of the Vienna Congress was thus not exclusively directed against France, the aggressor of the previous decades. Restraining Russia, by far the most powerful country in Europe, was at least of equal importance.

For all these reasons, there was no way of simply re-establishing the European order prior

to the French Revolution of 1789. The framework of the pentarchy, the five Great Powers (Britain, France, Russia, Austria and Prussia), the European concert, as the famous German historian Leopold von Ranke called it, was not questioned, however. France was weakened, but remained an influential part of the concert. In order to act as a check on dangers from the periphery (France and Russia), the two central powers, Austria and Prussia, were strengthened considerably. The boundaries of the territories under their rule, scattered over central Europe and sometimes even isolated from each other, were partially redrawn and their cohesion improved. While Prussia received the task of being on guard along the Rhine, Austria's duties were even more complex. Abandoning the remainder of her former possessions in western Europe, the Vienna Congress directed the Empire toward the east and south-east. Austria was given large territories in the former Poland (integrated into the Monarchy as the province of Galicia) and, in a joint action with Prussia, was to build up a wall against a further Russian advance into the heart of the continent. By incorporating Dalmatia, situated on the Adriatic, Austria strengthened her position in the Balkans. The Vienna Congress expected the Empire to act as a counterbalance against both the Ottoman state and Russia's aspirations to reach the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the Congress established Austrian rule in northern and central Italy, a region split up into a confusing variety of small states. In Germany, too, Austria was the acknowledged head of the new German Confederation, thereby combining a realistic recognition of the existence of the Austrian and Prussian monarchies with the creation of an organization strong enough to resist pressure from the flanking powers, France and Russia.

The settlement left the Habsburgs in possession of an Empire more extensive, but at the same time more compact than ever. Austria was therefore in a good position to fulfil the role assigned to it. One could argue that the amount and the heterogeneity of all these duties overestimated the Monarchy's capacity to guarantee stability in the regions under her responsibility. Galicia, for example, by its very geographic nature was hardly defensible against a massive Russian attack. The Dalmatian coastal strip, on the other hand, relied for its defence on tenuous maritime communications. Austrian positions would be difficult to maintain in the long run. Shortcomings in the interior added further obstacles. Even a little expedition against a handful of rebels in Naples in 1821 threw the state finances into virtual bankruptcy. With its population of 30 million and an army of merely 230,000 men, Austria lacked the argument of force that alone could give reality to its Great Power status.

On the other hand, it cannot be disputed that the system worked quite well for a remarkably long time. It did not, however, function without numerous and severe frictions. Threats to change the status quo to Austria's disadvantage arose in three areas: in Italy, in Germany and in the Near East. Especially in Italy, uprisings were common. To some degree, these riots can be interpreted as a reaction to an order that may at best be called reactionary. For the statesmen assembled in Vienna in 1814-15, however, no other feasible solution seemed to be possible. Leaving the Balkans or Italy to themselves, internal struggles, and anarchy and, as a likely consequence, interventions by neighbouring states were all a threat to peace. In Italy, every French government after 1815 was eager to exploit anti-Austrian feelings and to re-establish French influence, possibly as a first step towards a destruction of the whole 1815 settlement. Only a Great Power like Austria, the only member of the concert that bordered these regions, was regarded as capable of carrying out the

task. The participation of France in regard to Italy was completely out of the question. France, the war-monger of the past, had to be weakened, not strengthened.

Austria had taken over a difficult duty, but succeeded for at least three decades. Minor rebellions in Italy during the 1820's and 1830's were suppressed. Yet events led the Vienna government to the recognition of the simple fact that the Monarchy alone was too weak to maintain all the positions that had been created for it by the anti-French coalition of 1814-15. Here we find the explanation for Austria's unwearied efforts to enlist the support of at least one of the leading powers of that coalition. This was an attempt to perpetuate the spirit of solidarity that had appeared in the final stages of the struggle against Napoleon. In fact, so long as memories of the war remained fresh, decision-makers outside the Monarchy were more than willing to endorse Austrian rule in Italy, the Balkans and central Europe. Austria's stubborn insistence on the sanctity of treaties and legitimacy in international relations was common sense for a state whose position, unlike those of the real Great Powers, could never rest ultimately on sheer force.

In the first years of the 'Congress System', Austria seemed to find a natural ally in Great Britain because nowhere did the interests of the two powers clash. But a British alignment could never offer absolute security. Isolationist and liberal public opinion in Britain was unpredictable and Great Britain – since the demobilisation of her army in 1815 almost exclusively a naval power – could do little to assist the Monarchy in practical terms if a confrontation with France or Russia occurred. If Britain could do little to help Austria, Russia possessed the capacity to harm her infinitely more. Speaking in general terms, Austria had earned a fragile security, dependent to a high degree on her ability to convince the decision-makers in the capitals of the real Great Powers that their interests were the same as Austria's.

At the end of the 1820's, when Russia started a movement to expand her influence along the southeastern frontiers of the Monarchy, a particular power constellation became apparent that had been created by factors largely outside Austrian control. This decade had demonstrated the interdependence of Austrian interests in the Near East and in central Europe and had highlighted the lesson that the Monarchy depended for its security on the voluntary support of at least one of the leading powers. The obvious disarray in the old coalition gave the French the opportunity to launch a diplomatic campaign to gain the support of Russia and Prussia against Austria and Great Britain with a view to a revision of the 1815 settlement. Luck, however, was on the Austrian side. In 1830, another revolution in France and the subsequent establishment of the July Monarchy there banished for a whole generation any possibility of a Franco-Russian coalition. Austria was consequently able to maintain her position with relative ease against indigenous forces intent on undermining it. There were no objections from the other powers to Austria's suppression of the revolutionary disturbances of 1830-31 in Italy and the German states.

It is true that Austrian rule in Italy rested solely on bayonets. The Monarchy found itself in the unenviable position of having to trust to incompetent satellite regimes simply in order to stave off at any cost the erection of overtly anti-Austrian forces. For the present, however, the Austrians had bayonets enough, at least more than their opponents had. Monarchical solidarity gained ground again: the revolutionary events of 1830 in Poland, Belgium and France converted the Russian Tsar to absolute respect for the established order everywhere. As a consequence, Austria and Russia concluded the Münchengrätz agreement of 1833,



**Fig. 1**  
Europe in 1830 showing the Austrian Empire and the German Confederation.

pledging the two states to do nothing to upset the status quo in the Ottoman Empire, one of the most dangerous and unstable regions of the whole of Europe. There were differences, however. Whereas Austria had held the key position shortly after 1815, having established close relations with a Great Britain and a Russia which remained hostile to each other and therefore desirous of Austrian support, the Monarchy after 1840 was never able to exercise the same measure of influence over Britain and Russia, because these two powers had now found a basis of co-operation of their own. As long as the Russians might hope to come to terms with Britain, Austria was a power of secondary importance.

Events in Italy turned even more dangerous. Following the suppression of local rebellions in 1830-31, a nation-wide revolutionary movement, backed by the kingdom of Piedmont, had arisen. For the moment Austrian bayonets were sufficient to check the movement. The British, however, had ceased to accord to the Austrians in Italy that positive support they had provided in the years after 1815. For the government in London the most effective barrier against a reinforcement of French influence in the region was now not Habsburg rule, but its enemy, Italian nationalism. Although externally no Great Power as yet posed a direct threat, as the 1840s wore on the Austrians were finding themselves increasingly isolated in defence of their positions in Italy and in Germany as well.

## **1848: THE YEAR OF REVOLUTION**

In 1848, when a wave of revolutions struck large parts of Europe, massive uprisings in the north of the Italian peninsula led to a war-like confrontation. Confronted with a revolution in her interior, Austria had to rely on her army to crush the Italian revolutionaries. Thanks

to the abilities of Austria's commander, Field Marshal Radetzky, a man aged 80, the Monarchy was victorious and maintained her Italian provinces for another decade. One lesson of the fighting had become clear: if the European powers stood aside or even backed their fellow players within the concert, locally or regionally-based rioters stood no chance when challenging an enemy belonging to the pentarchy. Solidarity among the players of the concert worked in 1848, because no one even tried to exploit the temporary weakness of Austria (and Prussia as well), as they were preoccupied by uprisings in all parts of their empires.

For three years after 1848 the revolutionary movements posed a vital challenge to the rule of the Monarchy as established by the settlement of 1815. But the Empire survived. Its military power was still adequate to deal with threats if they were not backed up by Great Power interventions. The Habsburg army defeated the attempt of Piedmont and the other Italian states to drive Austria out of Italy. The army further crushed the revolution at home and forced Prussia to abandon her hopes of dominating a new and united Germany (The Olmütz agreement 1850). The international situation worked in Austria's favour and enabled her army to deal with opponents unhindered. Furthermore, Austria profited from the fact that France had once more become an object of suspicion to all the other governments. Russia and Great Britain, the two Great Powers themselves unaffected by the revolution, now dominated the European states system more than ever. These two states had no interest in seeing Austria disappear altogether from the ranks of the Great Powers. It might have been unsatisfactory for a Great Power to base its existence on the fact that other powers could think of nothing better to put in its place, but Austria was able to continue to draw an illusory strength from this simple fact.

In general terms, the Austrian position was somewhat weaker than it had been before 1848. Piedmont, which had after all launched an aggressive war against the 1815 settlement, had survived defeated but unscathed and was now a recognizable focus for Italian hopes of future liberation and unification. Stability, however, seemed to have been re-established in the east. The Tsar, for his part, saw in a strong and conservative Austria an essential barrier against the spread of western liberalism to the borders of his Empire. The revolution in the Austrian interior, assisted by Polish refugees from Russia, led the Tsar to lend the Monarchy actual armed assistance against the Hungarian rebels. But suspicion in Vienna that the Tsar regarded the new Austrian Emperor, Francis Joseph I (1848-1916), as somehow beholden to him for the recovery of Hungary brought an element of unease into Austro-Russian relations. In Germany, the Habsburg position had come near to complete collapse in 1848. Perhaps the most serious aspect of the situation was that in Germany the Monarchy was to find itself challenged by another Great Power: Prussia. Vienna watched helplessly as the Frankfurt parliament offered the crown of a united Germany – excluding Austria – to the Prussian king in March 1849. As in Italy and Hungary, however, a favourable international situation contributed to rescue Austria one more time. Neither Russia nor Great Britain, not to speak of France, was keen to see any significant alteration of the 1815 agreements in respect of Germany. The British had no desire at all to see a monolithic and probably protectionist state controlling central Europe from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Alps. Russia since the 18th century had seen her security and opportunity in the continued existence of both Austria and Prussia balancing each other. A Russian warning to Berlin, therefore, was sufficient to deter King Frederick William IV

from accepting the offer of the crown. With that, the radical-popular and partly anti-Austrian threat to the 1815 system disappeared for the time being.

But this in itself settled nothing. The real Austro-Prussian struggle over domination in Germany was only just starting. Again, as in Italy, Austria's position in Germany was now weaker than before. The revolutionary period had shown how far Prussia was determined to go in her claim to leadership. Prussia used the German tariff union (*Zollverein*) in which Austria had no place to spread the national idea and the concept of putting it into practice in Prussian terms. The Austro-Russian alliance, based upon conservatism and monarchical solidarity, had proved stable. But the Tsar's diplomatic and military triumphs in south-east and central Europe created in London a suspicion of Russia that was to lead, within a few years, to an Anglo-Russian conflict which would shatter the foundations of the 1815 settlement. In international perspective, therefore, the Monarchy emerged from the revolutions of 1848-49 weakened both in Italy and Germany, and more than ever dependent on Russian support. On the surface, however, the overall impression around 1850 was of the triumph of the forces of stability and order.

### **THE 1850s: THE EASTERN CRISIS AND THE DIPLOMATIC *VOLTE-FACE***

The 1850s saw a complete transformation of the international situation. Nearly all of the reasons for this lay outside Austria. They were primarily connected to a change in the relationship between the two leading upholders of the 1815 system. In France, Napoleon's nephew, crowned French Emperor (Napoleon III) in 1852, pursued an offensive foreign policy. His aim was to remove the restraints put upon France by the Vienna Congress and to re-establish his country as, at the least, a semi-hegemonial power in continental Europe. He was the man who profited most from the Anglo-Russian turmoils. In 1853 Russia made a bold attempt to challenge the balance of power in the Near East. The Tsar attempted nothing less than to demonstrate to Europe his primacy over Turkey. Great Britain responded by an equally uncompromising determination to destroy Russia's position at Constantinople and her influence in the Ottoman Empire once and for all. Intervening in Russo-Turkish quarrels, Napoleon III, joining an alliance with Great Britain, engaged his country in the Crimean War against Russia. It was the first major conflict fought among three out of the five powers constituting the concert of Europe since 1815.

The Austrians had made desperate attempts to resolve the crisis by diplomacy before it produced an actual war. Such a war would confront Austria with the dilemma of having to make a choice between the belligerent powers. Vienna was willing to mediate, but full support for Russia's attempt to alter the status quo in the Near East was out of the question. Giving in to Russia's demands would have meant nothing less than to contribute to the destruction of the 1815 settlement. Every statesman in Vienna before and after the Crimean war clearly recognised the limits to the price to be paid for co-operation with Russia. Actually, the price demanded by the Tsar was prohibitive, both in terms of weakening Turkey and of establishing a Russian strategic threat to the Monarchy in the eastern Balkans. When war started in the spring of 1854, both the concert and the Holy Alliance between the European monarchs, which had given Austria her security since 1815, lay in ruins. The war was limited to a relatively small area, the Crimean peninsula, and the Great

Power status of any of the combatants was not threatened at all, irrespective of the outcome of the bloody fighting around the fortress of Sebastopol. Prussia and Austria stayed neutral, but in doing so could not avoid a severe threat to the peace settlement of the Vienna Congress. Russia, under attack not only by the Turks but also by French and British invasion forces on her own territory, expected at least Austria's benevolent neutrality, if not outright assistance. Nothing of that kind occurred. By insisting on her neutrality, Austria surely shortened and limited the war, but at the same time generated Russian anger and disgust. In spite of the absence of any treaty obligations forcing Austria to assist Russia in case of war, the Tsar expected the monarchical solidarity so sternly refused by Austria.

The long-term consequences of this for Austria's position in Europe were to be very serious. In the first place, it drove the Tsar to rage. In the second place, it weakened Austria's position vis-à-vis Prussia within the German confederation. Prussia's interpretation of her own neutrality in a markedly pro-Russian sense stood in sharp contrast to Austria's threatening troop movements. By July 1854, an Austrian ultimatum to St. Petersburg, threatening intervention on the side of the Western Powers, forced Russia to withdraw troops from the Balkans. At Turkey's request, the Austrians then proceeded to occupy the Danube principalities. This occupation gave the Monarchy immediate strategic security, but Vienna had committed herself to altering the status quo in the region – in this case, naturally, to Russia's disadvantage. Austria, too, had shown that she had finally broken with the policy of the Holy Alliance. Emperor Francis Joseph had come to the conclusion that his country could expect no lasting security in the Near East unless Russia could be forced to admit defeat and to draw back from the position from which she had launched her advance in 1853. Russia's final retreat at the behest of a power that had not even fired a single shot was regarded as a greater slur on Russia's honour than any of the demands of her opponents on the battlefield. In St. Petersburg, these things were long remembered and hatred of Austria rose to new heights of intensity.

The treaty of Paris (30 March 1856) ended the war. In the short term, it was an Austrian success. The possibility that Russia might once again attempt to establish control of the Ottoman Empire was significantly reduced. A tripartite pact concluded between France, Great Britain and Austria gave Turkey a guarantee against any future Russian attack. In the long term, however, the treaty of Paris left the Monarchy far from secure. The European alignments on which the treaty rested were exceedingly unstable. The Paris conference was the first occasion for decades at which Austria's position in Italy had been openly questioned by French suggestions for a handover of Lombardo-Venetia to Piedmont. Even more dangerous, Russia, hitherto the chief supporter of the established order, was now the revisionist power par excellence. Her closest supporter on the continent was Prussia. In France, Napoleon III, intent on replacing Austrian by French influence in Italy, started to pursue revision as an end in itself. Great Britain had a common interest with Austria in the Near East, but had a healthy fear of a Franco-Russian alliance. Britain, therefore, was anxious to hold on to her entente with France for general European purposes.

By the end of the 1850s, Austria had fallen into total isolation. The outcome of the crisis was disastrous for Austria: Russia seemed irretrievably lost, France and even Great Britain had not been won over, while Prussia and Piedmont continued to pose threats to Habsburg leadership of Germany and Italy. The crisis of 1853-1856 and the realignment of the first-

class powers in its wake marked the end of an era in terms of Austria's position in the European state system.

## **1859-1871: ITALIAN AND GERMAN UNIFICATION**

Emperor Francis Joseph reacted with a rigid insistence so typical for him as to legitimate rights and refused to seek allies by compromising anywhere. His policy was consistent but unrealistic. In the wars of 1859 (against Piedmont and France) and 1866 (against Italy, Prussia and her allies among the German states) the Monarchy fought without luck and in isolation. The result was the loss of two provinces in Italy and of the largely formal primacy in Germany. Both campaigns demonstrated that the Monarchy was unable to sustain unaided her position in Germany and Italy which had only been achieved thanks to the help of the victorious coalition of 1814-15. In some respects, the wars of 1859 and 1866 were beneficial: Austria's duties and engagements were brought more into line with her resources, and the Italian chimera was at last abandoned and never taken up again. Austria's engagement in Germany lasted for longer and only after 1871, faced with a united Germany under Prussian leadership, did Francis Joseph at last come to terms with reality and finally abandon the 500-year-old German mission of his House.

Even before doing so, he had shifted his activities to the field of domestic politics, at least temporarily. After the signing of the *Ausgleich*, the compromise of 1867 that transformed the Austrian Empire into the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, the most immediate question that arose concerned the issue of nationalities. It was far from clear that the compromise would fulfil the expectations and aspirations that the ethnic minorities had expressed so violently in 1848-49. The question was and remained the object of interminable controversy within, as well as without, the Dual Monarchy. It needs to be mentioned here that foreign policy, along with administrative and command control of the military, remained, throughout the period up to 1918, one of the Emperor's most important prerogatives.

## **THE ROAD TO SARAJEVO: AUSTRIA-HUNGARY BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

It was, after all, the external situation that determined the success or failure of a relatively weak power such as Austria-Hungary. That situation, however, was subject to changes which were quite beyond the capacity of Vienna to control. After 1871, foreign policy was primarily concerned with safeguarding Austria's position in the Near East. It was the one sphere of influence that now remained to her. There, the declining Ottoman Empire was all too likely to be replaced by independent states. Some of them were expected to have irredentist claims against Austria-Hungary. Her army was strong enough to cope with any of these states in isolation. Yet this might not be the case if a Great Power were to back their ambitions. The main danger now seemed to be that Russia might gain control of the Balkans. It was even expected that Russia and her satellites might try to exploit the ambitions of some of the dissatisfied nationalities within the Monarchy.

Generally speaking, the various populations of the Dual Monarchy tended to remain faithful to the person of the sovereign. Austria-Hungary was never a racist state: while Germans

and Hungarians were the two dominant groups, other nationalities enjoyed much broader freedoms than their racial counterparts across the borders. Thus, most of the ethnic groups in the Dual Monarchy saw their future and that of the Habsburgs as inextricably linked. There were very few of Francis Joseph's subjects who did not have some reservations about ridding themselves of his government between 1867 and 1914. Paradoxically, some of the Dual Monarchy's most vocal opponents were German, preferring instead the concept of a 'greater Germany' directed from Berlin.

Attitudes differed outside the Empire. Pan-German proponents within Germany, with the strong support of politicised German-Austrians, envisaged integrating the Habsburg Empire – either with or without the Hungarian territories – into the framework of a vast 'Middle Europe' governed from Berlin. For its part, the Russian court was well aware of the great number of Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Russians were also conscious of the advantages to be reaped should they succeed in separating the Slavs from Austria-Hungary, and at least in theory were willing to use ethnic ties to attract the young Slavic states of the Balkans. Pan-Germanism in the west was thus paralleled by Pan-Slavism in the east. In France, strict neutrality on Austria-Hungary was maintained in official circles, but academics, leftist politicians, and anticlerical groups and freemasons considered the Habsburg Monarchy to be a conservative and clerical state. Accordingly, they did not hesitate to denounce the Dual Monarchy, focusing on real as well as contrived oppression of the Slavic and Romanian peoples. The Franco-Russian Alliance of 1892 reinforced anti-Austro-Hungarian sentiments. Now aligned by the need for military support from Russia in the case of a new Franco-German conflict, France embraced the principles of St. Petersburg concerning Austria-Hungary and the Balkans. In the name of Franco-Russian friendship, the point that the most oppressed nationalities were located in Russia was rather pointedly ignored.

Of the foreign ministers who managed for almost half a century before 1914 to defend the Monarchy's interests without recourse to war, all were confronted with the problem of an intractable diplomatic situation. After monarchical solidarity had been swept away by the nationalist tide of the late 19th century, European foreign policy was increasingly characterised by the formation of power blocs whose members shared common interests as well as common enemies. Austria-Hungary had to seek allies in order to confront Russia and resist her advance. Here, Great Britain and Germany were the powers to which the Austrians generally turned when other means of restraining Russia failed. The Dual Monarchy concluded a mutual defensive alliance with Germany in 1879 (the Dual Alliance; *Zweibund*) and even managed to expand it to Italy three years later (the Triple Alliance; *Dreibund*). The pact was renewed four times, the last in 1912. But Great Britain, by its very traditions always reluctant to undertake an actual commitment to fight in unforeseen contingencies, remained distant.

During the initial stage of the existence of the Dual Alliance, Austro-German relations with Russia were not directly hostile. Bismarck, the German chancellor from 1871 to 1890, was determined never to jeopardise his relations with St. Petersburg for the sake of Austria-Hungary's interests in the Balkans where they naturally clashed with Russian aspirations. Bismarck's aim in conceding the alliance of 1879 was to make the Dual Monarchy the servant of Germany, not vice versa. It was due to the new German Emperor William II (1888-1918) and changes in German domestic politics, not due to Austrian appeals, that a pronounced shift of German policy towards support for Austria-

Hungary occurred after 1889. The problem with the Dual Alliance, seen from Vienna's perspective, was the fact that it was initially a mere defensive military agreement which would only come into action if Germany or Austria (or both of them) were attacked by a third power. In normal times of peace it was, for diplomatic purposes, useless. Furthermore, Germany and Austria-Hungary were more often than not completely at odds in terms of day-to-day-politics. In the era of *Weltpolitik* inaugurated by William II, Germany was fast developing imperialist ambitions of her own in the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans – often at the expense of her ally.

Seen from a global perspective, Germany's massive naval armaments and her drive for colonies alienated Great Britain and led her to seek allies against Germany's threatening economic and military strength. It was not by diplomatic actions of her own, that Austria as Germany's firm ally became the target of war-planning of all of Germany's potential opponents. Step by step, France, Russia and Great Britain came to terms over colonial quarrels that had separated them for decades. The German threat received the highest priority. The conclusion of the Anglo-Russian agreements over Asia in 1907 put an end to any chance that Great Britain might support the Monarchy against Russia, and put her new-found imperial security at risk. On the whole, the British were well disposed towards the Monarchy, with which they had no quarrels, and which they wished to see preserved in the interests of stability and the balance of power. But as time passed by, an Austria tied to Germany was regarded not as a stabilizing factor but as a threat, because Austria seemed to enlarge Germany's military resources. The Austrians, although inclined to see in Great Britain a friendly power, discovered that she was not one on whom they could rely for much active support.

During the last decade before the outbreak of World War I, Russia recovered from her humiliating defeat forced upon her by Japan in 1904-05 and started an ambitious military programme aided by French loans. During the previous period, when Russia was preoccupied in the Far East, the Tsarist government expressed some sympathies for Pan-Slavism, but was usually ready to sacrifice if necessary ethnic interests to geopolitical ones. Destabilizing the Habsburg Monarchy was therefore not high among anyone's priorities in St. Petersburg prior to Russia's defeat in the Pacific. After 1905, however, Russia's foreign policy underwent a far-reaching re-orientation, turning its main direction for expansionism back to Europe. Pursuing ambitious targets in the Balkans, St. Petersburg inevitably clashed with Vienna's sphere of interest. The problem was likely to become truly intractable, and therefore even more complex, as the new national kingdoms that had appeared in the Balkans during the second half of the 19th century, most notably Serbia and Romania, began to look for Russian support. These states were generally more than eager to represent the interests not only of their own peoples, but those of their linguistic, ethnic, and confessional brethren within the borders of Austria-Hungary. In Belgrade's view, Francis Joseph had replaced the Ottoman Sultan as the chief opponent of the so-called 'historical' rights of the Slavs.

The kingdom of Serbia followed an outwardly hostile policy towards the Dual Monarchy, after the accession of a new dynasty to the Serbian throne in 1903. Under her new king, Serbia switched its sympathies from Vienna to St. Petersburg. In 1911 a period began in which the Serbs concentrated on terrorist rather than on cultural activities when pursuing their goal of enlarging Serbia's territory to Austria's disadvantage. Russia regarded the Serbs as 'orthodox brethren'; they also occupied an important strategic position in the south as



**Fig. 2**  
Caricature from the newspaper "Figaro", 11 July 1908. Austria (small figure to the right) and her allies Germany (center) and Italy are encircled by the members of the Triple Alliance: Great Britain

Russia's natural allies against Turkey and Austria-Hungary. It is certain that the men in Belgrade, inspired by Greater-Serbian nationalistic dreams, whether they were exponents of the 'official' or the 'unofficial' terrorist policy, could not have indulged, without the support of Russia, in hostile and aggressive acts against the Dual Monarchy. Therefore, the Belgrade-St. Petersburg combination became one of the most serious threats to Austria-Hungary. Aware of Austria's weakness and seeking support from Berlin, there was little the Austrians could do to halt their decline into increasing dependence on Germany. The fact was that changes in the international situation – largely, but not entirely, independent of Austrian activities – had left the Monarchy with no other possible source of effective support but the German Empire. The annexation of Bosnia in 1908 and Russia's determined efforts to rally the Balkan states in a league under her protection had damaged Austro-Russian relations beyond repair. Great Britain and France, more and more obsessed with the German threat, were eager to hold on to Russia at all costs. Confronting Germany with a possible war on two fronts was obviously the only way to counterbalance her overwhelming military efficiency.

Germany's provocative behaviour only served to intensify the growing feeling of isolation in Vienna. Additionally, observations about the close links between irredentist movements

in the interior and the support given to them by foreign states increased considerably during the last years before World War I. In June 1914, the Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold, summed up his analysis of both foreign and domestic politics when he wrote to Prime Minister Count Stürgkh:

Because of the events of the last years, an intensive relationship has been formed between foreign policy and those national questions which are connected with an irredentist movement supported from abroad, so that a firm conduct of foreign affairs, without the knowledge of internal treatment of these national questions has become impossible <sup>2</sup>.

## **1914-1918: WAGING WAR AND LOSING AN EMPIRE**

It was in these circumstances that the Austrians decided to react to the assassination of their heir to the throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 with the declaration of war on Serbia. Belgrade was held responsible for subversive south-Slav and anti-Habsburg propaganda conducted in Austria's southern provinces. Given the anti-Habsburg mood that had been noisily evident in Belgrade for several years, Austrian politicians suspected that the Serbian government stood behind the killing in Sarajevo. Vienna's accusations were – to a greater or lesser extent – justified. Viewed from an Austrian perspective, her stern response might well be regarded as a defensive one. Serbia's subjugation, tolerated by a Russia threatened by German intervention or, in the worst case, effected after defeating the Tsar's army, would once and for all exorcise the danger of an anti-Habsburg Balkan league headed by Serbia. But Austrian intentions to restrict the confrontation to a duel between the Monarchy and Serbia were futile. Once the decision for war had been taken, Austria-Hungary was left with no alternative diplomatic options at all. Previous crises had always implied that the Monarchy might, if disappointed, turn elsewhere for support. With the outbreak of war with the three Entente Powers in 1914, and with Italy in 1915, all such options had disappeared.

This fateful development has to be compared with Austria's position prior to the war. Up to July 1914, the Monarchy was favourably regarded by the Western powers as the protector of law and order in territories where political chaos was endemic and lawlessness always near the surface. Outwardly, the monolithic area of the Habsburg crown lands compared favourably with the kaleidoscopic arrangement of the territories beyond its south-east frontier. Balkan wars, assassinations, and poverty highlighted the comparative peace reigning inside the Habsburg state. Very few observers would have refused to acknowledge the fact that Francis Joseph's regime advanced the economic and social welfare of his subordinates. But during the summer 1914 crisis, politicians in Vienna failed completely to exploit to their advantage these benevolent attitudes towards the Monarchy.

Throughout the 19th century the statesmen of Vienna had always been aware that the Monarchy, as the weakest of the Great Powers, ran the risk, if it appealed for external support, of being exploited by a stronger ally for purposes alien to its own interests. Once the decision for war against Serbia had been taken, support from Germany seemed vital as the only chance to prevent Russia from intervening on the Serbian side. In 1914, Austria-Hungary found herself involved in a life-and-death struggle at the side of an incomparably stronger Germany. Therefore, the possibility that not only might the enemy threaten the



Fig. 3

existence of the Monarchy as an independent power but, additionally, that the ally might also do so, arose in an acute form. Altogether, in the First World War the Dual Monarchy faced the prospect, perhaps for the first time, and even more in the event of victory than of defeat, of ceasing to be an independent power. Even more disastrous, perhaps, was the fact that by its commitment to Germany the Monarchy had finally isolated itself from the other Great Powers which, for the past hundred years, had generally had an interest in preserving it.

The conduct of war produced contradictory results. The number and scale of Austria's setbacks on the battlefield showed that Francis Joseph's army was technically and logistically ill-prepared for a major conflict. His Empire had never been among the most innovative competitors in the European armament race of the previous decades. Despite catastrophic defeats during the opening stages of the fighting, Austria-Hungary managed to overcome these setbacks with substantial German aid. By 1917 Russia was staggering to defeat, and France and Great Britain could have controlled their ally Italy, the main proponent of the programme to dismember the Monarchy. Even as late as January 1918, influential voices in the Western capitals were advocating the preservation of Austria-Hungary after the war as a potential check on Germany. British Prime Minister Lloyd George, in a speech given on 5 January 1918, publicly declared that the Dual Monarchy's destruction was in no way part of Great Britain's war aims. But the assumption was always that Austria-Hungary must be genuinely independent. The decision in Vienna to stake everything on a German victory proved to be fatal when this victory, often announced as imminent by the German generals, did not arrive. The decision of the Austrian ruling elites to postpone every internal reform in favour of the smaller nationalities and to maintain the Monarchy as a mainly

German-Magyar state, drove the majority of the other nationalities to seek outright independence rather than federal reform, and drove the allies to endorse their aims. Strangely enough, Russia after her defeat no longer functioned as the nucleus for irredentist programmes. The majority of the men who eventually went to work against the Monarchy at home and abroad relied on the strength of the Western powers. By 1918, all the peoples of the Monarchy with the exception of the Germans and the Magyars were represented by radical politicians who regarded a clean break with Vienna as the only way of preserving the national identities of their fellow nationals. Even in the autumn of that year nobody seems to have made the slightest attempt at persuading them to revise their opinions.

True, there had been cautious attempts at achieving domestic reform and concluding a separate peace. The new Emperor Charles I (1916-1918), fully aware of the danger that his Empire might become a German satellite, even discussed the possibility of leaving the alliance with the Reich. He had discovered that the ambiguous German demands for a peace settlement (*Siegfrieden*) were the main obstacle to serious negotiations with the enemy countries. Charles himself mishandled the peace negotiations. Although his good intentions are beyond doubt, the execution of his plan lacked any decisiveness. Instead of ridding himself of the burden of the alliance with Germany, he finally became tied to the Reich more closely than ever before.

Vienna's consequent prolongation of the war left Austria-Hungary without the support of any power except defeated Germany, when the collapse of the central powers was imminent in autumn 1918. If the defeats of these months finally destroyed the Habsburg Monarchy, the preceding four years of warfare had already destroyed its position as an independent Great Power, reducing it to the status of a helpless if reluctant satellite of the German Reich. When the peacemakers assembled at Versailles in the spring of 1919, no one thought of suggesting that the now fragmented Monarchy might be re-created as a keystone of a new European order. After successor states had been established on the territory of the former Habsburg Empire, any plan for a revival of the multinational state was completely out of the question. The argument that the Allies wilfully broke up the Monarchy lacks any substance. There was very little to be decided by the peace conference with regard to Austria-Hungary. Austria's military defeat determined her fate, but it was a breakdown in the interior that finally led to her dissolution. The Entente powers had to a large extent encouraged the irredentist ambitions of Habsburg's ethnic minorities, using them as a means to weaken the enemy. They turned their attention to the problem of Austria-Hungary in the spring of 1918 under the impression of military necessity, when – after Russia's final defeat – the stability of the Western front was endangered by the German divisions released from the Russian front. It was then that the Allied governments recognised the expediency of encouraging the national ambitions of the Habsburg peoples. By the middle of the summer, they had given official recognition to the radical aims of the political exiles, aiming at nothing less than a break-up of the Monarchy.

Yet the main forces working for dismemberment of the Dual Monarchy came from within, not from without. It is obviously true that Austria-Hungary's disappearance contributed nothing to the stabilization of central and eastern Europe during the Inter-War years. But it is simply misleading to blame the Entente powers and their peace settlement for this.

With regard to other questions, they may have been shortsighted by comparison with their colleagues in 1814-15 who had tried to come to terms even with the defeated and to reach agreements that did not do irreparable harm to any state. But in 1919, Austria-Hungary had definitely vanished. Even had they so desired, a re-creation of the fragmented Dual Monarchy was far beyond the capacities of the victorious powers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The peace settlement of 1815 re-established Austria as a Great Power, enlarged her territory and allotted to her the task of contributing to the maintenance of the balance of power among the states of the pentarchy. Additionally, Austria was given the duty of keeping order in Italy and the Near East. Although the settlement was perhaps inherently unstable in so far as it assigned to Austria responsibilities beyond her capacities, the Monarchy was fortunate in that, for at least a generation after 1815, the leading powers of Europe continued to see their own interest in co-operation to uphold the established order.

The outbreak of the Eastern crisis in 1853 and of war between France, Great Britain and Russia the following year destroyed the tacit alliance on which the 1815 system rested. Thus was the door opened to revisionist schemes. Whatever the failures of Austria's foreign policy might have been, it is clear that the initiative to crush the European state system was not hers. After 1871, when Italy and Germany had been united under the leadership of Piedmont and Prussia respectively, the main threat to Austria seemed to be Russia and her ambition to advance towards the Balkans. Aligned with the German Empire since 1879 on a merely defensive basis, Austria could do almost nothing to hinder the formation of a Europe divided into two firm alliance blocs which were hostile to each other.

Facing growing tensions with her neighbours in the east and the Balkans, Austria-Hungary – under heavy German pressure – decided to respond to the Serbian-backed Sarajevo assassination plot with a declaration of war. Even the most ardent war hawks of the Habsburg regime wanted a short and territorially-limited conflict. An isolated 'punitive action' against Serbia took first priority as the ideal solution to the so-called south-Slav problem, but the risk of an escalation into a conflict involving all the European Great Powers was clear to the decision-makers in Vienna as well as to politicians elsewhere. Even so, it is striking that the crisis of 1914 was, during fifty years, the only one that seemed to the decision-makers in Austria-Hungary to demand a military solution.

It has sometimes been argued that the leadership in Vienna, confronted with huge interior problems and facing a desperate external situation, acted out of decadence. Tired to death, as they allegedly were, they are blamed for having triggered a final and heroic showdown. Austria-Hungary's determination not to give up without fighting is evident. When Emperor Francis Joseph and his advisers decided to go to war with Serbia, they may have thought in terms of 'now or never'. Austria's position as a Great Power was at stake if Serbia's challenge did not meet with an adequate response. Thereby, one can argue, the Monarchy fulfilled the task given to it in 1815: to remain as a Great Power and to safeguard order in the Balkans. Unlike Germany with her imperialist ambitions (*Weltpolitik*), Austria-Hungary up to 1914 had undoubtedly remained strictly within the established

power relations. The fact that the first step towards war was taken in Vienna during the summer of 1914 does not contradict this conclusion. The decision for war had very little, if anything, to do with weakness or a longing for death. It was the murderous answer to a murderous provocation.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Cited after W. Heindl, *Carl Ferdinand Graf Buol-Schauenstein. Die Grundzüge seiner Politik am Vorabend des Krimkrieges*, "Studien zur Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie", 9, Vienna 1968, p. 54.
- <sup>2</sup> Berchtold to Stürgkh, 5 June 1914. Cited after Z.A.B. Zeman, *The Break-Up of the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918*, London 1961, p. 12.



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## SOURCE

Text of the Dual Alliance stipulated by Austria-Hungary and Germany ("Zweibund"), in Vienna, 7 October 1879.

*In Erwägung, daß Ihre Majestäten der Deutsche Kaiser, König von Preußen und der Kaiser von Österreich, König von Ungarn, es als Ihre unabweisliche Monarchenpflicht erachten müssen, für die Sicherheit Ihrer Reiche und die Ruhe Ihrer Völker unter allen Umständen Sorge zu tragen;*

*In Erwägung, daß beide Monarchen ähnlich wie in dem früher bestandenen Bundesverhältnisse, durch festes Zusammenhalten beider Reiche, in Stande sein werden, diese Pflicht leichter und wirksamer zu erfüllen;*

*In Erwägung schießlich, daß ein inniges Zusammengehen von Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn niemanden bedrohen kann, wohl aber geeignet ist, den durch die Berliner Stipulationen geschaffenen europäischen Frieden zu konsolidieren, haben Ihre Majestäten*

*der Kaiser von Deutschland und*

*der Kaiser von Österreich, König von Ungarn,*

*indem Sie Einander feierlich versprechen, daß Sie Ihrem rein defensiven Abkommen eine aggressive Tendenz nach keiner Richtung jemals beilegen wollen, einen Bund des Friedens und der gegenseitigen Verteidigung zu knüpfen beschlossen.*

*Zu diesem Zwecke haben Allerhöchstdieselben zu Ihren Bevollmächtigten ernannt:*

*Seine Majestät der Deutsche Kaiser Allerhöchst Ihren außerordentlichen und bevollmächtigten Botschafter General-Lieutenant Prinzen Heinrich VII Reuß etc., etc.,*

*Seine Majestät der Kaiser von Österreich, König von Ungarn Allerhöchst Ihren wirklich Geheimen Rat, Minister des kaiserlichen Hauses und des Außern, Feldmarschall-Lieutenant Julius Grafen Andrassy von Csik-Szent-Király und Kraszna-Horka etc., etc.,*

*welche sich zu Wien am heutigen Tage vereinigt haben und nach Austausch ihrer gut und genügend befundenen Vollmachten übereingekommen sind, wie folgt:*

*Artikel I*

*Sollte wider Verhoffen und gegen den aufrichtigen Wunsch der beiden Hohen Kontrahenten Eines der beiden Reiche von Seite Rußlands angegriffen werden, so sind die Hohen Kontrahenten verpflichtet, einander mit der gesamten Kriegsmacht Ihrer Reiche beizustehen und demgemäß den Frieden nur gemeinsam und übereinstimmend zu schließen.*

*Artikel II*

*Würde Eines der Hohen kontrahierenden Teile von einer anderen Macht angegriffen werden, so verpflichtet sich hiemit der andere hohe Kontrahent, dem Angreifer gegen seinen hohen*

Verbündeten nicht nur nicht beizustehen, sondern mindestens eine wohlwollende neutrale Haltung gegen den hohen Mitkontrahenten zu beobachten.

Wenn jedoch in solchem Falle die angreifende Macht von Seite Rußlands, sei es in Form einer aktiven Kooperation, sei es durch militärische Maßnahmen, welche den Angegriffenen bedrohen, unterstützt werden sollte, so tritt die im Artikel I dieses Vertrages stipulirte Verpflichtung des gegenseitigen Beistandes mit voller Heeresmacht auch in diesem Falle sofort in Kraft und die Kriegführung der beiden hohen Kontrahenten wird auch dann eine gemeinsame bis zum gemeinsamen Friedensschluß.

#### Artikel III

Die Dauer dieses Vertrages wird vorläufig auf fünf Jahre vom Tage der Ratifikation festgesetzt. Ein Jahr vor Ablauf diese Terminus werden die Beiden hohen Kontrahenten über die Frage, ob die dem Verträge zur Grundlage dienenden Verhältnisse noch obwalten, in Verhandlung treten und über die weitere Dauer, oder eventuelle Abänderung einzelner Modalitäten übereinkommen. Wenn im Verlaufe des ersten Monats des letzten Vertragsjahres die Einladung zur Eröffnung dieser Verhandlungen von keiner Seite erfolgt ist, so gilt der Vertrag als für die weitere Dauer von drei Jahren erneuert.

#### Artikel IV

Dieser Vertrag soll in Gemäßheit seines friedlichen Charakters und um jede Mißdeutung auszuschließen, von beiden hohen Kontrahenten geheim gehalten und einer dritten Macht nur in Einverständnisse beider Teile und nach Maßgabe spezieller Einigung mitgeteilt werden.

Beide hohe Kontrahenten geben sich nach den bei der Begegnung in Alexandrowo ausgesprochenen Gesinnungen des Kaisers Alexander der Hoffnung hin, daß die Rüstungen Rußlands sich als bedrohlich für Sie in Wirklichkeit nicht erweisen werden, und haben aus diesem Grunde zu einer Mitteilung für jetzt keinen Anlaß, – sollte sich aber diese Hoffnung wider Erwarten als eine irrthümliche erweisen, so würden die beiden hohen Kontrahenten es als eine Pflicht der Loyalität erkennen, den Kaiser Alexander mindestens vertraulich darüber zu verständigen, daß Sie einen Angriff auf Einen von Ihnen als gegen Beide gerichtet betrachten müßten.

#### Artikel V

Dieser Vertrag wird seine Giltigkeit durch die Genehmigung der beiden hohen Souveräne erhalten und nach erfolgter Genehmigung von Allerhöchstdenselben innerhalb vierzehn Tagen ratifizirt werden.

Urkund dessen haben die Bevollmächtigten diesen Vertrag eigenhändig unterschrieben und ihre Wappen begedrückt.

From: *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914*, vol. 3, Berlin 1927, pp. 102-104.

Inasmuch as Their Majesties the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, and the German Emperor, King of Prussia, must consider it Their imperative duty as Monarchs to provide for the security of Their Empires and the peace of Their subjects, under all circumstances;

inasmuch as the two Sovereigns, as was the case under the former existing relations of alliance, will be enabled by the close union of the two Empires to fulfil this duty more easily and more efficaciously;

inasmuch as, finally, an intimate co-operation of Germany and Austria-Hungary can menace no one, but is rather calculated to consolidate the peace of Europe as established by the stipulation of Berlin;

Their Majesties the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, and the Emperor of Germany, while solemnly promising each other never to allow Their purely defensive Agreement to develop an aggressive tendency in any direction, have determined to conclude an Alliance of peace and mutual defence.

For this purpose Their Most Exalted Majesties have designated as Their Plenipotentiaries:

His Most Exalted the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, His Actual Privy Councillor, Minister of the Imperial Household and of Foreign Affairs, Lieutenant-Field-Marshal Count

Julius Andrásy of Czik-Szent-Király and Kraszna-Horka, etc., etc.,  
His Most Exalted Majesty the German Emperor, His Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary, Lieutenant-General Prince Henry VII of Reuss, etc., etc.,  
who have met this day at Vienna, and, after the exchange of their full powers, found in good  
and due form, have agreed upon the following Articles:

Article I

Should, contrary to their hope, and against the loyal desire of the two High Contracting Parties, one of the two Empires be attacked by Russia, the High Contracting Parties are bound to come to the assistance one of the other with the whole war strength of their Empires, and accordingly only to conclude peace together and upon mutual agreement.

Article II

Should one of the High Contracting Parties be attacked by another Power, the other High Contracting Party binds itself hereby, not only not to support the aggressor against its high Ally, but to observe at least a benevolent neutral attitude towards its fellow Contracting Party.

Should, however, the attacking party in such a case be supported by Russia, either by an active co-operation or by military measures which constitute a menace to the Party attacked, then the obligation stipulated in Article 1 of this Treaty, for reciprocal assistance with the whole fighting force, becomes equally operative, and the conduct of the war by the two High Contracting Parties shall in this case also be in common until the conclusion of a common peace.

Article III

The duration of this Treaty shall be provisionally fixed at five years from the day of ratification. One year before the expiration of this period the two High Contracting Parties shall consult together concerning the question whether the conditions serving as the basis of the Treaty still prevail, and reach an agreement in regard to the further continuance or possible modification of certain details. If in the course of the first months of the last year of the Treaty no invitation has been received from either side to open these negotiations, the Treaty shall be considered as renewed for a further period of three years.

Article IV

The Treaty shall, in conformity with its peaceful character, and to avoid any misinterpretation, be kept secret by the two High Contracting Parties, and only communicated to a third Power upon a joint understanding between the two Parties, and according to the terms of a special Agreement.

The two High Contracting Parties venture to hope, after the sentiments expressed by the Emperor Alexander at the meeting at Alexandrovo, that the armaments of Russia will not in reality prove to be menacing to them, and have on that account no reason for making a communication at present; should, however, this hope, contrary to their expectations, prove to be erroneous, the two High Contracting Parties would consider it their loyal obligation to let the Emperor Alexander know, at least confidentially, that they must consider an attack on either of them as directed against both.

Article V

This Treaty shall derive its validity from the approbation of the two Exalted Sovereign and shall be ratified within fourteen days after this approbation has been granted by Their Most Exalted Majesties.

In witness whereof the Plenipotentiaries have signed this Treaty with their own hands and affixed their arms.

Done at Vienna, October 7, 1879

Andrásy. H. VII v. Reuss.

L.S.        L.S.

From: A.F. Pribham, *Secret Treaties*, vol. I, pp. 25-31.

