

**Reforming Austria-Hungary:
Beyond his control or beyond his capacity?
The domestic policies of Emperor Karl I
November 1916 – May 1917**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This work aims to provide an objective portrait of Emperor Karl I and an analysis of his early reign in order to help determine his responsibility in the collapse of Austria-Hungary and to fill the gap in a historiography distorted by both hagiography and underestimation. This thesis examines Karl's character, education, ability, outlook and ambitions prior to his enthronement in November 1916, and his attempts in the following six months to revive political life, implement administrative and constitutional reform and bring about national reconciliation in Cisleithania. The Bohemian lands, and in particular the Czech-German conflict, constitute the main focus of this study, although developments among Poles, Ukrainians and South Slavs are also considered. Since Karl's chief concern was nevertheless the conclusion of peace, foreign policy – in any case inextricably bound to domestic issues in the Habsburg Monarchy – is also given due attention.

The examination of Karl's pre-war years reveals a not unpromising young man. His short heirship, however, involved only a perfunctory introduction to statecraft, leaving him lacking in preparation and experience. Yet, contrary to popular belief, Karl was not a blank slate; nor was he without his prejudices. Upon his accession to the throne, although he enjoyed a remarkably free hand, he threw in his lot with the German nationalists. After four months, however, he – or rather his foreign minister – retreated under the influence of the Russian Revolution and of the American entry into the war. Karl then recalled parliament but did not have the resolve, courage, skill or support to build on this initiative. Offered no prospects, the political representatives of the Slav nationalities radicalized behind the scenes. With the reopening of the House, the irreversible extent of their disenchantment and estrangement burst to the fore. Although Karl finally sought to embark on a new course, his resolve again faltered and his half-hearted efforts bore no fruit. Largely as a result of his earlier mistakes and vacillation, the chance had, in any case, already passed.

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INTRODUCTION

In the foreword to his 1925 work on the foreign policy of Emperor Karl I, the German historian Richard Fester admitted that he had been unable to pass judgement *sine ira*.¹ Nor, when writing about the last Habsburg ruler, had several of the protagonists he interviewed, such as August von Cramon,² Alfred Krauß,³ Erich von Ludendorff⁴ and Botho von Wedel⁵. However, post-war denigration of Karl was not the exclusive preserve of disaffected German nationalists. A few bereft servants of the Dual Monarchy, grieving for their lost empire, also expressed their frustration, anger and contempt towards him. In 1919, Josef Schneider published the anonymous,⁶ and controversial, memoirs of a former court official, who painted an unsparingly and unremittingly negative portrait of Karl.⁷ Two years later, the recollections of Baron Albert von Margutti, previously attached to Franz Joseph's *aide-de-camp* Count Eduard Paar, caused a scandal upon publication, likewise due to the candour of his (often spurious) revelations and the bitterness of his attacks on his former imperial master.⁸ No longer bound by etiquette or *devoir de réserve*, the authors made

¹ Richard Fester, *Die Politik Kaiser Karls und der Wendepunkt des Weltkrieges* (Munich, 1925), vi.

² August von Cramon, *Unser österreichisch-ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege. Erinnerungen aus meiner vierjährigen Tätigkeit als bevollmächtigter deutscher General beim k.u.k. Armeekommando* (Berlin, 1920). Cramon had been the German Plenipotentiary to Austro-Hungarian army headquarters. The Austrian general and military historian Edmund Glaise-Horstenau later confessed to having written half of Cramon's book, but complained that the latter had added the malevolent remarks on Karl. Cramon later regretted this and, sobered by the Third Reich, told Glaise in 1936: "I did Emperor Karl an injustice – he was in fact a very noble prince, who wanted the best", in: Peter Broucek (ed.), *Ein General im Zwielficht. Die Erinnerungen Edmund Glaises von Horstenau* (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1980), volume I, p.328.

³ Alfred Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage. Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1921). Krauß was a general in the Austro-Hungarian army.

⁴ Erich von Ludendorff, *My War Memories 1914-1918*, 2 vols (London, 1919).

⁵ Wedel, the German ambassador to Vienna from late 1916, published no memoirs, but wrote many articles in periodicals in the years after the war, for instance: "Zur Wiener Hofpolitik", in: *Preußische Jahrbücher*, CLXXXI: 3 (Berlin, 1920). Several others are listed in: Fester, xv. His criticism of Karl was, however, comparatively restrained.

⁶ Kriegsarchiv, Vienna, *Nachlass Wilhelm Möller*, B/180, 1, II, pp.305-324. Wilhelm Möller, a telegraph operator at court and amateur historian, tried to establish the identity of the author. Most believed it was the Czech privy councillor Ottokar Mikeš, a chief of section in the emperor's private office (*Kabinettskanzlei*), who had committed suicide as a result of the Empire's collapse. Schneider himself refused to reveal the secret. According to Glaise, despite the untruths, the account contained new elements which only seven or eight people in Franz Joseph's environment could have known. However, the author had obviously been less close to Karl. Möller even believed that an alien hand had added the passages on Karl, since he considered Mikeš too dynastically loyal for such violent attacks.

⁷ Josef Schneider (editor and translator), *Anonymus, Kaiser Franz Joseph I. und sein Hof. Erinnerungen und Schilderungen aus den nachgelassenen Papieren eines persönlichen Ratgebers* (Vienna/Hamburg, reprint, 1984).

⁸ The 1923 French translation is used here: Général Baron Albert de Margutti, *La Tragédie des Habsburg. Mémoires d'un aide de camp* (Vienna/Paris, 1923); KA, NMö, 1, II, pp.305, 323-324.

abundantly clear that the transition from the old emperor to his great-nephew had been a painful, dispiriting and ultimately fateful upheaval. Criticism of Karl, irrespective of the source, was usually consistent: he was inadequately educated, intellectually middling, childish, naïve, weak-willed, irresolute, fickle, unsuitably informal, easily swayed, susceptible to female influences, priggish, a poor judge of character, arbitrary, impulsive and rash.⁹ To many *Reich* Germans, he was also a traitor. The former emperor was, of course, not without his champions. Most distinguished among these was Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, the former chief of his private office, whose book, translated into English as *The Emperor Charles*, remains indispensable.¹⁰ Although his admiration and affection for the emperor fettered his critical faculty and left a gap in his conclusions, his reliable and insightful account was no obsequious panegyric.¹¹ More obviously biased – though not devoid of use – was the work of his last secretary Karl von Werkmann, who had followed him into exile.¹² Minor figures variously acquainted with the emperor also leapt to his defence, refuting scurrilous rumours and seeking to secure him a worthier place in history.¹³ Yet although he received sympathetic treatment from more important personages,¹⁴

Margutti himself was long suspected of being the anonymous author above. When asked by Möller, he laughed off these claims and pointed to Mikeš. To this day, however, he is referenced as the author by the Austrian National Library.

⁹ Such judgements appeared in: Moritz von Auffenberg von Komarów, *Aus Österreichs Höhe und Niedergang: eine Lebensschilderung* (Munich, 1921); Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, *Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1919-1921); Rudolf Sieghart, *Die letzten Jahrzehnte einer Grossmacht. Menschen, Völker, Probleme des Habsburger-Reichs* (Berlin, 1932); Carl Freiherr von Bardolff, *Soldat im alten Österreich. Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Jena, 1939).

¹⁰ Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, *The Emperor Charles* (London, 1930). Childhood friend, confidant and political adviser, Polzer held this post from February to November 1917, when he fell out of favour. He was, in his own words, “one of the few witnesses, perhaps the only one, who ever gained an insight into the emperor’s most intimate mind” (p.311).

¹¹ Polzer, p.46, footnote 1. Polzer kept a diary in which he almost always wrote up his conversations with Karl on the evening of the day on which they had taken place. When head of Karl’s private office, he noted important conversations with him immediately afterwards in shorthand, and often took down his exact words during the conversation.

¹² Karl Freiherr von Werkmann, *Deutschland als Verbündeter, Kaiser Karls Kampf um den Frieden* (Berlin, 1931).

¹³ Baron Julius von Szilassy, *Der Untergang der Donau-Monarchie* (Berlin, 1921); Emmerich Zeno von Schonta, *Erinnerungen eines Flügeladjutanten an Weiland Seine Majestät den Kaiser und König Karl. Eine Auswahl von Vorträgen und Aufsätzen des Fregattenkapitän d. R.* (Vienna, 1928); Stefan Baron Kray, *Im Dienste der Kabinettskanzlei während des Weltkrieges. Episoden und Charakterbilder aus dem Leben der Kaiser Franz Joseph und Karl. Reflexionen eines ehemaligen Hofsekretärs der k.u.k. Kabinettskanzlei* (Budapest, 1937); Tamás Graf von Erdödy, *Die Memoiren des Grafen Tamás von Erdödy. Habsburgs Weg von Wilhelm zu Briand. Vom Kurier des Sixtus-Briefes zum Königsputschisten*, ed. Paul Szemere and Erich Czech (Zurich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1931); Prince Ludwig Windischgraetz, *My Memoirs* (London, 1921).

¹⁴ Count Ottokar Czernin, *In the World War* (London, 1919); Prince Sixte de Bourbon, *L’offre de paix séparée de l’Autriche (5 décembre 1916 – 12 octobre 1917)* (Paris, 1920); Arthur Freiherr Arz von Straußenburg, *Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges 1914-1918. Aufzeichnungen* (Vienna, 1924);

Karl's reputation in Austria and Germany – never brilliant since 1918 – was not redeemed.¹⁵ Slipping towards oblivion, he inspired mostly pity or disdain. In the successor states, he disappeared from public consciousness altogether. In Hungary, despite his two restoration attempts, he featured in memoirs merely as a “likeable peripheral figure”.¹⁶ Czechoslovaks,¹⁷ Yugoslavs¹⁸ and Poles,¹⁹ for their part, paid scant attention to him in their often one-sided, selective and self-glorifying recollections of the road to independence. Several biographies of Karl began to appear in the early 1930s,²⁰ but scholarly work remained largely non-existent (with the exception of Fester's above-mentioned book).

Stephan Graf Burián, *Austria in Dissolution, Being the Personal Recollections of Stephan Count Burián, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Austria and Hungary 1915–1917 and 1918* (London, 1925); Alexander von Spitzmüller, *Der letzte österreichisch-ungarische Ausgleich und der Zusammenbruch der Monarchie* (Berlin, 1929); Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, *The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire* (London, 1930); General Ottokar Landwehr, *Hunger. Die Erschöpfung der Mittelmächte 1917/1918* (Zurich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1931); Ernst Streer Ritter von Streeruwitz, *Springflut über Österreich, Erinnerungen, Erlebnisse und Gedanken aus bewegter Zeit 1914-1929* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1937); Hans von Seeckt, *Aus meinem Leben 1866-1917*, ed. Friedrich Rabenau (Leipzig, 1938); *ibid.*, *Aus seinem Leben 1918-1936*, ed. Friedrich Rabenau (Leipzig, 1940). Interestingly, in light of his fraught relationship with Karl, Czernin provided a rather understanding – if patronizing – portrait of him in his otherwise unreliable and self-exonerating memoirs.

¹⁵ Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit 1906-1918*, 5 vols (Vienna/Berlin/Leipzig, 1921-1925); *ibid.*, *Private Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Kurt Peball (Vienna/Munich, 1977); Karl Friedrich Nowak, *Der Weg zur Katastrophe* (Berlin, 1919); *ibid.*, *The Collapse of Central Europe* (London, 1924); Gina Gräfin Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Mein Leben mit Conrad von Hötzendorf* (Leipzig, 1935). The death of the former chief of general staff Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf in 1925 spared Karl's reputation from a further blow. Indeed, Conrad had not had time to take his memoirs beyond December 1914, despite their title. His private notes, first published in 1977, however, provide probably the most violent of all attacks on Karl – a true character assassination. Conrad's friend Karl Friedrich Nowak and wife Gina had previously made their own contributions to the subject.

¹⁶ Iván Bertényi Jr., “Eine sympatische Nebenfigur. König Karl IV. im Spiegel von Memoiren ungarischer Politiker”, in: *Karl I. (IV.), der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Donaumonarchie*, ed. Andreas Gottsmann (Vienna, 2007), pp.247-268. For instance in: Count Julius Andrássy, *Diplomacy and the War* (London, 1921); Theodor Graf Batthyány, *Für Ungarn gegen Hohenzollern* (Zürich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1930); Count Michael Károlyi, *Fighting the World: The Struggle for Peace* (London, 1924).

¹⁷ Jaroslav Werstadt (ed.), *Naše Revoluce, čtvrtletní historický sborník* (Prague, 1923-1938); Alois Žipek, (ed.), *Domov za války. Svědectví účastníků*, 5 vols (Prague, 1929-1931); Gustav Habrman, *Mé vzpomínky za války: Črty a obrázky o událostech a zápasech za svobodu a samostatnost* (Prague, 1928); František Staněk, *Politik, tribun, národohospodář, družstevník a buditel lidu venkovského. Memoáry a dokumenty*, ed. Jaroslav Marcha (Brno, 1927); František Soukup, *28. říjen 1918. Předpoklady a vývoj našeho odboje domácího v československé revoluci za státní samostatnost národa*, 2 vols (Prague, 1928); Zdeněk Tobolka, *Politické dějiny československého národa od r.1848 do dnešní doby*, 4 vols (Prague, 1932-1937).

¹⁸ Slovene politician Anton Korošec gave a lecture on “The Genesis of Yugoslavia” in Ljubljana on 25.10.1925, in: Silvo Kranjec (ed.), “Koroščevo predavanje o postanku Jugoslavije”, *Zgodovinski Časopis*, 16 (Ljubljana, 1962), pp.218-229.

¹⁹ Leon Biliński, *Wspomnienia i Dokumenty*, 2 vols (Warsaw, 1924). The memoirs of Biliński, the former Austro-Hungarian finance minister, were particularly dismissive of Karl.

²⁰ Jérôme Troud, *Charles I, Empereur d'Autriche, Roi de Hongrie* (Paris, 1931); Herbert Vivian, *The Life of the Emperor Charles of Austria* (London, 1932); Bruno Brehm, *Weder Kaiser noch König: Der Untergang der habsburgischen Monarchie* (Munich, 1933); Imre Balassa, *Death of an Empire*

Karl's supporters, however, were hard at work. His premature end in 1922, in pitiable circumstances, for ever established him as a tragic figure. Yet it was on the basis of his life, rather than his death, that, on the first anniversary of his passing, the future Austrian president Wilhelm Miklas petitioned the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Piffl, to initiate the process of beatification. Two years later, the prayer league toiling to this end, the *Kaiser-Karl-Gebetsliga für den Völkerfrieden*,²¹ received official ecclesiastical sanction.²² In 1928, it started the publication of its yearbook – of little academic use despite the occasional contributions of first-hand witnesses.²³ After the *Anschluss*, the National Socialists disbanded the league, deporting and killing one of its leading members, Hans Karl Zeßner-Spitzenberg.²⁴ Nevertheless, the organization was able to resume its activity after the war,²⁵ and, in 1949, the Vatican announced the beginning of the beatification procedure.²⁶ As its conclusion approached, a literary industry emerged, virtually unopposed,²⁷ producing tome after tome of hagiographies posing as biographies, in order to bolster Karl's claims to sainthood.²⁸ Munificent, generous, humble, gifted, shrewd, sagacious, pious,

(London, 1936); Bertita Harding, *Imperial Twilight* (London, 1940); Joseph Delabays, *La destinée tragique d'un monarque pacifique* (Cambrai, 1945).

²¹ "The Emperor Karl Prayer League for Peace among Nations".

²² Eva Demmerle, *Kaiser Karl I.: "Selig, die Frieden stiften"* (Vienna, 2004), pp.258-259.

²³ Kaiser-Karl-Gebetsliga für den Völkerfrieden (ed.), *Gedächtnis-Jahrbuch. Dem Andenken an Karl von Österreich gewidmet* (Vienna, 1928-1937).

²⁴ Zeßner had been preparing a biography of Karl and had collected numerous statements and notes from eyewitnesses. After the war, his work was completed by Erich Thanner, regrettably without sources: Hans Karl Zeßner-Spitzenberg, *Kaiser Karl*, ed. Erich Thanner (Salzburg, 1953).

²⁵ The yearbook restarted in 1953 and has continued in the following forms: *Die stille Schar: Jahrbuch der Gebetsliga* (Lilienfeld/Vienna, 1953-1997); *Journal der Kaiser Karl Gebetsliga* (Vienna, 1998-1999); *Wir über uns: Jahresbericht der Kaiser Karl-Gebetsliga für den Völkerfrieden* (Vienna, 2000); *Jahresbericht der Kaiser-Karl-Gebetsliga für den Völkerfrieden* (Vienna, 2001-2010); *Jahrbuch der Kaiser-Karl-Gebetsliga für den Völkerfrieden* (Vienna, 2011).

²⁶ Demmerle, p.260.

²⁷ A notable exception was the small article by Rudolf Schermann which argued against the beatification of Karl due to his approval of the use of poison gas on the Italian Front: "Kaiser Karl, warum er nicht seliggesprochen werden darf", *Kirche Intern*, 11 (1996), pp.30-35.

²⁸ Heinz von Lichem, *Karl I.: Ein Kaiser sucht den Frieden* (Innsbruck, 1996); Peter Broucek, *Karl I (IV): Der politische Weg des letzten Herrschers der Donaumonarchie* (Vienna, 1997); Patrick Germain, *Charles et Zita: derniers souverains d'Autriche-Hongrie* (Nice, 2002); Michel Dugast Rouillé, *Charles de Habsbourg: le dernier empereur* (Brussels, 2003); Demmerle, op. cit.; Jan Mikrut (ed.), *Kaiser Karl I (IV.) als Christ, Staatsmann, Ehemann und Familienvater* (Vienna, 2004); James and Joanna Bogle, *A Heart for Europe: the Lives of Emperor Charles and Empress Zita of Austria-Hungary* (Leominster, 2004). Elisabeth Kovács, *Untergang oder Rettung der Donaumonarchie? Die österreichische Frage. Kaiser und König Karl I (IV.) und die Neuordnung Mitteleuropas 1916-1922*, volume I (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2004). The first volume by Kovács – a former professor at the Faculty of Catholic Theology in Vienna and member of the Historical Commission for the Beatification of Emperor Karl – is nothing short of odious. To her mind, Austria-Hungary fell victim to the intrigues and machinations of camarillas of freemasons, Jews, Bolsheviks, Liberals, Atheists and Slav nationalists. She gives particular credence to the idea of a masonic cabal fanatically intent on

spiritual, noble-minded, moral, progressive, visionary, doughty and brave, Karl had apparently been thwarted in his philanthropic designs to end the war and to reform Austria-Hungary on a democratic and federal basis by insurmountable difficulties, dastardly machinations and dark, pitiless, ungodly foes. His beatification was duly pronounced in October 2004.²⁹ There is, however, no respite from these eulogies in sight: canonization lies ahead for Karl once a second miracle is validated, while his wife Zita's beatification got underway in 2009.³⁰

Quite unwittingly, however, Karl's road to holiness has provided the most significant boost to historical research. Indeed, numerous documents were submitted to the Vatican – and subsequently verified, and published extensively in 2004 – from the otherwise closed Habsburg archive.³¹ Previously, only a handful of historians had been granted (very limited) access to some of the private papers of the imperial family, thanks to their close relationship with its members. Unfortunately, this association, particularly with Zita, proved fatal to their impartiality.³² As a result, no works of academic quality exist on Karl's life and reign as a whole,³³ though useful

destroying the Dual Monarchy. This view, however, was not alien to Karl or to Zita, and remains popular within the prayer league.

²⁹ Demmerle, pp.260, 266-267. On the basis of his peace efforts, his social measures and deep piety, and of a miracle: the curing of the venous ulcers of a Polish nun in Brazil in 1960.

³⁰ The president of the "Association pour la béatification de l'Impératrice Zita" is Jean Sévillia, author of one of the most recent rhapsodies on Karl: *Le dernier empereur. Charles d'Autriche. 1887-1922* (Paris, 2009).

³¹ Elisabeth Kovács (ed.), *Untergang oder Rettung der Donaumonarchie? Politische Dokumente zu Kaiser und König Karl I. (IV.) aus Internationalen Archiven*, volume II (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2004).

³² Gordon Brook-Shepherd, *The Last Habsburg* (London, 1968); Tamara Griesser-Pečar, *Zita: Die Wahrheit über Europas letzte Kaiserin* (1985); *ibid.*, *Die Mission Sixtus, Österreichs Friedensversuch im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna/Munich, 1988); *ibid.*, *Karl und Zita. Ihr kurzes Eheleben in einer schwierigen Zeit* (Vienna, 2004); Erich Feigl (ed.), *Kaiser Karl. Persönliche Aufzeichnungen, Zeugnisse und Dokumente* (Vienna/Munich, 1984); *ibid.*, *Kaiser Karl. Ein Leben für den Frieden seiner Völker* (Vienna, 1990); *ibid.*, *Zita, Kaiserin und Königin* (Vienna/Munich, 1991); *ibid.*, "Gott erhalte..." *Kaiser Karl. Persönliche Aufzeichnungen und Dokumente* (Vienna, 2006); Demmerle, *op. cit.* Brook-Shepherd was the first historian to be granted access to the surviving political and biographical material on Karl contained in the Habsburg family papers, and to be privy to Zita's recollections, who delivered them from memory when her diaries and jottings proved insufficient. But, aside from her tendentious contributions, his book is a standard biography. Feigl, who also befriended and interviewed the erstwhile empress, did not attempt to hide his bias and happily edited inconvenient passages. Though not quite impartial, Griesser-Pečar made by far the best use of her contacts with Zita and supplemented the information she obtained – and referenced rigorously – with archival research. Demmerle was the long-serving assistant of Karl's son Otto, and wrote accordingly.

³³ Wilhelm Möller, *Kaiser Karl I. von Österreich. Eine Lebensbeschreibung. Zusammengestellt aus der Presse, Literatur, Mitteilungen und eigenen Ermittlungen* (Vienna, 1954); Reinhold Lorenz, *Kaiser Karl und der Untergang der Donaumonarchie* (Graz, 1959); Heinz Rieder, *Kaiser Karl: Der letzte Monarch Österreich-Ungarns 1887-1922* (Munich, 1981); Jiří Pernes, *Poslední Habsburkové: Karel, Zita, Otto a snahy o záchranu císařského trůnu* (Brno, 1999); Jan Galandauer, *Karel I.: poslední český král* (Prague/Litomyšl, 2004). Wilhelm Möller compiled an extraordinarily extensive piece work over twelve years, based on the daily press, war literature, interviews with prominent court and military

studies, monographs and articles have appeared.³⁴ In the classic accounts of the downfall of the Monarchy, Karl takes up little space.³⁵ There, the conclusions are often penetrating and sometimes sympathetic, but, ultimately, always damning.³⁶

However, the availability of many of his personal recollections, though it might not alter this verdict, has for ever changed the nature of research on Karl. The last Habsburg monarch was not a prolific writer; he did not usually keep a diary,³⁷ and he apparently destroyed most of his secret documents and teleprinter exchanges.³⁸ Nevertheless, his papers were preserved and ordered by Zita.³⁹ Several of these are invaluable, most significantly for this work his jottings from late 1914⁴⁰ and the many pages he filled in exile in September 1920.⁴¹ These partly compensate for the many obstacles facing the student of Karl's rule. For instance, none of his Austrian prime

personalities and his own personal experiences, which contained "932 typed-up pages, 18 flowcharts, 12 supplementary sheets, 49 audiences given by Karl and published in the press". Only the above-mentioned, abridged version was published, though the full work (which contains no footnotes) is in the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv in Vienna (*Nachlass Wilhelm Möller*, K1). In his biography of Karl, Reinhold Lorenz announced the future publication of a complementary volume of notes, which never appeared. His papers, which contain much of the material for the book, were, however, deposited in the Kriegsarchiv (*Nachlass Reinhold Lorenz*, (A,B/999)). The absence of footnotes in Galandauer's recent biography is an incomprehensible shame.

³⁴ Gerhard Kielhofer, "Kaiser Karls soziale Bemühungen und Reformversuche" (PhD, University of Graz, 1965); Robert A. Kann, *Die Sixtus Affäre und die geheimen Friedensverhandlung Österreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 1966); Helmut Hoyer, *Kaiser Karl I. und Feldmarschall Conrad von Hötzendorf. Ein Beitrag zur Militärpolitik Kaiser Karls* (Vienna, 1972); Paula S. Fichtner, "Charles I (IV): War Leadership as Personal Leadership", in Béla K. Király and Albert A. Nofi (eds.), *East and Central European War Leaders: Military and Civilian* (New York, 1988), pp.75-84; Andreas Gottsmann (ed.), op. cit.

³⁵ Robert A Kann, *The Multinational Empire, Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918*, 2 vols (New York, 1950); Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy 1914-1918*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, 1968); Leo Valiani, *The End of Austria-Hungary* (London, 1973); A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918* (London, 1990); Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* (London, 2001); Robin Okey, *The Habsburg Monarchy c.1765-1918* (London, 2001); Mark Cornwall (ed.), *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary, A Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth-Century Europe* (Exeter, 2002).

³⁶ Kann, II, p.239. Kann, for example, wrote that "he failed on all points and everywhere" and that "nearly every one of his desperate attempts to stem the impending disaster ended in a situation worse than if no attempt had been made at all".

³⁷ Karl Freiherr von Werkmann (ed.), *Aus Kaiser Karls Nachlass* (Berlin, 1925), p.23. Though according to Werkmann, during agitated times, he wrote down his experiences and impressions on the sheets of a block of paper, as well as the measures he wish to take in future – this was to serve as an *aide-mémoire*.

³⁸ KA, NMö, 1, II, pp.258, 301-302. According to the operator Möller, who handled many of Karl's personal files, telegrams, teleprints and phone calls personally. However, at least one Hughes teleprint survived, reproduced in: UR, II, document 88, pp.340-341.

³⁹ UR, I, p.13.

⁴⁰ UR, II, 3, "Kriegserinnerungen Kaiser Karls", *sine loco*, 13.10.1914-24.12.1914 and 24.12.1914, pp.49-86.

⁴¹ UR, II, 213, "Persönliche Aufzeichnungen Kaiser und König Karls (21. November 1916 bis 24. March 1919), Prangins, Switzerland, 8.9.1920, pp.604-694.

ministers – Ernest von Koerber,⁴² Heinrich Clam-Martinic,⁴³ Ernst Seidler von Feuchtenegg,⁴⁴ Max Hussarek von Heinlein⁴⁵ and Heinrich Lammasch⁴⁶ – left any literature of note concerning their tenure. Moreover, many of the files from their office – including the minutes of the ministerial councils – perished in the fire of the Palace of Justice in 1927.⁴⁷ The diaries and recollections of Joseph Maria Baernreither⁴⁸ – minister without portfolio between December 1916 and June 1917 – as well as the diaries of Josef Redlich⁴⁹ – parliamentary deputy, potential prime minister and last finance minister of Austria – remain the best sources of inside information on Viennese politics for the period.

Drawing on Karl's still virtually unstudied papers, on archival research – primarily in Vienna, Prague and Berlin – and on the widest possible selection of published primary sources in German and Czech, this work aims to assess Karl's preparation as heir and record as emperor. From the moment of his accession to the throne, however, it is limited in time and place – to the time when he still had a realistic possibility of enacting domestic reforms, and to the places where stakes were highest.

Before the war, the Czech-German conflict was already the most acute in Cisleithanian parliamentary politics, resulting in the closing of the Bohemian Diet in Prague in July 1913 (as a result of German obstruction) and the proroguing of the *Reichsrat* in Vienna in March 1914 (as a result of Czech obstruction). The hope for a

⁴² Koerber died in March 1919, having left no memoirs. Very brief recollections were published a year later in: Josef Melbourn (ed.), "Mitteilungen und Äußerungen des Dr. Ernest von Koerber über Ereignisse und Persönlichkeiten der letzten Zeit", *Das neue Europa*, 6:1, ed. Paul Cohn (Zurich/Vienna/Berlin, 1920), pp.22-30. The diaries of Josef Redlich represent the most substantial source of information on Koerber: Fritz Fellner and Doris A. Corradini (eds.), *Schicksalsjahre Österreichs 1869-1936: Die Erinnerungen und Tagebücher Josef Redlichs*, 3 vols (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2011).

⁴³ A handful of interesting documents are nevertheless preserved in the family archive in Burg Clam in Upper Austria.

⁴⁴ Seidler's recollections were serialized in the *Neue Freie Presse* in 1924, under the title "Aus schwerer Zeit": part I, *Morgenblatt*, 20.7; part II, *M*, 25.7; part III, *M*, 2.8; part IV, *M*, 9.8; part V, *M*, 14.8; part VI, *M*, 2.9.1924.

⁴⁵ Hussarek published an article entitled "Aus den letzten Wochen des alten Österreich" in the *Reichspost*, 11.11.1928, pp.3-5.

⁴⁶ There is very little on this period in: Marga Lammasch and Hans Sperl (eds.), *Heinrich Lammasch, Seine Aufzeichnungen, sein Wirken und seine Politik* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1922).

⁴⁷ The historian Ludwig Brügel studied these before the blaze, and his *Geschichte der Österreichischen Sozial-Demokratie*, 5 vols (Vienna, 1922-1925) is in some cases the only remaining record.

⁴⁸ HHStA, Nachlass Baernreither, K6 and K7 (wartime diaries); K11 (memoirs). Extracts were published in: *Der Verfall des Habsburgerreiches und die Deutschen, Fragmente eines politischen Tagebuches 1897-1917*, ed. Oskar Mitis (Vienna, 1939). The full publication of his diaries, under the supervision of Fritz Fellner, is expected in 2014.

⁴⁹ Fellner and Corradini (eds.), op. cit.

compromise – an *Ausgleich*, or *vyrovnnání* to the Czechs – had faded, as national competition became a “zero-sum game”.⁵⁰ Although Karl often seemed unaware of it during his reign, the Bohemian problem remained the most central and contentious issue in Austrian politics. In contrast to the Polish and South Slav questions, its resolution was not dependent on the outcome of the war and, at least at the beginning of Karl’s reign, had no implications for foreign policy or for the dualist structure of the Monarchy. It could therefore be resolved prior to the conclusion of peace and without Magyar involvement. Accordingly, it constituted the cornerstone of the plans for internal reform hatched by buoyant German nationalists – from the Bohemian lands and elsewhere – in the first two years of the war.⁵¹ To such men, the social, economic, industrial, cultural, political and demographic development of the Czechs had become a mortal threat to their own national existence and, by extension, to the nature of the Monarchy. A wartime memorandum from German parliamentary circles made this clear: “Here [in Bohemia], Germandom faces its most advanced, and therefore most dangerous, opponent”.⁵² To be sure, the Czechs ended up at the forefront of the movements which brought about the collapse of Austria-Hungary, both at home and abroad. Yet domestically, this path had been convoluted, slow, uncertain and often ambivalent. The literature on the subject, with several noteworthy exceptions,⁵³ was long obfuscated by the mythologizing of Masaryk and Beneš’s action abroad,⁵⁴ of the events around 28 October 1918 – the date of Czechoslovak

⁵⁰ Catherine Albrecht, “The Bohemian Question”, in: Cornwall (ed.), p.91.

⁵¹ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, *Österreich 86Nr.2*, volume 21, Tschirschky to *Auswärtiges Amt*, 30.8.1916. As the German ambassador Tschirschky pointed out to his foreign office in August 1916, the South Slav question had been all but ignored.

⁵² PAAA, *Österreich 101*, 36, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 26.6.1915. This unsigned and undated memorandum entitled “German Bohemian thoughts on the Austrian question” was transmitted to Tschirschky, who passed it on to Berlin.

⁵³ The English-language literature is a little dated but still useful: Z.A.B. Zeman, *The Break-Up of the Habsburg Empire* (Oxford, 1961); Victor S. Mamatey, “The Union of Czech Political Parties in the Reichsrat 1916-1918”, in: Robert A. Kann, Béla K. Király, Paula S. Fichtner (eds.), *The Habsburg Empire in World War I* (New York, 1977), pp.3-28; H. Louis Rees, *The Czechs During World War I* (New-York, 1992). Two of the best works on the subject remain unpublished: F.B.M. Fowkes, “The Policy of the Habsburg Monarchy towards the Bohemian Question 1913-1918” (PhD, London School of Economics, 1967) and Carl W. Chrislock, “Reluctant Radicals: Czech Social Democracy and the Nationality Question, 1914-1918” (PhD, Indiana University, 1972). In Czech, the pioneering studies by Milada Paulová remain indispensable: *Dějiny Maffie: Odboj Čechů a Jihoslovanů za světové války, 1914-1918*, (Prague, 1937); *Tajný výbor [Maffie] a spolupráce s Jihoslovany v letech 1916-1918* (Prague, 1968). To this one must add the works of Jan Galandauer and Zdeněk Kárník, for instance: Galandauer, *Bohumír Šmeral 1914-1941* (Prague, 1986); Kárník, *Socialisté na rozcestí, Habsburk Masaryk či Šmeral* (Prague, 1996).

⁵⁴ Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State, Memories and Observations 1914-1918* (London, 1927); Édouard Beneš, *Souvenirs de guerre et de révolution (1914-1918), La lutte pour l’indépendance*

independence – and of the Czech legion, but has improved considerably.⁵⁵ In addition, in recent years, a particularly rich historiography has appeared, highlighting the complexity and ambiguity of national identity in the Bohemian lands.⁵⁶

A solution to the Bohemian problem – and indeed to the fundamental crises of Austria-Hungary – was a Herculean task. But in the first months of his reign, Karl had enough room for manoeuvre at least to attempt a solution, whether localized or as part of a complete reform of Cisleithania, whether through negotiated compromise or imperial decree. Moreover, as the supreme civil and military commander of Austria-Hungary, his power was absolute. That this attempt was barely made, and that his failure was ultimately complete, suggests, at the very least, a considerable degree of responsibility in his own dismal fate.

des peuples, 2 vols (Paris, 1928). Both Masaryk and Beneš, however, recognized the difficulties Karl had caused them.

⁵⁵ Jan Křen, *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft. Tschechen und Deutsche 1780-1918* (Munich, 2000); Otto Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft 1848 bis 1918*, 2 vols (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1994); Ivan Šedivý, “České loajální projevy 1914-1918”, *Český časopis historický*, 97:2 (Prague, 1999), pp.293-309); *ibid.*, *Češi, české země a velká válka 1914-1918* (Prague, 2001); Hans Mommsen, Dušan Kováč, Jiří Malíř and Michaela Marek (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Beziehungen zwischen Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutschen* (Essen, 2001); Richard Lein, *Pflichterfüllung oder Hochverrat, Die tschechischen Soldaten Österreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 2011). The publication of Zdeněk V. Tobolka’s wartime diary is also of prime importance: *Můj deník z první světové války* (Prague, 2008).

⁵⁶ Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans, A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1918* (Princeton/Oxford, 2002); Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists, The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, 2005); Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit (eds.), *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York/Oxford, 2005); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation, Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, 2006); Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival, Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (West Lafayette, 2006); Nancy M. Wingfield (ed.), *Creating the Other: Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe* (New York, 2003); Nancy M. Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints. How the Bohemian lands became Czech* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, 2007); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls, National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca/London, 2008).

CHAPTER I

ARCHDUKE CARL FRANZ JOSEPH

Until Gavrilo Princip's bullet tore through Franz Ferdinand's neck, his nephew, Archduke Carl Franz Joseph, had believed that another twenty or thirty years lay ahead of his accession to the throne.¹ In fact, after the attack in Sarajevo, the call of duty was barely thirty months away. In that time, despite the advanced age of the emperor and his own inexperience in statecraft, Karl – as he would become known on the throne – took the field and fulfilled almost exclusively military duties. By November 1916, battle-tried after postings on the Italian, Russian and Romanian fronts, he had risen to the ranks of colonel general and grand admiral.² Shortly after, however, upon hearing of the emperor's declining health, he returned to Vienna, arriving a mere nine days before his death on 21 November.³ The new, twenty-nine-year-old monarch's elevation from archducal anonymity⁴ had occurred through an unlikely series of extraordinary events,⁵ but he had not been entirely deprived of the grooming for a future emperor (even though it was nothing like the gruelling curriculum imposed on Franz Joseph).⁶ Indeed, by the age of eight, only his uncle Franz Ferdinand and father Otto stood ahead of him in the line of succession. What is more, as a result of the former's ill health, the latter long appeared a more likely heir.⁷ Though Franz Ferdinand recovered, his morganatic marriage in 1900 made Karl's

¹ Brook-Shepherd, p.3. According to his wife Zita.

² HHStA, Hausarchiv, *Nachlass Schager-Eckarstau*, K1, 3, Franz Joseph-Karl, 1.11.1916; Werkmann, pp.18-24, 38-67. In March 1916, he had been given the command of the Twentieth Corps on the Italian Front. Despite success in battle, the advance was halted in the wake of the Brusilov Offensive and in July, Karl, again promoted, was transferred eastwards to take charge of the planned, but still inexistent, mixed Austro-German Twelfth Army. Karl eventually controlled an army front which faced Russian offensives in August and September, and in mid-October, he assumed command of another army front in Transylvania.

³ Werkmann, pp.74-75.

⁴ *NFPM*, 18.8.1887, p.4. His birth featured in the "news in brief" section.

⁵ HHStA, *NMö*, K1, 1-3, p.275; Brook-Shepherd, p.5. Möller counted nine incidents which contributed to his accession, Brook-Shepherd six: "Execution by a firing squad in Mexico; a suicide in a hunting lodge at Mayerling; poison from the waters of the River Jordan; a father's premature death in a Vienna villa; an uncle's unfitting romance in Bohemia and his assassination on the banks of the Miljacka."

⁶ Egon Caesar Corti, *Vom Kind zum Kaiser. Kindheit und erste Jugend Kaiser Franz Josefs I. und seiner Geschwister* (Graz, 1950), pp.142-143, 194-201, 220-222, 240.

⁷ Czernin, p.36; Friedrich Funder, *Vom Gestern ins Heute. Aus dem Kaiserreich in die Republik* (Vienna/Munich, 1952), p.488.

enthronement seem inevitable.⁸ Soon after, imperial officials began to consider seriously the question of his education, and duly sketched comprehensive suggestions.⁹ Meanwhile, Karl continued to enjoy a conventional princely upbringing. After seven years in entirely female care – particularly in the hands of his pious mother Maria Josepha¹⁰ – he was assigned a tutor, Count Georg Wallis, from 1895 until his majority.¹¹ Alongside this, he had a successful spell in public education (as a private student) at the *Schottengymnasium* in Vienna,¹² which was curtailed in order to start his military training.¹³ Days after the premature death of his long ailing father in November 1906, which left him second in line to the throne, he moved to Prague to complete his academic instruction. In two years of study, he received private lessons from professors of both the German and Czech universities, according to a plan focused on jurisprudence and politics drafted by his friend and confidant Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz.¹⁴ Karl’s programme of study largely eschewed minutiae, concentrating on fundamental principles and seeking to give him “a clear overview of the wide field of political science, an insight into the workings and mechanisms of the machine of state” so as to obtain “an overall picture in order always to have his eye on the whole when deciding on an individual matter”. Knowing Karl’s character, Polzer wrote to Wallis: “I think that the lectures and studies should not be too abstract and theoretical, and should instead employ a lively, more Socratic method”. However, no compromises were made in constitutional law, its history, and current political and

⁸ *UR*, II, 1, Otto-Wallis, 22.9.1904, pp.37-39. In a missive addressed to Karl’s tutor in 1904, Otto wrote: “Our son Karl who, God willing, is destined one day to become emperor”.

⁹ KA, *Nachlass Karl von Steininger (III)*, B/708, Mappe 5. In 1900, Baron Bolfras, the chief of the emperor’s military chancellery asked Major General Steininger for his thoughts on the matter, which he wrote down in a lengthy memorandum. The fate of these proposals is unclear.

¹⁰ *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung, Kaiser-Huldigungsnummer*, 21.11.1917, p.26.

¹¹ Wallis, “Aus der Jugend des Kaisers”, *NFPM*, 17.8.1917, p.7; Archduchess Maria Annunciata, “Aus Kaiser Karls Kindheit”, *KGJ 1931* (Vienna, 1930), p.12. Wallis had previously tutored Karl’s father Otto and uncle Franz Ferdinand.

¹² *NSE*, K1, 3, school reports, 27.6.1901, 28.2.1902, 27.6.1902, 27.6.1902. He completed the exams for the lower form (*Untergymnasium*) with “excellent” success in June 1901.

¹³ *Ibid.*; KA, *Personalunterlagen, Qualifikationslisten*, Erzherzog Karl (sic) Franz Joseph; *NFPM*, 17.8.1917, p.7. He was made Lieutenant of the First Ulan Regiment in October 1903, he left school in the summer of 1904 and after a year of training, his active service began in October 1905 in the Seventh Dragoon Regiment in Bohemia.

¹⁴ KA, *Nachlass Polzer-Hoditz*, B/1499, Mappe, p.1; Kray, p.107; *NFPM*, 23.11.1916, p.5; 17.8.1917, p.7; *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 23.11.1916, p.2; 24.11.1916, p.6; *ÖIZ*, p.132. The press later attributed the plan to a “high-ranking official in the interior ministry”, which the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* identified as former Czech national minister Antonín Rezek, before retracting this claim. Indeed, Rezek had only helped select the tutors. The plan was then approved by Franz Joseph after consultation with the minister of education. Karl’s teachers were Professors Ott for canon law, Ulbrich for Austrian constitutional law, Pfaff for civil, trade and exchange law, Bráf for national economy, Goll for general history and Schmidt for history of art.

economic affairs.¹⁵ Karl was an able and assiduous student, noted for his quick understanding and outstanding memory, unafraid to ask questions and to express critical, even iconoclastic, opinions.¹⁶ His studies at an end, he rejoined his regiment in the spring of 1908 and spent almost four years garrisoned around provincial Bohemia before a transfer to Galicia and, ultimately, a return to Vienna.¹⁷ As his military commanders testified, he performed remarkably well. His report for 1913 noted: “Firm, decisive character, lively temperament, excellent mental ability, exceptionally quick grasp; [...] confident and skilful in the leadership of a battalion; understands and assesses tactical situations quickly and correctly; has a noteworthy capacity for decision; calm, secure and certain disposition”. It added: “Exemplarily zealous, benevolent and filled with the most avid sense of duty, he knows how to cultivate and to maintain discipline among men and military spirit; exerts an excellent influence on the spirit within the officer corps”.¹⁸ Thankfully for Karl, who had few opportunities to focus on anything else, he loved the army.¹⁹ In his spare time, he almost exclusively indulged his passion for hunting, as the numerous trophies on the walls of his beloved Villa Wartholz in Reichenau showed.²⁰ Once back in the capital in late 1912, he continued to discharge his military and occasional representative duties,²¹ and soon began to receive political and state dignitaries at his residence in

¹⁵ *NWT*, 23.11.1916, pp.2-4; *NPH*, 5, p.21.

¹⁶ Demmerle, p.44; Polzer, pp.43-44; *NFPM*, 23.11.1916, p.5; *ÖIZ*, pp.38, 132-133. According to Zita, Professor Ott, the director of studies, claimed that he had never had a student with such a quick capacity for understanding. Polzer felt Karl had learnt more than someone leaving university with a doctorate and praised his “phenomenal memory”, on which Goll also commented. Karl was awarded an honorary doctorate from each university in January 1917.

¹⁷ *PQ*, Karl. His regiment was transferred to eastern Galicia in March 1912. Later that year, he was made a Major in the 39th Infantry Regiment stationed in Vienna. In May 1914, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and in July named Colonel of the First Hussar Regiment.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* This assessment featured in all his reports from 1908 to 1914, with a few minor alterations. Karl was also described as a good marksman with a love of weapons, and as a passionate and dashing rider. His areas of skill were fencing, swimming, hunting, photography, bicycle- and motorbike-riding, and driving. His knowledge of countries included the whole Monarchy, France, Monaco, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, England, and Liechtenstein. In 1908, he spoke and wrote German, French, Italian and English fluently, and Hungarian and Czech sufficiently for official use. By 1913, his knowledge of legal Hungarian was fluent in speaking and writing.

¹⁹ *HHStA*, *Nachlass Franz Ferdinand*, K4, Karl-Franz Ferdinand, 22.1.1909; 7.1911.

²⁰ *NFP*, *Abendblatt*, 22.11.1916, p.3; *Fremden-Blatt*, *Morgen-Ausgabe*, 22.11.1916, p.20.

²¹ Auffenberg, p.110; *NFPM*, 1.2.1908, p.9; 23.6.1911, p.4; 20.12.1912, p.5; 28.1.1913, p.11; 8.2.1913, p.11; 1.2.1914, p.10. According to Auffenberg, Karl’s first official appearance was in December 1907 during a commemoration for Radetzky in Vienna. Karl first represented the emperor at the yearly Industrialists’ Ball in Vienna in February 1908, a duty he still performed in 1914. In June 1911, he had travelled to London on his behalf for the coronation of George V. In December 1912, he was sent to the Russian embassy to deliver Franz Joseph’s congratulations for the tsar’s name day, and the following month, presented the German embassy with the emperor’s birthday wishes to Wilhelm. He also represented him at the funeral of the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Nagl, in February 1913.

Hetzendorf Palace.²² In spite of this, he remained aloof from the public, politics and power.²³ Not only was there no urgency for the young archduke to fill this void but in fact, he privately disapproved of the increasing enterprise and influence of Franz Ferdinand, whose Belvedere Palace camarilla he considered an affront to the constitution and to imperial authority, and a misfortune for the country.²⁴

By the time war broke out, Franz Joseph, though still unimpaired, was already eighty-three. Polzer – who wrote that the prospect of the young archduke’s taking the throne under these circumstances “weighed on [his] soul like a nightmare” – therefore thought it imperative to acquaint the new heir with political affairs and public life to avoid his falling “into the toils of interested politicians” upon his accession.²⁵ Accordingly, he immediately wrote a letter to Wallis on the subject, in which he drew attention to a newspaper article which cast doubt on the seriousness of Karl’s education and which surmised that two high-ranking functionaries would be entrusted with his theoretical and practical initiation in all branches of state administration, for foreign and domestic policy. Riled by this frivolity, Polzer set out his vision for the heir’s training. Above all, he urged Wallis to ensure that Karl be taught by men outside political and government circles, unconnected to parties, individual politicians or the press. To this end, he proposed the establishment – only with the emperor’s blessing – of an independent private secretariat, composed of reliable civil servants from both halves of the Empire. These men were to inform Karl of all significant events in political life by drawing on both government and party sources; for matters of particular interest to Karl or of exceptional importance, ministers and experts were to report to him directly.²⁶ Polzer had originally written the missive days before mobilization but had desisted from sending it in the belief that the gravity of the hour would prompt imperial advisers to give the matter due priority and allow Karl full insight into the business of state.²⁷ Certainly, a few hours after hearing the news of

²² Julius Sylvester, *Vom toten Parlament und seinen letzten Trägern* (Vienna, 1928), p.53; *NFPM*, 2.3.1913, p.10; 5.3.1913, p.11; 6.3.1913, p.10. In March 1913, he and Zita received, among others, the president of the Lower House, the vice-president of the House of Lords, the mayor of Vienna, as well as several ministers, politicians and senior civil servants.

²³ Margutti, p.86; *FBM*, 22.11.1916, p.19. As the *Fremden-Blatt* later wrote: “Until [Sarajevo], he lived happily in relative seclusion, newly married and fully engrossed by his job.”

²⁴ Polzer, pp.56-57; Werkmann, pp.70, 72; *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, p.77.

²⁵ Polzer, p.50; *NPH*, p.9.

²⁶ *NPH*, Polzer-Wallis, 24.7.1914, pp.18-21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.

Franz Ferdinand's death, Franz Joseph had told the head of his private office, Franz Schießl von Perstorff, that Karl would now have to be more involved.²⁸ Later that day, several civil servants and ministers – notably Berchtold, the foreign minister, Stürgkh, the Austrian prime minister, and Heinold, the interior minister – had discussed the issue,²⁹ but no definite plan had emerged. A few days thereafter, upon hearing that Karl had been earmarked for troop command in Hungary, the chief of general staff Count Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf objected that he had to be “taught to govern” first, as a matter of urgency.³⁰ Consequently, on 5 July, Franz Joseph ordered that Karl be “educated through occasional lectures on the conduct of war in general, on tactics, army matters, politics and statecraft” by active professionals.³¹ But, after the declaration of war, he assigned him to army headquarters, insisting that he see the battlefield, though without being exposed to danger.³² (During the war, the intrepid Karl would, however often throw caution to the wind, to the dismay of his entourage.)³³ This posting, of course, prevented any further education. As Karl's friend, the former prime minister Prince Konrad zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, complained that autumn: “It is a crime to keep the poor archduke [...] away from everyone and everything, as if he were a career officer rather than the future ruler”.³⁴ Equally concerned, Polzer finally sent his letter in early November 1914.³⁵ In his accompanying message to Wallis, he reiterated his views, stressed the seriousness of the situation, and concluded: “He must enter the arena, he must be seen and recognized as the future ruler, he must be felt; for he is the heir!”³⁶

A few weeks later, Karl received Polzer to discuss the letter. But although he admitted that his friend's advice was entirely right, Karl declared himself unable to follow it. He felt that the set-up would remind the emperor too unfavourably of Franz Ferdinand's military chancellery, which had ultimately evolved into a parallel seat of power. Karl was therefore unwilling to petition Franz Joseph, lest he perturb their

²⁸ Heinrich Friedjung, *Geschichte in Gesprächen, Aufzeichnungen 1898-1919*, ed. Franz Adlgasser and Margret Friedrich (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1997), II, 1904-1919, conversation with Schießl, 15.5.1919, p.451.

²⁹ HHStA, *Nachlass Berchtold*, K2, memoirs, volume IV, part IX, p.412.

³⁰ Conrad, IV, 2.7.1914, p.107.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.7.1914, p.108. He was to command troops only during manoeuvres, or simply attend them as a spectator – in Franz Joseph's words, “so that he learns something”.

³² *Ibid.*, 3.8.1914, p.172.

³³ *NBT*, K5, diary, 16.4.1916; 2.5.1916; 21.6.1916; Conrad, IV, pp.691-692.

³⁴ Leopold von Chlumecky, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinands Wirken und Wollen* (Berlin, 1929), p.52.

³⁵ *NPH*, pp.21-22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Polzer-Wallis, 5.11.1914, pp.21-23.

good relationship.³⁷ Karl respected and admired him far too much to criticize him or take the initiative.³⁸ In fact, Karl revealed that his training had begun, as the emperor had ordered relevant ministers and senior civil servants to acquaint him with the government's agenda. Karl, however, confessed that he had learnt little from the few hours of instruction he had so far received.³⁹ Polzer conceded defeat, but thereafter continually warned Karl of the dangers of insufficient preparation, privately lamenting the fact that only Karl's closest personal acquaintances seemed concerned.⁴⁰ In January 1915, however, the interior minister explained that a suitable person "to give Karl an understanding of his future task" had been sought, but not yet found. He claimed that prior to the outbreak of war, Franz Joseph had intended to teach Karl himself before allowing him access to ministerial files.⁴¹

As it happened, when the Austro-Hungarian high command retreated to Teschen in November 1914 after the debacle in the east, Karl – whose role it was to liaise between the general staff and the emperor (on personnel rather than operational matters)⁴² – gained easier and more frequent access to his great-uncle, now sedentary in Schönbrunn Palace. Karl was able to use his stays in the capital to begin to familiarize himself with the machinery of state. It was again rumoured that Franz Joseph wished to initiate Karl in politics himself.⁴³ On 8 March, the heir attended his first crown council, during which territorial cessions to Italy were reluctantly approved in order to buy her neutrality.⁴⁴ (In January, the military chancellery had suggested that he go to Rome to negotiate directly with the King of Italy, but Franz Joseph had not thought it necessary;⁴⁵ previously, in August 1914, Archduke Friedrich – commander-in-chief of the armed forces as a result of Franz Joseph's advanced age – had demanded that Karl be sent to King Carol to seek the intervention of Romania on the side of the Central Powers.⁴⁶) In July, the emperor appointed him as his personal representative on the front, having decided that his great-nephew

³⁷ *NPH*, p.23; Polzer, pp.56-58. Karl told Polzer he would often rely on him instead.

³⁸ *RP, Morgenblatt*, 26.11.1916, p.2; Austro-Hungaricus, *Kaiser und König Karl, Kaiserin Zita, Der Kronprinz* (Vienna, 1917), pp.56-57; Burián, p.241. As a child, his adulation of his great-uncle was famed in the family.

³⁹ *NPH*, p.23.

⁴⁰ Polzer, pp.56, 58.

⁴¹ *RT*, II, 6.1.1915, p.3.

⁴² *NPH*, p.18; Conrad, V, p.747.

⁴³ *NB*, K6, 18.2.1915.

⁴⁴ Miklós Komjáthy (ed.), *Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie 1914-1918* (Budapest, 1966), 10, 8.3.1915, pp.215-233; Burián, p.241.

⁴⁵ *NPH*, pp.26-27.

⁴⁶ Conrad, IV, pp.600, 611.

should make a name for himself, play an active part in the life of the army and earn its esteem. Karl thus embarked on frequent tours, inspecting the troops, meeting the men and handing out decorations. But he was now based in Vienna and put up in Schönbrunn.⁴⁷ According to Werkmann – who first met Karl in March 1916 as head of his commando’s chancellery in the South Tyrol – Franz Joseph, conscious that he was in his twilight, conversed increasingly frequently with him.⁴⁸ Zita even claimed that he found the time each day to give him a personal tutorial;⁴⁹ meanwhile her mother, the Archduchess of Parma, told a German diplomat that all matters of significance were now submitted to Karl immediately before their execution by Franz Joseph in order to give him the opportunity to express any differing opinions.⁵⁰ She added that relations between emperor and heir had become increasingly warm. The German ambassador in Vienna confirmed this and indicated that many channels to Karl had recently emerged outside the official route.⁵¹ Karl himself told Berchtold the following March that his relationship with Franz Joseph was very good.⁵²

In fact, despite the undoubted *rapprochement* between the two, Franz Joseph’s personal involvement remained limited. According to Franz Joseph’s lord chamberlain,⁵³ Prince Alfred von Montenuovo, the emperor had instructed the Austrian and Hungarian prime ministers, Counts Karl von Stürgkh and István Tisza, as well as the new foreign minister István Burián, to keep Karl abreast of political matters; Karl had then reached an agreement with the three men which ensured that he was informed of all important matters and handed the appropriate files immediately *after* the emperor, while relevant experts remained at his disposal should he require further enlightenment. In practice, Karl did not usually see the ministers themselves, but the civil servants of individual departments reported to him in the *Hofburg*.⁵⁴ Foreign affairs – in which Karl showed a particular interest – were not omitted, and Karl received a daily batch of telegrams from the various Austro-Hungarian foreign

⁴⁷ NSE, K1, 3, Franz Joseph-Karl, 14.7.1915; 25.7.1915; KA, *Nachlass Rudolf Kundmann* (B/15), K2, diary, 15.7.1915; Werkmann, p.18; RT, II, 28.7.1915, p.69; FBM, 22.11.1916, p.19.

⁴⁸ Werkmann, p.25.

⁴⁹ Brook-Shepherd, p.43; UR, I, p.82. This claim also featured in the documents submitted to the Vatican for Karl’s beatification, though it was possibly also from Zita. No other references to these tutorials exist.

⁵⁰ Ö86Nr.1 *Geheim*, 4, Stockhammern-Bethmann, 24.7.1915. She herself was seeking information from the Bishop of Chur in order to “educate” her son-in-law.

⁵¹ PAAA, *Deutschland 128 Nr.2 G*, 36, Tschirschky-Jagow, 3.8.1915.

⁵² NBT, K5, 29.3.1916.

⁵³ *Obersthofmeister*.

⁵⁴ NBT, K5, 21.1.1916; 22.1.1916; Seidler, *NFPM*, 20.7.1924, p.3.

legations, again usually the same as that presented to the emperor. (These bundles had stopped completely on the day before Franz Ferdinand's death and only resumed at this time.)⁵⁵ What is more, Franz Joseph even began to delegate matters of minor importance. By the end of the year, Karl was able to show Polzer a mass of documents destined for Franz Joseph, with which he had been instructed to deal.⁵⁶ Thus, in spite of Karl's restricted responsibilities and of Franz Joseph's still distant involvement, the heir's access to political information improved considerably from July 1915.

His confidant Polzer nevertheless remained frustrated by the fact that Karl's introduction into the affairs of government had occurred in the very way against which he had counselled: an induction "in the political business of the government but not in government business", as he had warned in his first letter to Wallis.⁵⁷ He objected that the departmental officials ordered by both prime ministers to report to Karl "were given strict instructions on what they were to report". The result, in Polzer's eyes, was valueless.⁵⁸ Similarly, Montenuovo bemoaned the lack of overall leadership, of enlightenment on foreign and internal political developments and of guidance from the emperor on the great questions of the day, which the reporting civil servants could not dispense due to their insufficiently broad overview.⁵⁹ This apprenticeship was in any case cut short in March 1916, when Karl was sent to command a corps on the Italian Front. Simultaneously, however, he was assigned Count Leopold Berchtold, the former foreign minister, as lord chamberlain, for the purpose of "political orientation".⁶⁰

Karl, who had previously described Berchtold as "good man of honour, a good stable owner, who has nice collars as though he had swallowed a ramrod, but is a poor

⁵⁵ HHSStA, *Ministerium des Äußern, Politisches Archiv*, I. Allgemeines, K445b, indexes of the documents submitted to the heir, Nr.7 (1914); 8 (1915); 9 (1916); Burián, p.240. According to Burián, diplomatic correspondence had been placed at Karl's disposal since the beginning of the war, though evidence suggests otherwise.

⁵⁶ Seeckt, *1866-1917*, p.460; Polzer, pp.65-66; Kray, p.60; *NBT*, K5, 14-15.6.1916. These were naturally of low importance and usually concerned honours or clemency pleas. And, as the Hungarian constitution did not allow the king to deputize, they did not touch upon Transleithanian matters.

⁵⁷ *NPH*, p.21.

⁵⁸ Polzer, p.62; *NFPM*, 20.7.1924, p.3. Seidler, however, insisted that his lectures were in fact free discussions, which developed from a programme he had sketched "entirely independently".

⁵⁹ *NBT*, K5, 21.1.1916.

⁶⁰ KA, *Kriegsministerium, Präsidialbureau*, K1899, 54-8/3, 11.3.1915; *NFPM*, 22.11.1916, p.6.

foreign minister”,⁶¹ and was apparently not keen on his appointment,⁶² had nevertheless offered him the post in person.⁶³ Berchtold asked for time to reflect and, in the meantime, discussed the matter with General Wenzel von Wurm, who urged him to accept, arguing: “The heir is enchanting and has admirable qualities, but is somewhat weak and will be whatever the man he trusts makes of him.”⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Montenuovo noted that Karl was willing and receptive to instructions but lacking in training, experience and thus any knowledge of state business.⁶⁵ Hohenlohe, for his part, told Berchtold: “The archduke is still a blank slate and could become a capable person with suitably good care, despite his inadequate education and his perhaps not brilliant predisposition. At the moment he is showing good willingness but he cannot follow a serious lecture for long, he becomes absent-minded, as happens with children, and one must hit one’s finger on the table in order to get their attention back”.⁶⁶ (A year earlier, he had told Baernreither that Karl had good qualities, such as intellectual curiosity and sense of duty, but was not being given any political education.)⁶⁷ Karl Grabmayr, the president of the Imperial Court of Justice, summoned to teach the heir about the institution, later commented that he did not know which of the two was more bored, adding that it was far too late to teach Karl how to be emperor.⁶⁸ Such negative judgements were not uncommon.

In the years prior to the war, Karl was a peripheral figure, and his credentials had therefore seemed of remote relevance in political circles. In the shadow of his uncle, the second in line to the throne was rarely discussed, though he was occasionally an object of fun. For example, a Polish peer recounted mocking stories to Josef Redlich concerning a visit to Galicia by Karl, who was apparently puzzled to find out that Cracow, which he thought a fortress, also had a jury court. On top of this, he had allegedly asked the minister of railways Stanisław Głąbiński where he had been stationmaster.⁶⁹ Count Ottokar Czernin, a prominent member of Franz Ferdinand’s intimate circle, was distinctly unimpressed when he first met Karl in

⁶¹ *UR*, II, 3, 13.10-24.12.1914, pp.67-68.

⁶² *NB*, K6, 15.3.1916.

⁶³ *NBT*, K5, 16.1.1916.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.1.1916.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.1.1916.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.3.1916.

⁶⁷ *NB*, K6, 10.3.1915.

⁶⁸ Karl Grabmayr, *Erinnerung eines Tiroler Politikers 1892 bis 1920. Aus dem Nachlasse des 1923 verstorbenen Verfassers* (Innsbruck, 1955), p.181.

⁶⁹ *RT*, I, 23.5.1913. p.546.

1908 in Bohemia, calling him “childish for his age and devoid of interest in politics.” When they met by chance a few weeks later while riding in the woods, Czernin noted despairingly that Karl “did not have the faintest idea of the fundamental basics of a constitution” and resolved to inform Franz Ferdinand of this large gap in his education.⁷⁰ More damagingly for Karl, rumours of dissolution, carousing and womanizing began to appear among the public in late 1908, even reaching Franz Joseph and Franz Ferdinand.⁷¹ Though obviously untrue in light of Karl’s asceticism and piety, which verged on puritanism,⁷² this gossip continued to be widely believed in Vienna,⁷³ while the calumnies concerning his alleged alcoholism stuck well after his death.⁷⁴ On top of this, he seemed to develop a reputation for laziness.⁷⁵ Tittle-tattle and jokes aside, nothing seriously suggested that Karl was unequal to the position he occupied at the time. In fact, according to the president of the Lower House of the *Reichsrat*, Julius Sylvester, he made the “best imaginable” impression on the dignitaries who visited him increasingly frequently in Hetzendorf, in no small part due to his lively, friendly and talkative nature.⁷⁶

After Sarajevo, Karl naturally came under far greater scrutiny. Again, almost all who met him were impressed with his affability, personal charm and lack of affectation,⁷⁷ as well as his willingness and good intentions, but many were shocked by his lack of preparedness, and some by his lack of ability. It was, for instance,

⁷⁰ Národní archiv, Prague, *Pozůstalost Czernin*, K1, political overview 1905-1908, undated (though likely written in late 1908 or early 1909 as a basis for future memoirs).

⁷¹ Polzer, pp.48-49.

⁷² *UR*, II, 2c), Karl-Zita, 21.6.1911, pp.42-43; Seeckt, p.460; Kray, pp.105-106, 160. In London for the coronation of George V, Karl wrote to Zita of his anger that, at a court ball, “Catholic bishops in full regalia were dancing” and “that nuns in costume did not behave very religiously at all”. Everywhere he went, whenever possible, he attended mass in the morning and took the Holy Communion. This religiosity was not empty formalism, but intimate conviction. According to General Seeckt, Karl thought rigidly on all moral matters.

⁷³ Polzer, p.49; Kray, p.160; *RT*, I, 25.9.1913, p.559. In particular, rumours of “dissipations with musical comedy stars” thrived. Five years after the hearsay first appeared, former prime minister Koerber still assured Redlich that Karl “chased every skirt, even the most common”. Later, a Hungarian actress was rumoured to be his lover.

⁷⁴ Kray, p.158; Funder, p.560; Schonta, pp.18-22; Conrad, *Aufzeichnungen*, p.241. Conrad noted that he was a weak eater, drinker and smoker. Kray, who spent two years in direct contact with him when he was emperor, never saw him drink more than one or two glasses of wine or beer. Schonta concurred and vehemently denied the allegations (though he admitted that he did not know whether, as a young cavalry officer, Karl “had maybe, sometimes, had a couple too many with his friends”).

⁷⁵ *RT*, I, 25.9.1913, p.559.

⁷⁶ Sylvester, p.53. Sylvester commented that he was “on the best path to becoming popular, not only in Vienna and Budapest, but everywhere he went”.

⁷⁷ *NB*, K6, 15.3.1916; Burián, p.242.

commonly said that Zita was intellectually superior to her husband.⁷⁸ In August 1914, Conrad, though he thought Karl well-meaning, complained to Redlich: “He has learnt nothing, he cannot even spell. His uncle wanted to make him stupid deliberately”.⁷⁹ In early 1915, interior minister Baron Karl Heinold described him as an easily influenced child.⁸⁰ Around the same time, Margrave Sándor Pallavicini – a member of the Hungarian House of Lords who had met Karl on several occasions at army headquarters – openly informed acquaintances of his inauspicious impressions. Karl had apparently told him the previous October that the end of the war was approaching and that an offensive against Italy would have to follow immediately.⁸¹ (Pallavicini commented that Karl showed no concern for what was fair to the people.)⁸² The margrave’s worried nephew – an *aide-de-camp* to Karl – had even turned to him to ask whether somebody could be assigned to the heir to teach him about important matters of state. Upon hearing this story, the veteran politician Joseph Maria Baernreither despaired that even a young cavalry captain could see this as a necessity, and noted in his diary: “One really has to ask oneself: in what kind of hands are now the life, wellbeing and woes of thousands upon thousands?” Similarly, the German General Hugo von Freytag-Loringhoven, who met Karl while in post as plenipotentiary to Austrian army headquarters, later wrote, despite his fondness for him, that he “did not get an impression of outstanding intellectual ability from him, rather that of a certain ponderousness”.⁸³ His successor August von Cramon noted Karl’s timid restraint, commenting: “Generally, he gave the impression of a nice young man who did not yet know how to begin to make something of himself and was not particularly seeking to lessen his role as the odd one out”.⁸⁴ The former Austrian prime minister Ernest von Koerber found him “unworldly”.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the Bohemian diplomat Count Paul Thun-Hohenstein, who had known Karl since childhood, described him to Redlich: “He is of naïve nature, without any higher

⁷⁸ United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914 Supplement, The World War* (Washington, 1928), Penfield-Bryan, 13.7.1914, p.23.

⁷⁹ *RT*, I, 22.8.1914, p.636. There is, however, no evidence that Karl could not spell.

⁸⁰ *RT*, II, 6.1.1915, p.3. However, his claims that Karl had completely succumbed to the influences of the officers of the general staff, were untrue.

⁸¹ *RT*, II, 21.1.1915, pp.8-9; *NB*, K6, 18.2.1915; *NBT*, K5, 6.1.1915. He had softened by January 1915 when, in a conversation with Berchtold, he recommended avoiding war with Italy and discussed possible territorial bribes. But he added: “Still, one day we will have to attack her”.

⁸² *RT*, II, 21.1.1915, p.9.

⁸³ Freiherr von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Menschen und Dinge wie ich sie in meinem Leben sah* (Berlin, 1923), p.210.

⁸⁴ Cramon, p.89.

⁸⁵ *RT*, II, 24.4.1915, p.40.

interests, quite the ‘aristocratic cavalry captain’, but with a good heart and well-meaning.”⁸⁶ And when Archduchess Isabella obtained permission for the American journalist J.T. Roche to visit army headquarters, she was mortified to find out from the draft of his report that his judgement of Karl read, in the English original: “He is not very intelligent, nor instructed, but he may be one day a good constitutional monarch”. When she suggested he rephrase this, he duly complied and wrote: “He is not a big star but he may be one day a good constitutional monarch”. In the end, she convinced him that noting Karl’s future suitability would be amply sufficient.⁸⁷

Few people during Karl’s heirship, however, got to know him as well as the German General Hans von Seeckt, his chief of staff on the Russian and Romanian fronts between July and November 1916. Despite the embarrassing awkwardness of this arrangement, a bond formed between the two men. In his writings, Seeckt repeatedly emphasized that Karl was a “good chap”,⁸⁸ he was impressed by his charm, his open and natural manner, and his skilfulness in communication with subordinates and strangers.⁸⁹ Eventually, Seeckt, who saw himself in a “double role of educator and helper”, developed considerable affection, indeed a certain love, for Karl.⁹⁰ For his part, the archduke often confided in him, and they spoke openly on a wide range of subjects.⁹¹ Seeckt at first found Karl “full of interest and dedication towards the cause”, “not at all insignificant”, and noted that was “something decidedly sound in his nature and his judgement”.⁹² Yet he worried about Karl’s entourage and its mollifying, weakening, coddling, deluding and blinding effect on him.⁹³ Thus, although Emperor Wilhelm II and Quartermaster General Ludendorff urged Seeckt to work on Karl to win him over to the German standpoint, he quickly concluded that “the daily fight for this young soul really [was] hopeless”.⁹⁴ Despite his confidence in Karl’s convictions – his loyalty to the alliance, respect for German interests in Poland, and belief in the necessity of German predominance in Austria – he felt that he was poorly informed on political matters beyond Berchtold’s “gossip” and could not be counted on to exert any influence on Franz Joseph (partly due to his desire to avoid

⁸⁶ *RT*, II, 29.12.1916, pp.252-253.

⁸⁷ *NBT*, K5, 20.3.1915.

⁸⁸ Seeckt, pp.122, 136, 400, 406, 408, 478.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.400, 460. Though he noted that he was terribly formal with other royals, even relatives.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.467, 487, 522, 555, 581-582.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.406.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.400, 406, 408.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.400, 408, 460.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.460, 471.

conflict with his great-uncle).⁹⁵ And, although he thought the heir “far from stupid”, Seeckt described him as “intellectually completely unproductive, [with] no understanding or knowledge of art, science, literature, music [...]. Sometimes still somewhat childish and silly, [...] a penchant for the easiest jokes, no trace of wit, let alone for humour.”⁹⁶ Easily bored, because lacking any inner interest.”⁹⁷

Yet overall, the German hierarchy appeared impressed by Karl. After his second encounter with Karl in January 1915, Wilhelm told Bethmann “You will get to know the young archduke today. Watch out, you will like him a lot.”⁹⁸ During the same visit, chief of general staff Erich von Falkenhayn had several long conversations with Karl and praised the latter’s “knowledge in the matters discussed and the apposite manner in which he was able to substantiate his views”.⁹⁹ And Ludendorff, who had noted Karl’s “extreme youthfulness” in late 1914, commented that shortly before his accession to the throne, “he had developed and become manlier” and “spoke well on military subjects”.¹⁰⁰

Karl’s keenness and eagerness to learn impressed many. Redlich noted that both Wilhelm Singer, the editor of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* and Hugo Ganz, the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, enthused about Karl, the former predicting a great future for him.¹⁰¹ Baernreither, for his part, revised his opinion after meeting him. He found him “completely isolated” from events but “friendly, open, lively, fresh”, “very thirsty for knowledge, intelligent”, interested in the great questions of government, and filled with a tremendous sense of duty. And although he thought Berchtold the wrong person to feed Karl’s mind, he too held great hope for the future.¹⁰² Tisza, the Hungarian prime minister, praised Karl’s openness and desire to inform himself, noting that he always asked pertinent questions.¹⁰³ Burián, who followed Karl’s education keenly during the latter’s stay in Vienna, also remarked on his penetrative inquiries, as well as his “innate capacities”, vigorous intelligence, industry and ability to listen. Though he thought him too easily swayed by external

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.418, 460, 471-472.

⁹⁶ *NBT*, K5, 24.4.1916; 15.9.1916. Example of Karl’s toilet humour, and wit at the expense of Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

⁹⁷ Seeckt, p.460.

⁹⁸ Count Josef Stürgh, *Im Deutschen Großen Hauptquartier* (Leipzig, 1921), pp.112-113.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.113.

¹⁰⁰ Ludendorff, I, p.324.

¹⁰¹ *RT*, II, 9.3.1915, 29.6.1915, pp.27, 66.

¹⁰² *RT*, II, 23.3.1916, p.152; *NB*, K6, 15.3.1916.

¹⁰³ *NBT*, K5, 6.3.1916. Though Tisza remarked that Karl always withheld his own opinions.

influences, he felt that his development was “promising and justified the best hopes”.¹⁰⁴ Future prime minister Ernst Seidler, one of the civil servants who lectured Karl at the time, later recalled his lively interest in economics, in trade and in the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* arrangements, and remarked on his quick understanding and excellent memory.¹⁰⁵ Shortly after his appointment as lord chamberlain, Berchtold highlighted these two same qualities,¹⁰⁶ which he thought astounding.¹⁰⁷ Most rhapsodic of all, however, was the American war correspondent James F.J. Archibald. Reporting in November 1914 on his visit to Austrian army headquarters, he declared Karl to have “the most wonderful and sympathetic charm I have ever found in a man of public life” and “something which very few possess: personal magnetism”. Praising his knowledge, his natural leadership and his willingness to ask questions – which he compared to Theodore Roosevelt’s – he concluded: “He is the most interesting man Europe currently possesses”.¹⁰⁸ In the more sober assessment of the American ambassador Frederic C. Penfield: “The new heir [...] has certain talents which are requisite for rulership and it is predicted that when the time comes for him to take up the responsibilities of continuing the work of his great-uncle he will be found adequate to the task.” On the other hand, he agreed with the most frequent criticism of Karl, according to which he was “immature and unskilled in dealing with affairs of great importance”.¹⁰⁹

Karl himself was certainly not unaware of his lack of preparedness and of the limitations of his overwhelmingly military education. Indeed, he had apparently intended to absorb himself in further study when war broke out.¹¹⁰ And, as Freytag-Loringhoven later testified, during their time in Teschen, he occasionally told him openly “how unprepared for his high and difficult future office the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand had left him”.¹¹¹ Conscious of his shortcomings, but chiefly frustrated and humiliated by having to lead a non-existent army under the command of a German general,¹¹² he began to press for an assignment with greater

¹⁰⁴ Burián, pp.240-243.

¹⁰⁵ *NFPM*, 20.7.1924, p.3.

¹⁰⁶ *NMö*, K1, 1-3, p.275. Two “typical Habsburg qualities” according to Möller.

¹⁰⁷ *NBT*, K5, 4.4.1916; *Arz*, p.133. As did the future chief of general staff *Arz* von Straußenburg.

¹⁰⁸ *NFPM*, 29.11.1914, p.4.

¹⁰⁹ *USDS*, *SI914*, Penfield-Bryan, 13.7.1914, pp.22-23.

¹¹⁰ *NFPM*, 22.11.1916, p.6.

¹¹¹ Freytag-Loringhoven, p.210.

¹¹² *UR*, II, 20, Karl-Zita, 20.7, 4.8, 14.8, 17.9, 21.9.1916, pp.124, 128, 132-133, 138.

responsibilities. In September 1916, he ordered Berchtold to travel to Vienna to discuss with the leading men his appointment as commander-in-chief of the army or a “nebulous use” at the emperor’s side.¹¹³ Berchtold agreed and drafted a memorandum recording his concerns that the heir to the throne was insufficiently trained for the task ahead. Aware that the Monarchy faced one of the gravest crises in its history, he deemed it “urgently desirable” to give Karl the opportunity to gain practical experience on top of the purely theoretical education he had heretofore received. He thought Karl’s current role thankless, time-consuming, monotonous, demeaning for Austria-Hungary and overly exposed to danger. Moreover, he worried that any military setback would tarnish his prestige and that of the dynasty, while victory – in any case unlikely – would be credited to the Germans. But above all, he believed that it deprived the archduke of any insight into government business, of exchanges with leading politicians and of the wisdom of the emperor.¹¹⁴ Berchtold was invited to put these suggestions to Franz Joseph in person but the emperor deemed the moment unfavourable, as Wilhelm had just been given the supreme command of both armies and the emperor did not want Karl’s transfer to be interpreted as an affront.¹¹⁵

But this lack of involvement in the affairs of state did not reflect personal disregard or distrust on the part of Franz Joseph, but rather his rigidity and reluctance to delegate. Almost until the end, he refused to admit the necessity of assistance.¹¹⁶ Yet the weary monarch certainly esteemed his great-nephew. When speaking to Schießl shortly after hearing the news from Sarajevo, he had commented that, fortunately, Karl had talent.¹¹⁷ On 30 June 1914, he told the joint minister of finance Leon Biliński that Karl could be educated into becoming a good ruler because he was kind and devoted to him.¹¹⁸ When thanking Berchtold for accepting the post of lord chamberlain, he described Karl as “clever and filled with eagerness”.¹¹⁹ According to the former Hungarian minister Albert Berzeviczy, Franz Joseph had confided in him: “I am a very old man and cannot live much longer. But be reassured, my successor is a brave and splendid young man. He brings me much joy and one can have complete

¹¹³ Burián, p.243; *NBT*, K5, 5.8; 10.9.1916; *Ö86Nr.IG*, 4, Tschirschky-Jagow, 8.8.1916.

¹¹⁴ *NBT*, K7, memorandum on the preparation of the archduke for the office of emperor, 14.9.1916.

¹¹⁵ *NBT*, K5, 11.9; 13.9.1916; *D180G*, 4, Bethmann-Hindenburg, 29.9.1916.

¹¹⁶ Burián, p.243.

¹¹⁷ *FJ*, II, 15.5.1919, p.451.

¹¹⁸ Biliński, I, pp.277-278.

¹¹⁹ *NBT*, K5, 23.3.1916.

confidence in him”.¹²⁰ In the last days of his life, he reflected: “I value Karl very highly. He tells me his opinion honestly. He also knows to obey when I stick to my view.”¹²¹ And, on the day of his death, he allegedly said: “I took over the throne under the most difficult conditions and I am leaving it under even worse ones. I would like to have spared Karl this. But he is made of the right stuff, and will know how to cope.”¹²² This regard was in evidence in the weeks before his death, as he asked Karl for his thoughts on the possible removal of Conrad as chief of general staff.¹²³ Meanwhile, Karl’s political responsibilities also increased. On 8 October, after an audience with Franz Joseph, he received Burián, Stürgkh and the minister of war Alexander von Krobatin.¹²⁴ Yet Karl’s repeated trips to Vienna began to irritate the emperor, who asked Montenuovo angrily: “Have you heard? Karl is here again.” The lord chamberlain was equally indignant and thought it highly inappropriate, “at a time when all eyes are looking fearfully towards the east and to the Russian onslaught, to abandon one’s post there to go to Reichenau and peradventure shoot a chamois buck”.¹²⁵

Karl’s transfer to the Romanian Front in October at first did little to placate him. Tisza visited him shortly after his arrival and indicated that his summons to Vienna would occur immediately after a decisive victory against Romania.¹²⁶ At the time, Karl had not given up hope of taking over the high command.¹²⁷ Finally, upon news of the assassination of prime minister Stürgkh at the hands of the left-wing extremist Friedrich Adler on 21 October, a deeply affected Karl – who told Berchtold that it was “the expression of deep discontent in the country, the beginning of a revolutionary movement” – resolved to write to Franz Joseph, offering to leave the army and return to Vienna in order to relieve him of some of his burdens.¹²⁸ But Berchtold, who was instructed to deliver the letter to Schönbrunn, only got as far as Keleti Station in Budapest, when Karl telephoned him to announce the capture of Constanța and the great hopes he now harboured for the further course of operations –

¹²⁰ *ÖIZ*, p.8.

¹²¹ Werkmann, p.25.

¹²² Brook-Shepherd, p.46.

¹²³ KA, *Nachlass Brougier*, B/133, Karl’s handwritten report, 29.9.1916; *NBT*, K5, 24.6; 27.7; 29.7; 1.8.1916. Karl recommended that Conrad stay due to his great military authority and to the lack of an obvious successor. He did, however, suggest replacing Archduke Friedrich by Archduke Eugen.

¹²⁴ Werkmann, p.64.

¹²⁵ *NBT*, K5, 1.10.1916.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.10.1916.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.10.1916.

¹²⁸ Seeckt, p.486; Burián, p.243; *NBT*, K5, 22.10.1916; *NBG*, Karl’s handwritten draft, 22.10.1916.

he therefore ordered Berchtold “temporarily not to work towards his move to Vienna in the proximity of the emperor”.¹²⁹ Shortly after, he had to return to Vienna on account of Franz Joseph’s ill health. There, Burián – who had repeatedly insisted on this – informed Berchtold on 18 November that Franz Joseph had finally agreed to Karl’s permanent transfer to Vienna (though he had remained silent when the foreign minister had brought up his appointment as commander-in-chief).¹³⁰ However, the emperor died three days later without having informed his successor. Indeed, his last handwritten letter, due to be issued on 22 November, remained unsigned. In it, he praised Karl’s wartime military service and concluded: “I see that the time has arrived to recall Your Grace from the front to my side so that you, enriched by your experiences, can relieve me in my very extensive activities as commander-in-chief”.¹³¹ Right until Franz Joseph’s passing, speculation had been rife that he would either abdicate in Karl’s favour, accept a co-regency or at least surrender some significant responsibilities.¹³² In the end, only his death opened the corridors of power to Karl.

Despite his lack of training and practical experience, Karl was not bereft of political views, even though these were largely unknown to all but those closest to him.¹³³ Undeniably, Franz Ferdinand had been his chief influence. From an early stage, he had followed Karl’s educational programme closely and ensured that it corresponded to his wishes. In a letter to him in May 1905, Wallis wrote: “I am always glad when I have the opportunity to speak about Archduke Carl with Your Imperial Highness, since it matters greatly to me to be able to work very closely to the intentions of Your Imperial Highness; and my work is often really not easy!!”¹³⁴ After the death of his brother Otto, Franz Ferdinand took over his nephew’s guardianship and his

¹²⁹ Werkmann, p.73; *NBT*, K5, 22.10; 23.10.1916. Werkmann reprinted the letter but failed to mention that it had not been sent, instead claiming it had remained unanswered.

¹³⁰ Burián, p.243; *NBT*, K5, 18.11; 19.11.1916.

¹³¹ KA, *Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät*, K1254, 70-1/85. The original handwritten letter is also undated but the typed copies indicate 22.11 and bear Franz Joseph’s name.

¹³² HHStA, *Ministerium des Äußern, Zeitungsarchiv*, K45, Swiss press review, 3.12.1914; Romanian press review, 16.1.1915; *NS*, K6, 3.11; 14.11; 17.11; 20.11.1916; *Ö86Nr.1*, 21, Jagow-Stolberg, 14.11; Grünau-AA, 18.11; Oberndorff-AA, 19.11; Stolberg-AA, 20.11.1916. There was flurry of speculation shortly before the emperor’s death.

¹³³ Kray, p.109; Werkmann, pp.17, 22, 25, 37; Margutti, p.86. Werkmann could not detect any political element in him as heir. He believed that Karl, though not apolitical, never spoke of politics to his subordinates out of respect for the emperor. Margutti, however, wrote: “Karl did alchemy like the others and was elaborating systems and projects on the sly”.

¹³⁴ *NFF*, K25, Wallis-Franz Ferdinand, 19.5.1905.

involvement grew accordingly.¹³⁵ He informally approved Karl's study plan for university, attended his first examination, met his professors and asked for regular updates on Karl's progress.¹³⁶ From his castle of Konopischt, he had easy access to Karl in Prague, and effectively took charge of his study arrangements. When prime minister Max von Beck contacted Wallis to discuss a change of academics – the strict Czech-German parity had apparently upset the German minister for Bohemia – he responded that he was not entitled to make any decisions in the matter and would have to report to Franz Ferdinand.¹³⁷ What is more, Franz Ferdinand personally chose Karl's military tutor.¹³⁸

The heir to the throne also acted as a political mentor to Karl. Czernin recalled that although uncle and nephew liked and respected each other, their relationship was always defined by the “absolute subordination” of the latter to the former, and that in all political discussions, Karl “was always the listener, absorbing the precepts expounded by Franz Ferdinand”.¹³⁹ Burián offered a more critical assessment of their interaction, arguing that Franz Ferdinand had long treated Karl as a child and “had permeated him with his own ideas and not allowed him to form his own judgements”.¹⁴⁰ Franz Ferdinand himself boasted to the Slovak politician Milan Hodža that he had initiated Karl into everything and had enlightened him on the misgovernment of the Empire.¹⁴¹ For despite rumours to the contrary, Franz Ferdinand always saw Karl as his successor.¹⁴² The government programme drawn up for him in 1910–1911 by the head of his military chancellery Colonel Alexander von Brosch specifically designated Karl as “Archduke-Heir” in order to end speculation and to clarify his nephew's position.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, during a long conversation with Seeckt in August 1916, Karl admitted that he had not thought his succession secure

¹³⁵ A-H, pp.28, 39; Burián, p.241 *ÖIZ*, p.26.

¹³⁶ Polzer, pp.42-43; *NFPM*, 16.3.1907, p.7; *ÖIZ*, pp.26, 132.

¹³⁷ *NFF*, K25, Wallis-Franz Ferdinand, 1.1.1907.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, K4, Karl-Franz Ferdinand, 22.1.1909; *RPM*, 25.11.1916, p.6; *NFPM*, 17.8.1917, p.7; *ÖIZ*, p.26.

¹³⁹ Czernin, p.41.

¹⁴⁰ Burián, p.241.

¹⁴¹ *RT*, II, pp.92-93, 15.10.1915.

¹⁴² *RT*, I, 25.10.1911, p.395; Polzer, p.55; Kray, pp.14-15. He was, however, very sensitive about his nephew's public description as heir apparent. At Karl and Zita's wedding, he had apparently turned his back on the cardinal after the latter described the bridal pair as imperial heirs. Moreover, he used to compile a collection of press cuttings with such references, and from time to time handed them over to Wallis with biting comments.

¹⁴³ Theodor von Sosnicky, *Franz Ferdinand. Der Erzherzog-Thronfolger* (Munich/Berlin, 1929), pp.76, 80-81. The programme (reproduced pp.78-105) had first been printed by the *NWJ*, 30.12.1923, pp.7-9, and 1.1.1924, pp.7-8.

until Sarajevo, as he had expected Franz Ferdinand to put forward his own children despite having solemnly renounced their claim.¹⁴⁴ This seems implausible¹⁴⁵ although, of course, had Franz Ferdinand contracted a second marriage with someone of equal rank and had issue, the succession would have passed to this offspring.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, this matter did not affect Franz Ferdinand and Karl's relationship. Again, in spite of the gossip,¹⁴⁷ the two had a very good rapport and communicated quite frequently.¹⁴⁸ In fact, Karl's correspondence revealed a tremendous degree of warmth and affection towards his uncle and aunt, as well as a fervent desire to please and obey Franz Ferdinand. Over the years, his letters routinely included emphatic averments to this effect: "Thank you [...] for the great lessons which you gave me, whose fulfilment will be my utmost endeavour"; "If only to be able to show you my gratitude to some extent, I will strive to do everything in such a way as to please you"; "I will do everything as you did"; "I swear to you that I will continue to remain as loyally devoted to you as I have been hitherto. [...] Auntie and you were always so good to me that it is merely my duty in gratitude to strive to fulfil your will in everything as best I can"; "I, however, assure you [both] again that I will do everything within my strength in order to satisfy you"; "Be assured, dear uncle, that I did my utmost in order to fulfil your wishes."¹⁴⁹ In addition, Karl frequently turned to his relative for requests and advice, which the latter was always happy to give.¹⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Franz Ferdinand suffered little meddling in his affairs, and mostly kept Karl at arm's length from the Belvedere.¹⁵¹ Some suggested that he played a part in his nephew's postings to faraway garrisons and absence from public life.¹⁵² Yet Franz Ferdinand was deeply affected by the fact that Franz Joseph had not allowed him any insight or participation in the business of state and intended, once emperor, not to make the same mistake with Karl.¹⁵³ On at least two occasions, he

¹⁴⁴ Seeckt, p.418.

¹⁴⁵ Chlumecky, p.222; Funder, p.496. When discussing his successor with Johann von Chlumecký in 1901, Franz Ferdinand had "specifically and quite deliberately" named Karl. And when Friedrich Funder, the editor of the *Reichspost*, once inquired directly, Franz Ferdinand wrote back categorically: "A retraction of the renunciation will never be considered."

¹⁴⁶ Sosnicky, p.80. This scenario was mentioned specifically in Brosch's programme.

¹⁴⁷ Anonymous, pp.134-136; Auffenberg, p.231.

¹⁴⁸ Burián, p.24; Polzer, p.47, 55; Sieghart, p.244; *RT*, II, 29.12.1916, p.253.

¹⁴⁹ *NFF*, K4, Karl-Franz Ferdinand, 4.12.1905; 24.12.1907; 22.1.1909; 7.1911; 13.8.1911; 15.9.1911.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.3.1907; 20.7.1907; 4.5.1910; 13.9.1910; 22.1.1914.

¹⁵¹ Burián, p.241; *RT*, I, 22.8.1914, p.636; *NBT*, K5, 21.1.1916.

¹⁵² Kray, p.15.

¹⁵³ Chlumecky, p.222. From the handwritten notes (dated 20.2.1901) of Leopold von Chlumecký's father Johann, after a conversation with Franz Ferdinand.

sought his nephew's support in political matters, most notably when he objected to the so-called Hungarian constitutional guarantees in January 1908¹⁵⁴ and to the change in official title from "imperial war minister" to "war minister" in October 1911, both of which he saw as a Magyar infringements upon the rights of the crown.¹⁵⁵ Karl appended his signature to his uncle's notes of protest, but neither move ever had any practical significance. Meanwhile, although Franz Ferdinand and his advisers were engrossed in drawing up plans for the reform of Austria-Hungary, it seems that Karl was acquainted solely with their contours. This was in any case the view Polzer gathered from Karl's declarations. According to him, Karl only received the bundle of papers containing Franz Ferdinand's programme once on the throne, in May 1917, by which time he considered it out of date and inapplicable.¹⁵⁶ However, in light of the provenance and content described by Polzer, these were probably not Franz Ferdinand's last drafts for constitutional reform,¹⁵⁷ which had apparently been committed to paper between April and June 1914 with only the knowledge of Baron Carl von Bardolff, of Milan Hodža and of Baron Johann von Eichhoff.¹⁵⁸ According to the last-named, they envisaged the foundation of the "United States of Greater Austria",¹⁵⁹ through the creation of fully autonomous, nationally demarcated states under the Habsburg crown. Customs, railways, foreign policy and the army would remain as the basis of the unitary state.¹⁶⁰ But Franz Ferdinand was certainly no full-fledged federalist,¹⁶¹ and in any case favoured the retention of historic boundaries.

¹⁵⁴ *NPH*, diary extract, 30.11.1908, pp.7-8. The note of protest is reproduced and discussed in: Rudolf Neck, "Der Protest Franz Ferdinands gegen die ungarischen Verfassungsgarantien von 1907", *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 12 (Vienna, 1959), pp.433-437.

¹⁵⁵ Auffenberg, p.153; Polzer, declaration of Franz Ferdinand, 10.1911, appendix III, pp.432-433.

¹⁵⁶ Polzer, pp.48, 56, 60, 290-291.

¹⁵⁷ Polzer, pp.290-291; *RT*, II, 15.10.1915, p.92. Milan Hodža told Redlich in October 1915 that they had been taken to safety at the last minute by Bardolff, the head of Franz Ferdinand's military chancellery. The plans Polzer mentioned, however, had been found in the papers of Bardolff's predecessor Brosch, who had left the post in 1911, and fallen in battle in September 1914. In these, Polzer found only a plan for the change of monarch and some jottings by Brosch. In all likelihood, this was the aforementioned programme from 1910-1911.

¹⁵⁸ *KA*, *Nachlass Johann von Eichhoff*, B/874, 150, memoirs, "Von Miramar nach St. Germain", pp.1-2; *RP*, 28.3.1926, Eichhoff, "Die geplante Gründung der 'Vereinigten Staaten von Großösterreich'", pp.1-3. According to Eichhoff, all the texts of the basic laws and decrees were ready, and the men had been looking over the finished drafts in Miramar two months before Sarajevo.

¹⁵⁹ This concept had been popularized by another member of Franz Ferdinand's circle, Aurel Popovici, in his work *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich: politische Studien zur Lösung der nationalen Fragen und staatsrechtlichen Krisen in Österreich-Ungarn* (Leipzig, 1906).

¹⁶⁰ *NE*, 150, p.3; *RP*, 28.3.1926, pp.1-3; *RT*, II, 15.10.1915, p.92. Though Eichhoff mentioned mores and culture, language was the main marker of nationality; plebiscites were planned for disputed areas. He described the plan as "economic freedom of the individual – political freedom of the nations", and "mutual economic dependence – political independence".

¹⁶¹ Conrad, IV, pp.15-16.

Eichhoff had probably misinterpreted or exaggerated the finality of the archduke's commitment,¹⁶² and indeed, he was not alone in believing that Franz Ferdinand had settled on his project.¹⁶³ But although Franz Ferdinand's views constantly evolved – and may yet have changed again – they undoubtedly moulded Karl's outlook. In essence, uncle and nephew had no fundamental divergences of opinion. In fact, according to the former Hungarian interior minister József Kristóffy, Franz Ferdinand had told him – in May 1912 or in 1913, depending on the version – that he had a strong presage of death and had signed a deed with Karl, in which he agreed to respect his nephew's rights while the latter promised to execute his political testament.¹⁶⁴ On this occasion, Franz Ferdinand had apparently said: "I have fully initiated [Karl] into my ideas and educated him accordingly; he is honest and capable, and he will carry them out himself."¹⁶⁵ Similarly, the Budapest press had reported in January 1912 that Franz Ferdinand had once told the Hungarian prime minister Wekerle: "I will be able to make sure that the monarch grants no national concessions in military matters. You will never get anything from me, and I am already ensuring that my successor is of the same mind, because I am educating Otto's son exactly in that spirit".¹⁶⁶

The most enlightening *exposé* of Karl's views as heir is provided by the reflections he himself wrote down in late 1914.¹⁶⁷ At the time, he was still convinced of a victorious outcome to the war, which he thought would result in German supremacy in the west, and Austro-Hungarian in the east; he even expected to receive colonies from France and Britain.¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, his vision for the future was based on the revival of the Three Emperors' Alliance, with Germany and a "somewhat humbled Russia", and a

¹⁶² *NE*, 150, p.3; *RT*, II, 15.10.1915, p.92. He claimed that, in Miramare, Franz Ferdinand had become more amenable to national demarcation. Yet his claims do not match those of Hodža who, in October 1915, explained to Redlich the plan for Hungary – appointment of a Magyar general as prime minister, and of an interior minister and justice minister taken from the nationalities – but mentioned nothing of "United States".

¹⁶³ *RT*, II, 14.1.1917, p.259. The Hungarian politician Kristóffy believed that Franz Ferdinand had agreed to his draft for the creation of a "supra-state" (*Oberstaat*).

¹⁶⁴ Polzer, appendix II, p.432, reproducing an article by Kristóffy, *PLLA*, 10.1.1924; *RT*, II, 14.1.1917, p.259. In his article in the *Pester Lloyd*, Kristóffy gave his word of honour that this had occurred. He had also told Redlich the story in January 1917. The document was apparently deposited in the family archives, though it has never resurfaced.

¹⁶⁵ Polzer, appendix II, p.432; *RT*, II, 14.1.1917, p.258.

¹⁶⁶ *Die Zeit, Abendblatt*, 24.1.1912, p.3.

¹⁶⁷ *UR*, II, 3, *sine loco*, 13.10.1914-24.12.1914 and 24.12.1914, pp.49-86.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.81.

separation of Austro-Hungarian and Russian spheres of influence in the Balkans.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, he feared that an alliance solely with Germany would reduce the Habsburg Empire to the status of a “larger Bavaria”, while alienating her indigenous Slavs. He therefore thought the three-way union vital for the internal balance of the Monarchy, hypothesizing that pan-German and pan-Slav aspirations would thereby neutralize each other.¹⁷⁰ This alliance, he believed, would be so strong as to “rule the whole of Europe”.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, he wanted nothing to do with “fickle” Italy, from whom no gain was possible;¹⁷² he saw no expediency in allying with France, whose military strength was colossally weakened, and with whom Vienna had no direct connections; meanwhile, Berlin would accept an alliance with London only if Britain were thoroughly diminished, which would make the arrangement useless.¹⁷³ In all his calculations, Germany remained Austria-Hungary’s chief ally. Indeed, he was acutely aware of his country’s diplomatic isolation and knew that disloyalty on Berlin’s part would be disastrous for her.¹⁷⁴ In this respect, Karl had undeniably inherited the views of his uncle, who also desired a restoration of the Three Emperors’ Alliance, an understanding with Russia in the Balkans, the thwarting of Serb agitation through the good treatment of Austria-Hungary’s South Slavs, and the maintaining of Vienna’s independence from Berlin.¹⁷⁵

Domestically, Karl continued to be a sharp critic of dualism, referring to the “disastrous Compromise of 1867”.¹⁷⁶ He realized that the *Ausgleich* had denied the ethnic composition of the land and had allowed the subjugation and oppression of the Transleithanian South Slavs which, in turn, had dented their attachment to the Empire and encouraged them to squint over the border at a time when the Russian-sponsored Greater Serbian idea was emerging. Karl was pragmatic and understood the demographic reality of his Monarchy, and its implications: “Our future lies in Slavdom, since the Teutons are increasingly pushed back while the Slavs are multiplying like rabbits”; thus, he concluded: “we must direct our main attention to the Slavs”. As Karl expected the Central Powers to win a war which he considered a

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.79, 81; 85.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.86.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp.80, 85.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp.77-79.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.86.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.77.

¹⁷⁵ Czernin, p.51; Funder, pp.509-514; *Ö70*, 49, Kageneck-Wilhelm, 27.2.1913, report on a conversation with Franz Ferdinand the previous day.

¹⁷⁶ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, p.78.

fight for “dominance in Slavdom and in the Balkans”, he understood the necessity of consolidating the Habsburg position in the region by securing the loyalty of the Monarchy’s South Slavs and eliminating the natural lure of pan-Slavism (all the more so since, according to him, “every Slav is a pan-Slavist”).¹⁷⁷ To this end, he envisaged the removal of the dualist straitjacket and the creation of a South Slav empire consisting of the Banat, Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and sections of Albania, “partly united under Austrian leadership as the third state of the Monarchy, partly linked to the Monarchy as half-states, like Württemberg”. The re-establishment of the Three Emperors’ Alliance would then guarantee its viability and the stability of the region. He concluded: “That is the future of Austria and should be the guiding star of our policy.” On the other hand, he dismissed the erection of a tripartite structure through the unification of Russian Poland and Galicia with an archduke as governor: “Nonsense and chaos! We cannot find our way around our current situation so imagine then!”¹⁷⁸ Likewise, he dismissed “quadralism”, the creation of a fourth entity for the North Slavs, due to divisions between them, to the presence of German-inhabited territories between Czech and Polish lands, and to the Ukrainians’ aversion to the Poles.¹⁷⁹ There was no question of the realization of Bohemian state rights:¹⁸⁰ “Bohemia must remain a province as before”. However, he was potentially willing to concede a permanent crownland minister, a Bohemian Guard, and thought his coronation as King of Bohemia essential, as it was the “greatest wish of the Czechs”.¹⁸¹ At any rate, he dismissed any policy which reinforced the existing system by seeking “to Magyarize everything in Hungary, repress the Slavs and Germanize everything in Austria” as futile, dangerous and “stupid”.¹⁸² He expressed the necessity of fighting nationalism, “but at the same

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.74,78-80.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.74.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.80-81.

¹⁸⁰ Galandauer, *Šmeral*, pp.101-103. The state-rights dogma was based on the insistence that the historic Czech state (the lands of the crown of Saint Wenceslas: Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) had never ceased to exist and that its affiliation to the remainder of the Empire rested on an agreement between its representatives and the monarch. Though open to various interpretations, it supported federalization in relation to Vienna, but centralization within the Bohemian lands, namely towards the German-speaking territories. Great emphasis was thus placed on the provincial diets as opposed to the *Reichsrat*.

¹⁸¹ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, p.80.

¹⁸² Ibid., pp.78-80.

time of granting each nation within Austria the greatest possible national autonomy compatible with the unity of the Empire”.¹⁸³

No mention was made of federalism, though Karl’s champions later reinterpreted his views in this sense. Polzer wrote that, during the Bosnian annexation crisis, Karl had confided to him that a bleak future – indeed, a catastrophe – lay ahead for Austria-Hungary, which had departed too greatly from her federalist tradition. He apparently did not believe that his uncle’s plans at the time were sufficient to salvage the Monarchy.¹⁸⁴ He allegedly reiterated this belief to Zita in April 1911: “Dualism cannot be saved. Trialism is not just and anyway does not go far enough. The only solution is a truly federal one to give all the peoples a chance.” Still according to Zita, Karl wished to return to the old Habsburg way, prior to the centralizing measures of Maria Theresa. She even claimed that Karl, following the dictum according to which “a father makes no distinction between his children”, was prepared to give “all seventeen [sic] nationalities” of the Empire their individual freedom and – quite implausibly – that he had no objections to the formation of republics within the state, as long as the nations maintained their link with the Monarchy and their identity within the unitary state. She insisted that he never wavered in this guiding thought.¹⁸⁵ In reality, Karl’s ideas for domestic reform were far less radical.

Tellingly, when Pallavicini warned Karl in early 1915 that a drastic domestic change was required in Austria, he answered that he had been brought up in the strictly conservative tradition of his family and that all old rights and customs had to be maintained.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, even “the greatest possible national autonomy compatible with the unity of the Empire” did not necessarily imply federalization as imagined by its champions, let alone the creation of republics. The national autonomy he was willing to concede was cultural, economic and linguistic rather than political. Far from a devolution of centralized power, it represented an attempt to strengthen the dynasty and the unitary state by defusing national tensions and frustrating nationalist and irredentist tendencies. In fact, to Karl’s mind, it went hand in hand with openly centralizing measures. Berchtold summarized the heir’s views on the question after a conversation with him in April 1916: “no repression or gagging of the nationalities,

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.80.

¹⁸⁴ *NPH*, p.7.

¹⁸⁵ Brook-Shepherd, pp.38-39.

¹⁸⁶ *NB*, K6, 18.2.1915; *RT*, II, 21.1.1915, p.8.

free development with every possible protection of their individuality, economic interests and languages but adherence to state necessities, namely the introduction of German as language of state.¹⁸⁷ The reorganization of the school system must constitute the starting point.”¹⁸⁸ (However, three months later, he told General Alfred Krauß that it was impossible to impose German as the language of state in Austria as “we are not German and two states cannot have the same language”.¹⁸⁹ Instead, German could only be established as “language of communication”.¹⁹⁰ Though he had possibly changed his mind since speaking to Berchtold, he was perhaps more likely reacting defiantly to Krauß’s strident pan-Germanism.)

Karl assuredly wanted to dismantle the Empire’s dualist structure but his substitute plan for trialism was a response to the South Slav and Balkan questions, and not intended as a means of federalizing the Empire. His desire to see Bohemia remain unchanged and his opposition to trialism with Poland or quadralism with the North Slavs revealed the limits of his federalist ambitions. Here, he simply hoped that national autonomy would protect the Ukrainians from Polish domination,¹⁹¹ and lessen the intensity of the conflict in the Bohemian lands – a few sops would cushion the blow for disappointed Czechs. Greater Polish aspirations were simply disregarded. Overall, therefore, Karl seemed not to have any concrete or far-sighted programme in these matters. Quite obviously, he was not acquainted with Franz Ferdinand’s last plans. In any case, it was neither man’s intention to dilute the Monarchy’s central power, on the contrary. In the alleged agreement concluded between the two, Karl had promised, “in the event of his becoming emperor first, to recover the rights and possessions of the Monarchy and the army which have been thrown away”.¹⁹²

Incidentally, the thoughts which Karl expressed on the various nationalities of the Empire in his notes showed that a father could in fact prefer some of his children to others. Karl had a good overall opinion of the South Slavs, whom he considered historically and fundamentally Austrophile, and only recently led astray as a result of Magyar repression.¹⁹³ Similarly, he considered the vast majority of Ukrainians to be

¹⁸⁷ “*Staatssprache*”.

¹⁸⁸ *NBT*, K5, 2.4.1916.

¹⁸⁹ Krauß, p.79.

¹⁹⁰ “*Verständigungssprache*”.

¹⁹¹ *UR*, II, 13.10.1914, p.67. He wrote: “Expiation [...] after the war should be in the form of Polish civil servants dangling from the gallows”.

¹⁹² Polzer, appendix II, p.432.

¹⁹³ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, p.81.

admirably *schwarzgelb* and *kaisertreu* – the “Tyroleans of the east” – and ascribed their wartime lapses into treachery to the brutality of military persecution, supported by the Polish administration.¹⁹⁴ Small wonder, he thought, that some of them had become traitors for money, since the unjust, corrupt and Polonizing imperial bureaucracy of Galicia treated them “as animals”. Certainly, Karl was not enamoured of his Polish subjects; to his mind, they had never been Austrophile, only ever Polish.¹⁹⁵ He believed – not unfairly – that all Poles, whether in Austria, Russia or Germany, had one single idea: to restore the old Kingdom of Poland. As the outbreak of war had convinced them of the inevitable realization of this dream, they now intended to achieve it, irrespective of the winner.¹⁹⁶ As a result, Karl virulently opposed any “Greater Poland” policy or Polish buffer state, in the hope that Austrian Poles would then remain loyal to the Habsburgs, since they were better off under their rule than in Germany or Russia.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, he categorically rejected the annexation of Polish-inhabited Russian territory, as he thought the acquisition of “more Polacks” the greatest possible misfortune.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, he considered the Romanians the biggest worry for the Empire, as Romania’s strength had them instinctively ogling across the border. Of the Italians he said little. Nor was he particularly loquacious on the subject of the Czechs. He did not believe the current Russophile movement to be deep-rooted in the population but recommended its energetic repression.¹⁹⁹ Karl was quite plainly exasperated by the pettiness and parochialism of Cisleithanian national politics, especially of the Czech-German conflict: “the representatives of the people, worried daily about their ten florins, hold speeches as to whether *zde* or *hier*²⁰⁰ should be written above a urinal in northern Bohemia, but do not care two hoots if the army, the prestige of the state, perishes”.²⁰¹ (Franz Ferdinand had thought the same and had boasted that, given full powers, he would put Bohemia in order in twenty-four hours.)²⁰² He felt that the youth of the nation was now paying with its blood for their stupidity, adding: “These bastard deputies should be placed on the front line”.²⁰³ Karl

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.84-85.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.81.

¹⁹⁶ UR, II, 3, 24.12.1914, pp.73-74.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., pp.80, 82.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.77. “*Polaken*”.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp.80-81.

²⁰⁰ The Czech and German for “here”, respectively.

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp.76-77.

²⁰² Ö70, 49, Kageneck-Wilhelm, 27.2.1913.

²⁰³ Ibid., p.77. “*Mistviecher*”.

naturally disliked nationalism and loathed national politics; he was particularly contemptuous of the middle-class intelligentsia, the “riffraff” present in every nation of the Empire who misled the “stupid populace”.²⁰⁴

Furthermore, Karl had apparently inherited a degree of his uncle’s aversion to the Magyars. Reporting to him on a trip to Budapest in late February 1911 – during which he had striven to follow his instructions – he wrote of his boredom and despair in the Hungarian capital. He dismissed those present at the Court Ball as “inelegant and dreadfully horrible” and complained about the atrociously grating music of the “wretched gypsies”. He also boasted that he had spoken Hungarian – a couple of sentences at that – only to those who had not addressed him in German. He concluded: “During those three days I really recognized the veracity of the old saying: ‘Vienna is Vienna, Pest is pestilential.’”²⁰⁵ His tone was so forcibly negative, however, that he may simply have been indulging his uncle, whose creed was that every great Habsburg monarch had to battle with the Hungarians and bend them to his will.²⁰⁶ Whether this was the case, or whether his views later changed, Karl never evinced such petty anti-Magyar sentiments during his reign. Overall, in fact, his preferences and prejudices appear innocuous in comparison to the rabid hatreds of his uncle; and importantly, they were virtually unknown. In any case, they did not undermine Karl’s understanding of the Habsburg monarch’s supranational mission. He knew his country was a “large conglomerate of nations” whose survival as a Great Power required a “great, common goal”.²⁰⁷ He bluntly accepted that Austria-Hungary’s future belonged to Slavdom but his outlook – inevitably for a Habsburg ruler – contained at its root an irremediable German bias: “We are on the one hand a German land according to our civilization and half-Slav according to our inhabitants”.²⁰⁸ In mid-July 1916, Seeckt summarized his *Weltanschauung*: “Sound views, very outspokenly German-minded and still without any discernible fondness for the Poles and the Czechs, from which his little-respected late uncle probably dissuaded him”.²⁰⁹ A few months later, the general reassured Ludendorff that Karl did not pander to the overwhelming Slav influence in Austria and was imbued with the

²⁰⁴ *UR*, II, 3, 13.10.1914, 24.12.1914, pp.67, 85. “*Gesindel*”.

²⁰⁵ *NFF*, Karl-Franz Ferdinand, 24.2.1911; undated letter (from the content, written on 27.2.1911). “*Wien ist Wien und Pest ist ein Nest*”.

²⁰⁶ Czernin, pp.37-38; *RT*, II, 15.10.1915, p.93.

²⁰⁷ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, p.79.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

²⁰⁹ Seeckt, p.406.

necessity of German preponderance.²¹⁰ (A year on, however, disappointed by Karl's actions in power and perceived amenability to outside influences, he amended his earlier judgement, and confessed that he had thought Karl's repeatedly expressed conviction about the necessity of German and Magyar predominance "more strongly grounded".)²¹¹ In this case, Karl had perhaps played up to his German commander's expectations. Yet, shortly before his accession to the throne, Karl allegedly uttered incautious words on this topic while in Teschen, which found their way into the press: "The Germans should act with self-confidence and pride. They should stress what they have done for the state during this war and before. They should express their satisfaction about the fact that the German nation was once again able to prove its old mission as a state-preserving element and that it has been shown that true Germanism, dynastic endeavours and factors which preserve the state are one."²¹² The authorities had to intervene promptly to prevent any further publication of these declarations, before ordering the release of a press statement indicating that Karl had not been in Teschen for some time and had made no address there.²¹³ Nevertheless, Karl's faux pas was relayed in French newspapers and held up as proof of the heir's unshakeable pro-German sympathies.²¹⁴ Paradoxically, shortly before, certain German *Reichsrat* members had been up in arms since Karl had purportedly remarked that the Czechs were Austria's best protection against German predominance.²¹⁵ (For unsubstantiated reasons – perhaps simply due to his moderation in national matters – Karl was often accused of harbouring pro-Czech sympathies.)²¹⁶

Karl's preparation for office was undoubtedly deficient, but he was not without blame in the matter. He considered himself a soldier above all,²¹⁷ and regarded military

²¹⁰ Seeckt, p.472.

²¹¹ Hans Meier-Welcker, "Die Beurteilung der politischen Lage in Österreich-Ungarn im Sommer 1917", *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 2 (1968), Seeckt-Hindenburg, 22.7.1917, pp.99-104 (full draft); Seeckt, pp.574-576 (extracts). The part of the letter concerning Karl was not sent.

²¹² NA, *Presidium pražského mistodržitelství 1911-1920*, K5091, 36374. Originally excised by the censor from the *Deutsche Volksstimme* of 14.10, it then appeared on 26.10 in the *Ascher Zeitung*, before being picked up by the *Prager Tagblatt* on 6.11 (*Abend-Ausgabe*, p.2).

²¹³ *PM1911-1920*, K5090, 34461; 34837; 34918.

²¹⁴ KA, *Kriegsüberwachungsamt*, K173, 93123, 29.12.1916.

²¹⁵ *Ö95G*, 4, report by Paul Goldmann, the Berlin correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse*, to the foreign office in Berlin, on his time in Austria between August and September 1916, 26.9.1916.

²¹⁶ *NK*, K2, 14.6.1915; Nowak, *Weg*, p.225. Archduchess Isabella for instance had heard that he was "too Czech", and felt he needed a mentor.

²¹⁷ *PA*, I, K504, Mérey-Czernin, 27.12.1917. Regarding the respective performances of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies, Karl snapped to the diplomat Mérey in December 1917: "Only we soldiers understand that".

duties more highly than civilian ones. After the outbreak of war, he had wished to join the fight with his regiment though acknowledging that, as heir to the throne, he could scarcely afford to be made prisoner.²¹⁸ But he continued to hope for a front-line posting. In July 1915, he asked to take over a corps, but Franz Joseph ordered him to stay in Vienna to learn about affairs of state.²¹⁹ In February 1916, Lieutenant Colonel Kundmann noted in his diary that Karl was angry not to have been assigned a command.²²⁰ When finally sent to the Italian Front, Karl told Burián that this was entirely in accordance with his own wishes and that, although he realized the importance of being in Vienna, he felt it his duty to take part in the great battles ahead.²²¹ Subsequently, as mentioned before, the prospect of heading a victorious military campaign in Romania had outweighed his urge to be trained in the business of state.²²²

Devoted as he was to his great-uncle and to the army, Karl was not ideally placed to recognize the disservice which the former and his advisers – the head of his private office Schießl, the chief of his military chancellery Baron Arthur von Bolfras,²²³ and his *aide-de-camp*²²⁴ Count Eduard Paar – had done him as heir. These aged men – at the outbreak of war eighty-three, seventy, seventy-six and seventy-six respectively – were staid, stale,²²⁵ resistant to change and protective of their powers. Consequently they ignored, consciously or not, the urgency of preparing Karl for his future role. In all likelihood, they were relieved to escape the vexatious interference they had endured on the part of Franz Ferdinand.²²⁶ As Hohenlohe remarked, those in Schönbrunn feared him even in death.²²⁷ Their eagerness to banish the spectre of the former heir and to avoid the establishment of a shadow government probably contributed to Karl's complete exclusion from the fateful decisions of the July Crisis²²⁸ and subsequent confinement to military duties, often far from Vienna.²²⁹

²¹⁸ Conrad, IV, pp.410-411.

²¹⁹ NK, K2, 15.7.1915. Conrad fully agreed and supported his initiation in all government matters.

²²⁰ NK, K2, 14.2; 16.2.1916.

²²¹ Burián, pp.242-243.

²²² NBT, K5, 24.9; 22.10; 23.10.1916.

²²³ *Militärkanzlei seiner Majestät*.

²²⁴ *General-Adjutant*.

²²⁵ NBT, K5, 24.6.1916. Karl remarked to Berchtold that Franz Joseph was fresher than Bolfras and Paar (and even Montenuovo).

²²⁶ NB, K6, 10.3.1915; Polzer, p.56.

²²⁷ Chlumecky, p.53.

²²⁸ Komjáthy, 1, 2, 7.7.1914, 19.7.1914, pp.141, 150-151. Karl was not present at the crown councils of 7.7 and 19.7.1914.

(Karl frequently returned, though chiefly to see Zita and his children – his fourth was born in May 1916.)²³⁰ Franz Joseph had a poor track record in grooming his successors, though in his defence, he had perhaps wished to keep his great-nephew untainted by the decision to go to war; and he certainly wished to see him serve and gain the respect of the armed forces. His aides, more prosaically, were simply fearful of losing their influence. The journalist Hugo Ganz told Redlich in mid-1915 that when Franz Joseph had started to discuss military matters directly with Karl, Bolfras and Paar had offered their resignation in protest.²³¹ Certainly, their attitude to Karl's education appeared remarkably casual. For instance, a few days after Franz Ferdinand's assassination, Bolfras had told Conrad – who had stressed the need for civilian rather than military duties – that there was still time for this.²³² Among the Austro-Hungarian hierarchy, Conrad appeared to show the most concern about Karl's lack of training in statecraft, though he most likely wanted him out of his way.²³³

To be sure, Karl's time at army headquarters was unproductive, unfulfilling and of no educational value.²³⁴ And for many months, the situation remained unchanged. When Leopold von Chlumecky suggested to Hohenlohe that he do everything in his power to have Karl called to Vienna and trained by experienced statesmen, he responded: "That is impossible! I would have to wade through too much dirt to achieve that".²³⁵ Despite improvements in mid-1915, by January of the following year, Karl still only had a head of household,²³⁶ the plodding Prince Zdenko Lobkowitz, by his side. Montenuovo, though he ostensibly lamented this state of affairs, and had thought of Berchtold for the post of lord chamberlain as early as January 1915, appeared in no rush to organize the appointment. The former foreign minister was finally offered the position in January 1916 but although he accepted it almost immediately, he began only two months later.²³⁷ (Lobkowitz could apparently not be made lord chamberlain because the holder of the post had to be a privy

²²⁹ *NMö*, K1, 1-2, p.131b; Kray, pp.110-111. This view is expounded in identical wording in Möller's late 1936 manuscript and Kray's 1937 book.

²³⁰ Seeckt, pp.136, 437; Burián, p.240; Conrad, V, p.747; *NBT*, K5, 9.4; 1.10.1916. When away, he left the dinner table every day at 21.00 to talk to her on the telephone for thirty minutes. Burián did, however, note that he used his Viennese stays to inform himself on diplomatic matters.

²³¹ *RT*, II, 29.6.1915, p.66.

²³² Conrad, IV, 2.7.1914, p.107.

²³³ *NK*, K2, 15.7.1915.

²³⁴ Burián, p.240.

²³⁵ Chlumecky, pp.52-53.

²³⁶ *Kammervorsteher*.

²³⁷ *NBT*, K5, 11.1; 2.2.1915; 16.1; 21.1; 22.1; 23.2; 23.3.1916.

councillor and this title would have made him rise above Montenuovo, since his family was of a higher rank – this was, it seems, unacceptable.)²³⁸ Berchtold, a charming and distinguished *mondain*, was, however, old-fashioned, indecisive and uniquely uninterested in domestic affairs.²³⁹ Unfortunately for Karl, who only devoted a limited amount of time to non-military matters, this was the man in charge of his education in the eight months preceding his accession to the throne.

For all these shortcomings, Karl was nevertheless level-headed, dispassionate, pragmatic, able, perceptive and keen to learn. The not infrequent contradictions in his views reflected partly their ongoing maturation and his personal uncertainty, but also his flexibility and open-mindedness (not to mention his oft-noted habit of simply agreeing with his interlocutor).²⁴⁰ But the war undoubtedly exerted a decisive influence on his outlook. As the conflict dragged on, he understood that irrevocable changes made a return to the old order impossible. In particular, he knew that a degree of democratization and liberalization was inevitable. In March 1916, he told Baernreither: “After the war, one cannot screw things back as Metternich did, because that led to 1848.”²⁴¹

Understandably for someone who had never seen battle and whose beloved relative had just been murdered, Karl had at first eagerly supported the war. Rumour had it that during Franz Ferdinand’s wake in Artstetten, an insouciant Karl had declared: “Hopefully now, for once, there will finally be war.”²⁴² Even as the conflict progressed, Karl was adamant that his country had not been responsible for its outbreak. In an interview with J.T. Roche, he defended Austria-Hungary’s original action against Serbia as “necessary to protect elementary national rights and to put an end to the outrageous agitation” which had reached its pinnacle in Sarajevo. He squarely blamed Serbia and Russia for starting the war and maintained that Austria-Hungary and Germany were fighting for purely defensive reasons.²⁴³ Likewise, on the

²³⁸ *NB*, K6, 15.3.1916. Berchtold, on the other hand, could be appointed without outranking Montenuovo.

²³⁹ Hugo Hantsch, *Leopold Graf Berchtold, Grandseigneur und Staatsmann*, (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1963), II, pp.823-824. Even at the height of the Monarchy’s domestic unrest, his diaries overflowed with depictions of high society.

²⁴⁰ *NBT*, K5, 27.8.1916; Cramon, pp.90-91. For instance, he told Franz Joseph that he would gladly stay posted longer under Seeckt, much to the emperor’s satisfaction.

²⁴¹ *RT*, II, 30.3.1916, pp.154-155; *NB*, K6, 15.3.1916.

²⁴² Anonymous, p.174, 181; *GH*, I, pp.278-279; *KA*, *NMö*, 1, II, p.315.

²⁴³ *NFPM*, 5.7.1915, pp.3-4.

basis of occasional remarks by Karl, Werkmann concluded that he had full comprehension for Franz Joseph's predicament during the July Days.²⁴⁴

What is more, as the plans he sketched in late 1914 showed, Karl had firmly believed that Austria-Hungary would rapidly emerge victorious. By the time he came to the throne, however, his faith in victory was shaken. By January 1915, Karl had let it be known in conversation that Austria-Hungary could probably conclude peace with Russia on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum*.²⁴⁵ Colonel Theodor von Zeynek recounted that, that spring, Karl had remarked over dinner with army commanders that he did not understand why they were trying so hard "since everything was in vain, the war could not be won, and that he himself would be happy if he retained a palace in Vienna".²⁴⁶ If true, this was probably no more than an off-the-cuff remark and a reflection of Karl's disenchantment with his country's military leadership. By the summer of 1916, however, his confidence was truly broken, and he sincerely hoped for a swift end to the war.²⁴⁷ In June, Berchtold – also despondent about the prospects of the war he had helped start – noted that his tutee was war-weary.²⁴⁸ Karl had even begun to doubt the endurance and fighting ability of his own army, telling his lord chamberlain: "The troops are no longer holding out! Curiously, only ever ours."²⁴⁹ He blamed the high command for their change of spirit and now considered the situation "critical, very critical".²⁵⁰ At the same time, Seeckt remarked that Karl had a "tremendous yearning for peace".²⁵¹ The following month, Karl warned Berchtold that the Monarchy's manpower would be exhausted by March 1917 and that peace would have to be concluded by then. He also asked if anything was in preparation in this respect.²⁵² When he met Wilhelm in October, he made clear that he thought peace with Russia was more likely to come through mutual exhaustion than absolute victory, and urged him to accelerate steps towards a peace move.²⁵³ Therefore when, in November, the Central Powers judged the military situation

²⁴⁴ Werkmann, p.82.

²⁴⁵ NB, K6, 29.1.1915.

²⁴⁶ Theodor Ritter von Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabkorps erinnert sich*, ed. Peter Broucek (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2009), p.228.

²⁴⁷ Zeynek, p.253; Werkmann, p.22.

²⁴⁸ NBT, K5, 22.6.1916.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.7.1916.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 1.8.1916.

²⁵¹ Seeckt, 8.7.1916, p.400.

²⁵² NBT, K5, 21.8.1916; K7, Berchtold-Czernin, 2.9.1916.

²⁵³ NBG, Karl's handwritten report for Franz Joseph on his conversation with Wilhelm in Pleß, 9.10.1916.

favourable enough to consider a peace offer, in the belief that it would not be considered a sign of weakness, Karl approved the idea enthusiastically.²⁵⁴ But he thought even the terms originally suggested by Burián “too demanding regarding territorial conquests”.²⁵⁵ (In the end, Berlin ensured that it contained no terms at all.)²⁵⁶ Still as heir, he sent Pope Benedict XV a draft of the offer and pleaded with him to use all his influence on the belligerents to help end the war.²⁵⁷

By then, Karl was fully aware that he was inheriting – in Franz Ferdinand’s words – a “crown of thorns”.²⁵⁸ Fear began to set in. After a long conversation with him in August, Seeckt noted that he was “full of the holy shiver before the greatness of the task which could face him tomorrow, aware of the thousands of weaknesses of his monarchy and apparently without a real man of confidence”.²⁵⁹ His unhappy posting on the Russian Front brought increasing anxiety and despondency, and in late September he had to ask Franz Joseph for a holiday to spare his nerves.²⁶⁰ To Wilhelm, he depicted the domestic mood as uncertain and unfamiliar, since a firm hand was lacking.²⁶¹ Shortly after, he was further shaken by Stürgkh’s assassination – as Seeckt wrote at the time: “he shudders before all the burdens and dangers of his future office”.²⁶² Having accompanied him to the train station on 11 November when he finally returned to Vienna, the German general wrote: “It was very hard for me to leave him alone in the night and into his dark fate – so young and so alone – nothing but lackeys around him, nothing but stiff servants in front of him. Nobody who tells him the truth”.²⁶³ Yet despite his foibles, the partial neglect he had endured and the cheerless circumstances surrounding his accession to the throne, Karl was – rightly – not entirely fatalistic about his prospects as a ruler and the future of his Empire.

²⁵⁴ Burián, pp.201-202.

²⁵⁵ *NBT*, K5, 14.11; 19.11.1916; *PA*, I, K524, Burián-G. Hohenlohe, 7.11; German embassy in Vienna to Burián, 9.11; draft of combined Austrian and German demands, 11.11.1916; notes on negotiations in Berlin on 15-16.11, signed in Vienna, 18.11.1916.

²⁵⁶ *NFPA*, 12.12.1916, pp.1-2.

²⁵⁷ *UR*, II, 22, pp.145-146; Burián, pp.240-241. The letter is undated, so it is unclear which draft he sent. In any case, prior to this, he had played no active part in diplomacy.

²⁵⁸ Funder, p.496; *RT*, I, 27.1.1906, p.177. In 1906, he had apparently told an aristocrat during a hunt: “I am the unluckiest of men because I have to become Emperor of Austria”.

²⁵⁹ Seeckt, p.418.

²⁶⁰ Seeckt, p.465; *NBT*, K5, 20.9; 1.10; *NK*, K2, 26.9.1916.

²⁶¹ *W20G*, 5, note from Wilhelm on his conversation with Karl and Berchtold in Pleß, 9.10.1916, undated (initialled by Bethmann, 11.10.1916).

²⁶² Seeckt, p.486; *RT*, II, 29.12.1916, pp.252-253. In December, Karl’s childhood acquaintance Paul Thun told Redlich that Karl had been scared of the change of throne.

²⁶³ Seeckt, p.497.

CHAPTER II

THE INHERITANCE

The struggle for power in wartime Austria

When Karl ascended the throne,¹ the military situation of the Central Powers was not unfavourable. In the west, the Germans had just withstood the Somme Offensive – albeit at considerable cost – and in the east, thanks largely to their own efforts, they and their Austro-Hungarian ally had occupied Russian Poland. Admittedly, the Dual Monarchy’s position was more problematic, as Russia had seized eastern Galicia and the Bukovina during the Brusilov Offensive, while the Italians, who already held small parts of the Trentino and of the Littoral, had captured Gorizia during the Sixth Battle of the Isonzo. However, Austria-Hungary had repelled the three subsequent Italian attempts at a breakthrough and was now safe for the winter. Both Russia and Italy were in any case drained. The original enemy, Serbia, had been beaten, while Romania, the latest, was in disarray, leading to the capture of Bucharest on 6 December and the occupation of Wallachia by the Central Powers (said to promise vast new supplies of foodstuffs).²

Nevertheless, Germany and Austria-Hungary had counted on early victories and knew that time was running against them, despite the exhaustion of the Entente. The Allied blockade continued to weigh on them,³ and though their armies were still unbroken, they were increasingly lacking men and horses.⁴ Austria-Hungary, in particular, had suffered irreplaceable losses in 1914, which, in the words of her future chief of general staff, “had done the army out of the largest part of active officers, of men and of well-trained reservists”. Indeed, by February 1917, Austria-Hungary had used up over three million men and had only 500,000 replacement troops.⁵ Even though her army remained a capable fighting force, boosted by the success of the

¹ As Emperor Karl I of Austria, King Karl IV of Hungary and, theoretically, King Karl III of Bohemia.

² *NFPM*, 7.12, p.3; 8.12.1916, p.4.

³ *Arz*, p.144; *Landwehr*, p.16; Gustav Gratz and Richard Schüller, *Der wirtschaftliche Zusammenbruch Österreich-Ungarns* (Vienna/New Haven, 1930), p.196.

⁴ *Landwehr*, p.18.

⁵ *Arz*, pp.141-142. 14,520 officers and 562,378 men dead; 18,726 officers and 1,342,697 men missing or made prisoner; of the 3.3 million men wounded or ill, 200,000 died and 1 million remained unable to fight.

Romanian campaign,⁶ its outlook was unpromising. What is more, Germany's succour in the east had considerably increased Austria-Hungary's military and economic dependence on her ally, not to mention her moral indebtedness. It was symptomatic of Vienna's weakness that, in September 1916, a joint high command was established under the leadership of Emperor Wilhelm (though, in reality, Hindenburg and Ludendorff were in control).⁷ Karl was displeased, though the arrangement stayed in place after his accession.⁸

On top of this, the Austro-Hungarian high command often appeared at least as concerned by the situation in the hinterland and, from the outset, had expended considerable efforts on fighting the designated enemy within. Even before the declaration of war on Serbia, emergency laws had started to be issued through Paragraph Fourteen of the constitution (which gave the government full executive power in the absence of parliament). As a result of the raft of decrees promulgated in late July 1914, the army high command had been granted the powers of civilian administration in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia to the south,⁹ and in a very broadly defined hinterland behind the Eastern Front, englobing Galicia, the Bukovina, much of Silesia and several districts in Moravia.¹⁰ Throughout Cisleithania, a wide range of criminal offences was placed under military jurisdiction,¹¹ civil liberties were suspended¹² and strict control of communications introduced.¹³ Additionally, the self-governing municipalities were ordered to cooperate in enforcing wartime regulations, under threat of imprisonment for public servants found in dereliction of this duty.¹⁴ In late August, trial by jury was suspended in the entire Austrian half of the Empire.¹⁵ On top of this, a secretive and tentacular war surveillance office – the

⁶ *Arz*, p.141.

⁷ *Arz*, pp.126-128.

⁸ *NBT*, K5, 1.10.1916; Nowak, *Weg*, p.214; *Arz*, p.128; *MKSM*, K1251, 69-2/10-15. Wilhelm retained the final say in cases of dispute.

⁹ *Reichsgesetzblatt 1914*, Nr.153, 25.7.1914, p.815.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Nr.170, 31.7.1914, p.891.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Nr.156 and Nr.164, 25.7.1914, pp.821, 837.

¹² *Ibid.*, Nr.158, 25.7.1914, p.825.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Nr.167, 25.7.1914, p.843; *KÜA*, K173, 93158. As a result, between 28.7.1914 and 31.12.1916, almost eight million telegrams were handled by the censor (12,506 every weekday on average; 84% of these in German), though only under 0.5% were blocked.

¹⁴ *RGBl. 1914*, Nr.154, 25.7.1914, p.817.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Nr.228, 29.8.1914, p.937.

Kriegsüberwachungsamt – was set up under the aegis of the ministry of war to “coordinate all the agencies necessary for the internal control of the state”.¹⁶

Mobilization had gone smoothly throughout Austria,¹⁷ but as soon as the first signs of waning enthusiasm, of hostility to the war or incidences of treacherous activities emerged, particularly within the Slav and Latin populations of the Empire, the high command – nominally headed by Archduke Friedrich but effectively controlled by Conrad – requested the further expansion of its powers at the expense of the political, administrative and judicial authorities. Its primary aim was the subjugation of a perceived fifth column. In large parts of the Empire, it was able to execute this policy unhindered, as many Poles, Ukrainians and South Slavs could testify.¹⁸ Enforcement was ruthless and often indiscriminate. In Conrad’s own words: “Better to arrest a hundred people too many than one person too few”.¹⁹ Even outside the areas it controlled, the army often acted with little regard for civilian authority. In Styria, for example, in the early days of the war, local commanders arbitrarily arrested many Slovenes – particularly clergymen – accused of Serbophile and pan-Slav sympathies, with neither the agreement nor the knowledge of the local governor.²⁰ Subsequently, on the day of the Italian declaration of war, the military was able to add Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Salzburg, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and the Littoral to its dominions.²¹ Given the command of the South-Western Front, Archduke Eugen was quickly convinced of the disloyalty of the Slovene intelligentsia (in contrast to the loyal peasantry), whose aims to unite all South Slavs inside and outside Austria he thought incompatible with the Austrian state idea and as dangerous as Italian irredentism.²² Asked to investigate, Lieutenant-General Karl Scotti, the head of the Tenth Army, castigated the civilian authorities for their laxness, and requested that the leaders of the dominant Pan-Slovene People’s Party²³ – *Reichsrat* member and governor of Carniola Ivan Šušteršič, and diet deputy Janez Evangelist Krek – be

¹⁶ Josef Redlich, *Austrian War Government* (New Haven, 1929), pp.84-85.

¹⁷ *NB*, K6, 5.9.1914.

¹⁸ *KA, Feldakten, Armeeoberkommando, Operationsabteilung*, K8, Op.Nr.5078, Stürgkh-KM, 17.11.1914; *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, pp.611-612; *RT*, II, 23.8.1916, p.197.

¹⁹ Conrad, IV, Conrad-Berchtold, 28.7.1914, p.135.

²⁰ Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Vienna, *Ministerratspräsidium*, K270, 383; “Koroščevo predavanje”, p.221; Funder, pp.565-566. For a detailed treatment of the subject, see: Martin Moll, *Kein Burgfrieden, Der deutsch-slowenische Nationalitätenkonflikt in der Steiermark 1900-1918* (Innsbruck, 2007).

²¹ *RGBl. 1915*, Nr.133, 23.5.1915, p.221.

²² *MRP*, K291, 5932, Eugen-Koerber, 9.11.1916.

²³ *Vseslovenska ljudska stranka*.

locked up on trumped-up charges of fraud and embezzlement. In his view, this was the easiest way to make them “disappear from public life” without “offering them the possibility of playing the comfortable role of “political martyrs”.”²⁴

Most frustratingly for the high command, since it considered the Czechs among the most dangerous and least reliable nations of the Monarchy, Bohemia and most of Moravia remained outside the militarized zone. There, it had greater difficulty in imposing its will but nevertheless proceeded as energetically as it could. As a result of the extension of its jurisdiction, innumerable offences ended up before military courts, which often handed out exemplary sentences. Yet although men could be judged on the spot and executed simply for distributing propaganda flyers or making a speech,²⁵ a great many cases were simply the result of careless public-house talk reminiscent of *The Good Soldier Švejk*.²⁶ Should the wrong person overhear, any casual remark against the state, the army, the dynasty or Germany, in favour of the enemy or in support of peace – whether out of suffering, weariness, genuine defiance or idle bluster – could result in arrest. Even waving at prisoners of war or having one’s photo taken with them could land the culprit before a military tribunal.²⁷ Naturally, the Czechs were targeted with particular zeal (though at least one man faced charges for having complained about Czech desertions to the enemy).²⁸ Seemingly trivial actions could trigger prosecution. For instance, sixteen local officials in Radnice were tried for *lèse-majesté* for supposedly failing to take part in high mass on the occasion of the emperor’s birthday and name day in 1914.²⁹ (Admittedly, any deficient patriotism was treated severely regardless of nationality.)³⁰ Any sign of the red, blue and white Slavic tricolour – deliberate or not, whether in a shop window, on an advertisement, a matchbox³¹ or a handkerchief – was usually enough to warrant a few nights in jail and sometimes led to prosecution.³²

²⁴ *MRP*, K291, 5932, Scotti-Eugen, 15.10.1916.

²⁵ *Ö101*, 35, extract from the *Prager Tagblatt*, 2.12.1914; *NB*, K6, extract from a newspaper in Mährisch Ostrau, 30.12.1914.

²⁶ Numerous individual examples are listed in: Libuše Otáhalová, *Souhrnná hlášení presidia pražského místodržitelství o protistátní, protirakouské a protiválečné činnosti v Čechách 1915-1918* (Prague, 1957).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1079, 1464, 1465, pp.136, 181.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1323, p.164.

²⁹ *MRP*, K290, 5739. They were acquitted but the authorities appealed. Re-tried, they were acquitted again.

³⁰ *SH*, 1093, pp.138-139.

³¹ Collage of “suspicious” matchboxes in: *PMV/R*, K161, 17429.

³² *SH*, 1055, 1077, 1087, 1097, 1114, 1121, 1150, 1153, 1175, 1259, 1299, 1309, 1333, pp.133, 136, 138-139, 141-142, 145, 148, 157, 162, 163, 165.

Many Czechs felt that the military authorities were making the most of incidents involving them in order to capitalize on these during and after the war.³³ Men such as Conrad had long believed that only a purge of the Empire's untrustworthy elements – Slavs in particular – could save it. Others settled more personal scores. General Eugen von Scheure, the military commander in Leitmeritz (responsible for the northern half of Bohemia), himself a German from Prague, summed up his views in a plea to the high command for further repression: “The time has now definitely come to sweep away all that is bad and rotten with an iron broom.”³⁴ (In the same report, he boasted that when receiving a deputation of Czech politicians on a local matter, he had lectured them on Czech disloyalty and told them: “Do you know, I could safely bet all the gold in the world that since humanity has existed, no nation has produced such contemptible, wretched characters as the Czech nation.”)³⁵

Yet despite unrelenting pressure, the military did not succeed in gaining full power throughout the Bohemian lands, chiefly due to the opposition of the Austrian prime minister. Stürgkh, though he had sent a confidential circular in July to his regional chiefs ordering them to bow to all the needs of the army and to show implacable severity towards the enemies of the state,³⁶ refused to accede to the military's wishes. Though an exponent of authoritarian rule, he thought its proposed course of action in the Bohemian lands damaging to the Monarchy's domestic and foreign interests.³⁷ As a result, he tenaciously opposed army encroachments and stood by Prince Franz Thun-Hohenstein, the Czech-friendly governor of Bohemia. Both men were deeply concerned by the effect of military repression on the Czech population.³⁸ The powers of the civilian state administration had also increased with the war and they deemed these sufficient to counter internal threats. Stürgkh's strategy was facilitated by the fact that he had already done away with potential political opposition, having closed the Bohemian Diet and prorogued the *Reichsrat*. Rigid press censorship and strict control of public activity completed the muzzling.³⁹

³³ MKSM, K1240, 28-3/1-3, MKP-KM, 19.7.1916.

³⁴ MKSM, K1240, 28-3/1-3, 30.5.1916.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ AVA, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, K28, MRZ32, ministerial council, 27.7.1914.

³⁷ MRP, K270, 6434, Stürgkh-Thun, 12.12.1914.

³⁸ NA, *Ministerská rada presidium/Rakousko*, K18, 84, Thun-Stürgkh, 20.1.1915; Stürgkh-Georgi, 22.1.1915.

³⁹ AOK, *OpAbt*, K17, Op.Nr.7017, Stürgkh-AOK, 8.2.1915; Ö86Nr.2, 20, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 17.1.1915.

In any case, the political parties of Cisleithania – including the Austrian Social Democrats⁴⁰ – were overwhelmingly supportive of the decision to go to war,⁴¹ and agreed to a domestic truce, the famed *Burgfrieden*. As long as the war lasted, Stürgkh refused to consider the recall of the *Reichsrat*,⁴² repeating only days before his assassination in October 1916 that Austria could not afford the spectacle of a divided House unable to conduct its business. This, he thought, would reveal all her weaknesses to the world and be “a presage of imminent collapse”.⁴³ As he considered his government responsible only to the emperor, he had no compunction in ruling by decree. During this time, use of Paragraph Fourteen broke all records, being employed 145 times between 25 August 1914 and the end of 1916, almost as much as during the previous fifty-three years.⁴⁴ Stürgkh himself used it 161 times during his tenure, which had begun in 1911.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, in Bohemia, his ally Thun strove to attest to Czech loyalty and regularly cast doubt on military sources which sought to demonstrate the contrary.⁴⁶ But despite the prime minister’s best efforts, Thun’s position grew weaker as reports of Czech misbehaviour – which he could not always deny – increased, and as the emperor himself expressed his growing concern about the attitude of Czech soldiers on the battlefield⁴⁷ and political conditions in the crownland.⁴⁸ Stürgkh eventually enjoined his friend to act firmly through the use of emergency legislation – preventatively in general and repressively in individual cases.⁴⁹ But Thun’s administration had hardly been complacent: numerous clubs, associations and newspapers had been banned or suspended, and prominent figures neutralized. The

⁴⁰ *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*.

⁴¹ *RT*, I, 23.7.1914, p.615; Funder, p.521.

⁴² *RT*, II, 11.3.1916, 27.7.1916, pp.148, 190.

⁴³ Polzer, p.104.

⁴⁴ *NFPM*, 8.4.1917, p.11. Between 1861 (then in its previous incarnation) and 25.8.1914, it had been used 156 times.

⁴⁵ *NFPM*, 8.4.1917, p.11. Seven times until the proroguing of parliament; seventeen times until its closure; thereafter, 48 times in 1914, 54 in 1915 and 41 in 1916. His successor Koerber did not use it, while the following prime minister, Clam-Martinic, used it eighteen times between December 1916 and April 1917.

⁴⁶ *MRP*, K238, 6480, Thun-Heinold, 12.11.1914; K240, 6930, Thun-Stürgkh, 19.12.1914; *AOK, OpAbt*, K17, Op.Nr.7017, Stürgkh-AOK, 8.2.1915; *RT*, I, 24.11.1914, pp.688-689; *NB*, K6, 26.8; 30.8.1914; Tobolka, *Mij denik*, 1.11.1916, p.212.

⁴⁷ *AOK, OpAbt*, K8, Op.Nr.4925, 5.12.1914. In particular, the high command made much of the alleged incidents involving the 36th Infantry Regiment from Hradec Králové and of the 30th Landwehr Infantry Regiment from Mladá Boleslav.

⁴⁸ *MRP*, K238, 6434, Stürgkh-Thun, 23.11.1914; Thun-Stürgkh, 27.1.1915; K240, 6930, Thun-Stürgkh, 19.12.1914; *RT*, I, 12.12.1914, p.692. Thun admitted to Franz Joseph that the good behaviour he had first reported had partly shifted, but blamed incessant provocation by “victory-drunk” Germans.

⁴⁹ *MRP*, K238, 6434, Stürgkh-Thun, 12.12.1914.

army was informed that between the outbreak of war and the end of 1914, 950 people had been arrested for political offences (of which 704 had been handed over to the military courts), and that forty-six newspapers and thirty-two clubs had been closed.⁵⁰ Notably, Václav Klofáč, the founder and leader of the radical National Social Party,⁵¹ had been arrested on suspicion of high treason and the party's newspaper, *České slovo*, closed down (though it was soon replaced). *Samostatnost*, the organ of the State-Rights Progressive Party⁵² and the periodical *Čas* of Tomáš Masaryk's Realist Party⁵³ suffered the same fate, while *Národní listy*, the influential mouthpiece of the Young Czech Party,⁵⁴ was forced to cease publication for eight days.⁵⁵ Yet the military continued to excoriate the governor, to press Franz Joseph for his replacement by a senior general with special powers – in fact, for the “elimination of the administration” – and for the extension of its political and administrative authority to Bohemia, and to all of Moravia and Silesia.⁵⁶ Long unpopular among German Bohemians,⁵⁷ assailed by their political representatives⁵⁸ and by Berlin's fiercely anti-Czech diplomats, ambassador Tschirschky in Vienna and consul general Baron Fritz von Gebstattel in Prague, Thun's position became increasingly untenable.⁵⁹ In late March 1915, plagued by worsening eyesight and undermined by further reports of Czech disloyalty,⁶⁰ he reluctantly resigned.⁶¹ The news was greeted enthusiastically by the German camp and deplored by the Czechs,⁶² but Franz Joseph resisted pressure to appoint a general in his place and instead named Count Max von Coudenhove, a Bohemian noble whose family had previously occupied the post in alternation with

⁵⁰ AOK, *OpAbt*, K17, Op.Nr.7017, Stürgkh-AOK, 8.2.1915.

⁵¹ *Česká strana národně socialistická*.

⁵² *Česká strana státoprávně pokroková*.

⁵³ Officially the *Česká strana lidová*.

⁵⁴ *Národní strana svobodomyslná*.

⁵⁵ AOK, *OpAbt*, K17, Op.Nr.7017, Stürgkh-AOK, 8.2.1915; *Ö101*, 35, Gebstattel-Bethmann, 20.12.1914; 8.4.1915.

⁵⁶ MRP, K238, 6434, Stürgkh-Thun, 23.11; Friedrich-Franz Joseph, 26.11; K240, 6930, Friedrich-Stürgkh, 9.12; AOK, *OpAbt*, K8, Op.Nr.4925, 5.12.1914.

⁵⁷ *Ö101*, 34, Gebstattel-Bethmann, 17.10.1913.

⁵⁸ *Ö101*, 35, copy of a memorandum by German Bohemian *Reichsrat* deputies Urban, Hartl, Lodgman, Pacher and Schreiner, handed to Stürgkh on 14.10.1914.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Gebstattel-Bethmann, 20.12.1914.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Gebstattel-Bethmann, 8.4.1915.

⁶¹ *NFPM*, 28.3, p.2; 19.6.1915, p.12; MRP/R, K18, 356, Thun-Stürgkh, 17.3; Thun-Heinold, 17.3; Stürgkh-Thun, 26.3.1915. Thun's poor health was not a pretext. By mid-March, he could only receive reports for two hours a day and his doctors categorically forbade more. He was operated on in Hamburg in June. He died on 1 November 1916.

⁶² *NFPM*, 29.3, p.6; *Ö101*, 35, Gebstattel-Bethmann, 28.3; Tschirschky-Bethmann, 31.3.1915.

the Thuns.⁶³ However, whereas the latter traditionally identified with the Czech nation, the Coudenhoves were more German in spirit.⁶⁴

The new governor was expected to initiate a tougher course, and was quickly forced into action. Days after he took office, news emerged that much of the overwhelmingly Czech 28th Infantry Regiment had gone over to the Russians during the battle at Stebnicka Huta on 3 April. Now debunked,⁶⁵ this version of events was accepted almost unquestioningly at the time. The regiment was promptly dissolved,⁶⁶ helping establish the myth of Czech treachery on the battlefield,⁶⁷ which both German nationalists and anti-Habsburg Czech *émigrés* would eagerly exploit. (In fact, the regiment was discreetly re-formed in December 1915 after a reserve battalion originally from its ranks distinguished itself on the Italian Front.)⁶⁸ This incident led to a renewed onslaught by the military authorities, who bombarded Stürgkh with more evidence of Czech disloyalty and machinations against the state and the army, both at home and abroad, and demanded ruthless repression in order to “sanitize conditions in Bohemia”.⁶⁹ And again they asked Franz Joseph to appoint a senior general as governor and thus to place the crownland under military administration.⁷⁰ On 21 May, the high command moved in directly and, without consulting civilian authorities, had Karel Kramář, the leader of the Young Czech Party, and Josef Scheiner, the head of the Sokol – the nationalist gymnastics society long suspected of being a breeding ground for pan-Slavism – arrested on suspicion of high treason.⁷¹ In July, Kramář’s collaborator and editor of the *Národní listy* Alois Rašín joined them in jail (though Scheiner was released shortly after).⁷² Stürgkh was furious and Franz Joseph was

⁶³ Polzer, p.105; *Ö101*, 35, Gebattel-Bethmann, 28.3.1915; *NFPM*, 28.3.1915, pp.2-3.

⁶⁴ Edmund Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe. Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten* (Zurich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1929), p.66.

⁶⁵ Lein, *Pflichterfüllung oder Hochverrat*, Chapter III, pp.53-201.

⁶⁶ *MRP*, K254, 3234, Kroatien-Stürgkh, 22.4.1915.

⁶⁷ *NB*, K6, 14.4; 8.5.1915. As Baernreither noted in April 1915, such stories – which could rarely be verified – were told every day.

⁶⁸ *MRP*, K271, 643; *NA*, *Fond Šmeral (F55)*, K18, S141/1, 12.1.1917. In January 1917, prime minister Clam-Martinić admitted to Czech deputy Maštálka that neither he, nor the minister of defence, nor the minister of war, had any authentic information about disloyalty in Czech units. He added that, in the case of the 28th and 36th Infantry Regiments in particular, a definite clarification would only occur after the war.

⁶⁹ *MRP*, K254, 3234, Stürgkh-Heinold, 8.6.1915. In notes from 13.4, 26.5 and 3.6.1915.

⁷⁰ *AOK*, *OpAbt*, K24, Op.Nr.10273, 17.5.1915.

⁷¹ *MRP*, K254, 3234, Friedrich-Stürgkh, 21.5; Coudenhove-Stürgkh, 22.5; Stürgkh-Friedrich, 23.5; Friedrich-Stürgkh, 24.5; Stürgkh-Friedrich, 24.5.1915; *NBT*, K5, 23.1.1916.

⁷² *TD*, 12.7, 22.7.1915, pp.57, 59.

apparently outraged.⁷³ Unbeknown to them and to the military, however, Kramář, Rašín and Scheiner were all deeply involved in the *Maffie*, the underground organization working towards the destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy from the inside in conjunction with the exiled Masaryk.⁷⁴ Still unsated, and highlighting further reports of Czech misdeeds on the battlefield – for which it blamed “uninhibited, enduring anti-dynastic and anti-militaristic propaganda in Bohemia” – the army again asked Franz Joseph to appoint a general as governor in mid-June.⁷⁵ But when he received Conrad in audience two days later, the emperor made it clear that he did not think this necessary for Bohemia⁷⁶ (although he relented in the case of Galicia).⁷⁷ His refusal was so categorical that the military authorities never again made this demand. The following month, they requested merely the appointment of a military governor alongside Coudenhove (as well the nomination of a staff officer as chief of police and, again, the extension of the emergency decrees to Bohemia).⁷⁸

This was not so much an admission of defeat as a change of tack. Indeed, they now demanded the sanitizing of Bohemia through the ending of municipal autonomy, the nationalization of the police and of all schools, and the investigation of all civil servants to assess their trustworthiness.⁷⁹ Thereafter, however, the high command abandoned its specific strategy for Bohemia and sought instead to initiate these fundamental reforms for all of Cisleithania.⁸⁰ In July 1915, it informed Stürgkh that it considered the removal of all learning institutions from the competence of the crownlands as one of the most important conditions for Austria’s domestic political recovery.⁸¹ In September, again pointing to Czech unreliability on the battlefield, Friedrich reported to the emperor: “The necessary strengthening of state authority and of the armed forces is unthinkable without the complete annihilation of all anti-Monarchy strivings, the education of all nations in an Austrian spirit, [...] the creation

⁷³ *NBT*, K5, 23.1.1916.

⁷⁴ Beneš, I, pp.43, 45-47, 79, 81.

⁷⁵ *AOK, OpAbt*, K26, Op.Nr.11581, 16.6.1915.

⁷⁶ *NK*, K2, 19.6.1915.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; *AOK, OpAbt*, K5, Op.Nr.3222, 14.10.1914; K24, Op.Nr.10273, 17.5.1915; K26, Op.Nr.11629, 15.6.1915; *Wiener Zeitung*, 20.7.1915, p.1; 22.4.1916, p.1; *Wiener Abendpost*, 8.4.1916, p.5. The army had been requesting the appointment of a single military governor for both Galicia and the Bukovina since October 1914. Franz Joseph refused but eventually consented to the measure in Galicia. General of the Infantry Hermann von Colard was duly appointed governor on 19.7.1915. When he died the following April, he was replaced by Major General Baron Erich von Diller.

⁷⁸ *MRP*, K257, 3872, Friedrich-Stürgkh, 3.7.1915.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *AOK, OpAbt*, K29, Op.Nr.12821, *AOK-Stürgkh*, 17.7; K45, Op.Nr.18576, *AOK-Stürgkh*, 9.12.1915.

⁸¹ *AOK, OpAbt*, K29, Op.Nr.12821, *AOK-Stürgkh*, 17.7.1915.

of a uniform, reliable corps from the nationally fragmented civil service, a fundamental change in administrative, educational and defence law”.⁸² In December, the high command laid out its demands to Stürgkh for the sanitizing of internal conditions in Austria. These involved not only the forming of a dependable, consistent, loyal civil service but also the development and maintaining of a diligent, patriotic teaching body and clergy, impervious to all anti-state and extreme national influences. To this end, the military required the removal of all compromised elements, the strictest surveillance of teaching institutions and of municipal functionaries, the nationalization of the entire school system, the introduction of military initiation for all youths, the legal recognition of German as the compulsory language of communication,⁸³ and the limitation of municipal autonomy.⁸⁴ The high command did not fail to point out to Stürgkh that it had already sent him notes on all these subjects but had only received an answer on the subject of ecclesiastical positions.⁸⁵ Indeed, the prime minister, as he had told Redlich in September 1914, had no intention of even engaging in speculation on the future domestic policy of Austria during the war.⁸⁶

In Bohemia, nevertheless, Coudenhove’s appointment ushered in a new era. The German Consul cheerily reported that “a new wind [was] blowing”, to the delight of local German circles.⁸⁷ As the high command had wished,⁸⁸ the Prague chief of police and the head of the governor’s office – both Czechs – were replaced by Germans.⁸⁹ Also in line with military demands, the two main Bohemian clubs of the Sokol were dissolved, followed by several local branches and many other Czech clubs and associations.⁹⁰ Similarly, organizations suspected of fostering separatism – such as the Czech Football Association and the Czech Committee for the Olympic Games – were

⁸² AOK, *OpAbt*, K36, Op.Nr.15724, written 24.9.1915. The incriminated troops were the Seventh Landwehr Infantry Regiment from Pilsen, the Eighth from Prague and the 29th from Budweis.

⁸³ “*Obligate Vermittlungssprache*”

⁸⁴ AOK, *OpAbt*, K45, Op.Nr.18576, AOK-Stürgkh, 9.12.1915.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; Friedrich-Stürgkh, 10.11.1915.

⁸⁶ *RT*, I, 19.9.1914, p.664.

⁸⁷ *Ö101*, 36, Gebattel-Bethmann, 24.8.1915.

⁸⁸ *MRP*, K254, 3234, Friedrich-Stürgkh, 21.5.1915.

⁸⁹ *Ö101*, 36, Gebattel-Bethmann, 24.8.1915. Gebattel noted with satisfaction that Gottfried Kunz, the new police chief, was “said to make no secret of his German disposition”, while the governor’s office was now “under German leadership”.

⁹⁰ *Ö101*, 39, Gebattel-Bethmann, Prague, 5.12.1916.

disbanded.⁹¹ Furthermore, an increasing number of Czech newspapers was forced to stop publication – 80 by June 1916, according to Gebattel.⁹² Those that remained frequently had articles imposed by the police, under threat of closure.⁹³ In addition, throughout the Bohemian lands, the German language made inroads at the expense of Czech in both the civilian and military administration, from ministries to barracks.⁹⁴ But the climax of anti-Czech persecution came in June 1916 with the sentencing to death, after a six-month trial, of Kramář and Rašín for high treason and crimes against the military power of the state. (In the same judgement, the secretary of the *Národní listy* Vincenc Červinka and employee Josef Zamazal also received this punishment for spying.)⁹⁵ Though Kramář had indeed been involved in treasonous activity,⁹⁶ the military prosecutor was unable to provide any evidence for this.⁹⁷ In reality, it had been the trial of Czech politics, a reckoning. As Redlich commented: “With this judgement, the nigh forty-year period of Czech ascendancy in Austria ends”.⁹⁸ Much of the Czech public, already indignant about the arrest of significant public figures,⁹⁹ was further embittered by the verdict, all the more so since the details of the case against the accused were not published for several months. Although the authorities did not wish to make the men into martyrs by executing them,¹⁰⁰ their arrest, imprisonment and sentencing had been largely sufficient to elevate them to this status. And shortly after, four National Social deputies – Buřival, Choc, Netolický and Vojna – received prison sentences ranging from one to five years for having allegedly discussed plans for the reception of the victorious Russian army in Bohemia in the wake of the fall of Lwów.¹⁰¹

The heavy-handedness of the military’s actions against the Czechs did little to help Coudenhove’s more pedagogical attempts to redress their deficient patriotism. Early in his tenure, in response to reports of their allegedly treacherous – mostly

⁹¹ *PMV/R*, K161, 21753, *KÚA-MI*, 1.9.1916.

⁹² *Ö101*, 39, Gebattel-Bethmann, Prague, 5.12.1916.

⁹³ *TD*, 27.10.1916, p.210.

⁹⁴ Carvel de Bussy (ed.), *Memoirs of Alexander Spitzmüller Freiherr von Harmersbach* (New-York, 1987), p.120; *NFPA*, 18.11.1916, p.7; *MRP*, K290, 5715.

⁹⁵ The 629-page judgement is in: *MRP*, K280, 3510. The trial lasted from 6.12.1915 to 3.6.1916.

⁹⁶ Zeman, p.16. On top of his work in the *Maffie*, he had discussed with a Russian friend a plan for a Slav confederation ruled from Petersburg, and written it down in May 1914.

⁹⁷ Grabmayr, p.181; Polzer, pp.101-102; *RT*, II, 3.6.1916, p.170; *Ö101*, 39, Gebattel-Bethmann, 3.12.1916. According to Grabmayr: “He could be reproached for moral high treason but there was no proof for punishable high treason in the judicial sense”.

⁹⁸ *RT*, II, 3.6.1916, p.170.

⁹⁹ *Ö101*, 36, Gebattel-Bethmann, 24.8.1915; 29.5.1916.

¹⁰⁰ *Ö101*, 38, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 3.6.1916.

¹⁰¹ *Ö101*, 39, Gebattel-Bethmann, 5.12.1916.

Russophile – inclinations and “passive, indifferent and apathetic behaviour”, he had instructed local authorities and civil servants to awaken, nurture and promote their patriotic sentiments. He ordered active propaganda to be deployed daily, in all spheres, at every opportunity.¹⁰² The essence of the ideological message was that the development of the Czech nation could occur only within the framework of the Habsburg state, and that a strong Austria was therefore in its interest.¹⁰³ On top of this, he demanded that entirely new Czech schoolbooks be written, as existing ones did not promote the Austrian state idea or the unbreakable bond between the fate of the Czech nation and the state.¹⁰⁴ The ministry of education responded by requesting a review of all teaching materials at Czech-speaking schools in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.¹⁰⁵ (It had previously done the same for Slovene-language books in Styria.)¹⁰⁶ Clearly, Coudenhove did not consider the Czechs fundamentally disloyal or beyond salvation. When issuing the instructions in his circular, he had stressed: “It is beyond any doubt that the majority of the Czech population of the Empire is completely loyally minded and condemns [incidents involving Czech troops on the front]”.¹⁰⁷ The first results of his initiative soon confirmed to him “the fact that the overwhelming part of the Czech population is loyal”.¹⁰⁸ Two months later, he boasted that the Czechs in Bohemia now displayed flags and decorated their houses after each victory of the Central Powers.¹⁰⁹ Shortly after, the military commander in Prague reported that Franz Joseph’s birthday in August had been celebrated throughout the province.¹¹⁰ In January 1916, Coudenhove concluded that the results of this action had been satisfactory thus far, and urged its continuation, though he demanded greater initiative from local district commissioners, and gave further instructions for influencing and surveilling teachers.¹¹¹ Five months later, he recognized that the heads of local authorities had worked “mostly eagerly, systematically and successfully” towards the nurturing of the Austrian state idea among the Czech population. To his great satisfaction, he had read reports of declarations of loyalty, of numerous patriotic

¹⁰² *PM1911-1920*, K5095, 31083 in 8819, 10.7.1915.

¹⁰³ *MRP*, K254, 3234, 20.5; K257, 3861, 26.6.1915.

¹⁰⁴ *MRP*, K264, 6076, Coudenhove-Hussarek, 25.8.1915.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Hussarek-Stürgkh, 9.10.1915.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *MRP*, K257, 3861, 26.6.1915.

¹⁰⁸ *PM1911-1920*, K5095, 8819, 10.7.1915.

¹⁰⁹ *MRP*, K262, 5345, 9.1915; *ÖIÖI*, 36, Gebattel-Bethmann, 24.8.1915. Confirmed by Gebattel.

¹¹⁰ *MRP*, K262, 5524.

¹¹¹ *MRP*, K270, 255, 12.1.1916.

events and meetings, of the erection of Nail Men, of dynastic street-naming, and of the successful military training of the youth. He admitted, in light of these observations: “the majority of the Czech population is willingly led towards active exercising of the Austrian state idea”.¹¹² Military reports concurred. Inspections of recruits continued to pass off without incident, and were occasionally accompanied by patriotic declarations.¹¹³ Dynastic loyalty seemed unperturbed: Franz Joseph’s birthday was again keenly celebrated,¹¹⁴ while a new bridge on the Elbe in Hradec Králové was named after Karl, as was a street in Vinohrady after Archduke Eugen.¹¹⁵

Coudenhove was not entirely satisfied, however. He deplored the continued existence of indifference and insincerity in certain circles and vowed to root out such attitudes in the future through education. As a result, he advocated a purge of the Czech teaching body. Only those whose “heart, mind and reason” were “imbued with Austrian patriotism” would be suitable to teach.¹¹⁶ A few days later, the minister of the interior wrote to his cabinet colleagues urging them to consider measures for the review of the mindset of the civil service, and its constant supervision.¹¹⁷

Coudenhove’s predecessor, of course, had always insisted that the majority of the Czech population was patriotic, and that nationalistic and pan-Slavic elements represented a minority of the intelligentsia. He had pointed to the trouble-free mobilization of Czech soldiers, to eager public demonstrations in Prague, to the Czechs’ contributions to war welfare organizations and to their sacrifices on the battlefield.¹¹⁸ There was certainly evidence of a Czech fighting spirit in the very early days of the war.¹¹⁹ In the first few weeks after its outbreak, even Gebattel had reported positively on the behaviour of the Czechs who “seem[ed] to be going to war against Serbia and Russia with the same enthusiasm as the Germans”. He had buoyantly described a scene before the consulate in which several thousand Czechs

¹¹² *MRP*, K272, 3217, 12.6.1916.

¹¹³ *PMV/R*, K161, 21753, *MKPSB*, 14.8; *KÜA-MI*, 1.9.1916.

¹¹⁴ *PMV/R*, K161, 24565, *MKPSB*, 31.8; *MRP*, K293, 6620, *KÜA-MRP*, 18.12.1916, copy of a report of the *KÜA* to the *AOK*.

¹¹⁵ *PMV/R*, K161, 21753, *KÜA-MI*, 1.9.1916.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *MRP*, K272, 3291, draft of the minister of the interior for the ministries of justice, finance, trade, public works, education and religion, railways, and agriculture, 18.6.1916.

¹¹⁸ *MRP*, K238, 6480, Thun-Handel, 12.11.1914.

¹¹⁹ Funder, p.521.

and Germans had gathered to celebrate favourable news from the front.¹²⁰ (Though in fact, Thun himself had orchestrated this manifestation with the help of Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic.)¹²¹ When the Czechs' fervour waned visibly, Thun explained – quite rightly – that this was the result of the war's development and increasing human cost. Further, he blamed their lack of enthusiasm for German military successes on the historical antagonism between both peoples and on the widespread fear among Czechs that a complete German victory would result in a huge increase of German influence in Austria-Hungary, and particularly in Bohemia.¹²² (He quoted the chief of police, according to whom aversion to the Germans was greater than sympathy for Russia.)¹²³ Interior minister Heinold, a former governor of Moravia, fully supported Thun and repeated the governor's arguments to the military. He conceded that nationalism and pan-Slavism existed but maintained categorically that the overwhelming majority of the Czech population did not subscribe to these ideas. He thought it unfair to call the entire nation unpatriotic, and insisted that most Czechs were loyal to both dynasty and empire.¹²⁴ (He even accused the military courts of laxness.)¹²⁵ In any case, Thun and Heinold knew that they could count on the solid support of Stürgkh who, though he too admitted the existence of a "questionable tendency [...] in part of the Czech population",¹²⁶ likewise refused to generalize. Indeed, he understood elements of the Czech predicament. As he told a group of dismayed German Bohemian deputies, the Czechs were fighting against feelings towards Russia and Serbia which had long been instilled in them, and the Germans of Bohemia would feel the same if they had to fight a war against Germany.¹²⁷ Aware of the existence of treacherous inclinations among a minority of Czechs, he, Thun and Heinold worried that blind tyranny would only foster them further, and that the civilian authorities would have to pick up the pieces.¹²⁸ Of course, they were also defending their record, and fighting to ward off encroachments from the military and retain their powers. Though they were therefore prone to underplay the frequency and

¹²⁰ *Ö101*, 34, Gebattel-Bethmann, 8.8.1914.

¹²¹ *RT*, I, 22.8, p.639; *NB*, K6, 26.8; 30.8.1914. Clam admitted this to Redlich.

¹²² *MRP*, K238, 6480, Thun-Heinold, 12.11; K240, 6930, Thun-Stürgkh, 19.12.1914.

¹²³ *MRP*, K240, 6930, Thun-Stürgkh, 19.12.1914.

¹²⁴ *MRP*, K238, 6480, Heinold-*KM*, 29.11.1914.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6434, Stürgkh-Thun, 12.12.1914.

¹²⁷ *NB*, K6, 20.9.1914.

¹²⁸ *MRP*, K240, 6480, Stürgkh-*AOK*, 29.12.1914.

significance of Czech misdemeanours, they were undoubtedly sincere – and, indeed, correct – in their confidence that the nation was predominantly loyal.

The military, on the other hand, consistently considered the Czechs inherently unreliable, unpatriotic, anti-German, pro-Russian, disengaged from the Austrian state idea and desirous of complete autonomy for the lands of the Bohemian crown.¹²⁹ Even the traditional political programme of historic Bohemian state rights – common to all non-Socialist Czech parties and virtually always envisaged within the Habsburg Monarchy – was seen as “frank treason”.¹³⁰ Though here too treacherous tendencies were first and foremost ascribed to educated circles,¹³¹ suspicion was frequently extended indiscriminately to the entire nation. According to General Scheure, for instance, it was “deeply stirred by Russophile feelings, right down to every stratum of the population, [...] both genders, from ten to over seventy, from privy councillor to tramp”.¹³² In the eyes of such men, any Czech expressions of loyalty were necessarily insincere and opportunistic.¹³³ German nationalists, as well as *Reich* German leaders and diplomats¹³⁴ espoused and propagated these views. Within weeks of the outbreak of war, the tales of Czech deceit had become widespread, even though the evidence was often anecdotal, biased or based on hearsay or denunciation.¹³⁵ Many thought the Czechs uniquely treacherous and coddled among all the peoples of Austria-Hungary. Burián, for example, believed that the other Slav nations, who had felt the full force of the state, had “proved their worth outstandingly” in the war, while Czechs at home and abroad were pervaded by the desire for an independent Czech-Slovak state under a Slav Prince.¹³⁶ Even Karl had been heard to speak disparagingly about them in the opening months of the war, apparently declaring: “In such times, one truly learns to know one’s subjects.”¹³⁷

But not even the military considered the Czechs wholly irretrievable, at least provided they were treated with an iron hand. In May 1915, the high command wrote to Stürgkh: “In places where capable men are at the top and elements hostile to the

¹²⁹ *MRP*, K257, 3872, Friedrich-Stürgkh, 3.7.1915; *MKSM*, K1240, 28-3/1-3, 30.5.1916.

¹³⁰ Redlich, p.79.

¹³¹ *MRP*, K240, 6930, *AOK*-Stürgkh, 9.12.1914.

¹³² *MKSM*, K1240, 28-3/1-3, 30.5.1916.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ö101*, 35, Gebattel-Bethmann, 20.12.1914; 36, 24.8.1915.

¹³⁵ *MRP*, K238, 6434, Friedrich-Franz Joseph, 26.11; K240, 6930, *AOK*-Stürgkh, 9.12; 6981, *AOK*-Stürgkh, 23.12.1914; *AOK*, *OpAbt*, K12, Op.Nr.6138, *AOK*-Stürgkh, 17.1.1915.

¹³⁶ *MRP*, K254, 3230, Burián-Stürgkh, 1.5.1915.

¹³⁷ *Ö101*, 35, Gebattel-Bethmann, 20.12.1914. Gebattel had heard this “from a good source”.

state are ruthlessly administered their just deserts, the population remains loyal. Even today, one can still hope for this change in the case of the Czech element, but only if the authority of the state intervenes mercilessly.”¹³⁸ By mid-1916, it noted with satisfaction that the radicals had been culled, and that level-headed, loyal elements were coming to the fore in public demonstrations and in the press. In particular, it commended the numerous articles against Masaryk and the *émigrés* in the Agrarian *Večer*, the Social Democratic *Právo lidu*, and even in *Národní listy* (which was by now in Austrophile hands). Furthermore, the behaviour of Czech troops had apparently improved, and various commanders testified that “the Czech peasant is generally a brave, reliable soldier, who is wholly removed from the endeavours to tear the Bohemian lands away”. It added that national conflicts were rare in mixed Czech-German regiments, and that political radicalism had not taken hold. Nevertheless, the report concluded that these positive developments were the result of the Czechs’ acceptance of the inevitable victory of the Central Powers.¹³⁹

Indeed, suspicion still prevailed and the military continually sought to extend its powers by demonstrating Czech disloyalty. The civilian authorities, however, did not yield. When, in August 1916, Conrad’s Intelligence Bureau¹⁴⁰ produced a highly critical political report on Czech activities at home and abroad,¹⁴¹ the interior ministry disputed the domestic accusations point by point.¹⁴² First of all, to counter the claim that the mood of the Czech population had shown no improvement and continued to be hostile to the state and anti-German, it provided police figures for Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia which indicated that each month so far that year had witnessed a drop in the number of arrests and legal proceedings compared to 1915 (though arguably, there were fewer people to arrest). Furthermore, and again based on police sources, the ministry denied that the Czechs were secretly cheering on the Russian offensive; rather, after Austro-Hungarian victories, the Czech population now – unlike in the early days of the war – organized patriotic demonstrations in various localities. In addition, it vigorously rejected the assertion that the Czech authorities’ loyalty was superficial and hammed up to cover the truth of their treachery. The interior ministry had seen no evidence of this, considered the accusation outrageous and maintained

¹³⁸ *MRP*, K254, 3230, *AOK-Stürgkh*, 21.5.1915.

¹³⁹ *MKSM*, K1240, 28-3/1-4, *AOK-Bolfras*, 24.6.1916: report on the Czechs, 4.6.1916.

¹⁴⁰ *Evidenzbüro des Generalstabschefs*.

¹⁴¹ *MKSM*, K1240, 28-3/1-5.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 28-3/1-8.

that the civil service in the Bohemian lands had fulfilled its duties in exemplary fashion and had recorded notable successes in inculcating the idea of state unity in the population. It also pointed out that not a single case involving treasonable declarations by children had been traced back to a teacher. All other criticisms were likewise dismissed, even though the ministry did not deny Czech wartime failings and the responsibility of school institutions for the disloyal education of “the majority of Czech youth”. Conrad was incensed by this rebuttal and insisted that the years of nationalist incitement among the Czechs were the cause of these alarming wartime occurrences.¹⁴³

From the statistics for criminal offences brought to court in Bohemia from 26 July 1914 to 31 December 1916 compiled by the governor’s office, the Czechs certainly appeared disproportionately active (and indeed guilty of more serious offences) or disproportionately targeted. Though only 63.22% of the population according to the 1910 census, they accounted for 73.97% of those charged with offences, while Germans represented 17.05%.¹⁴⁴ Of those sentenced, 81.51% were Czech and 14.2% were German, with the former receiving 84.9% of the prison time to the latter’s 9.62%. These escalating percentages certainly suggested a more severe treatment of the Czechs. Yet the breakdown of offences revealed that these were overwhelmingly the result of individual rather than collective actions. Indeed, most cases involved a breach of the peace (1705 cases – 37.09% of the total), *lèse-majesté* (650 – 14.4%), public violence (609 – 13.25%), high treason (404 – 8.79%) or the aiding and abetting of deserters (401 – 8.72%); insurrections and riots were, on the other hand, comparatively infrequent (181 – 3.91%). Only 87 cases of incitement to national or religious hatred were recorded. The highest number of offences had occurred between 26 July and 30 September 1914. Thereafter, whereas the German figures quickly dropped and remained consistent, Czech ones stayed high and peaked again in the second and third quarters of 1915. However, 1916 witnessed a drop of almost 30% from the previous year, doubtless due to the effective repression by the authorities and war-weary apathy of the population.

Though the high command often pointed to these statistics to prove Czech treachery, other figures hinted more plausibly at inadequate Czech patriotism and lack

¹⁴³ Ibid., Conrad-MKSM, 12.11.1916.

¹⁴⁴ PMV/R, K192, 14004, 13.7.1917. From 4598 cases.

of enthusiasm for the war. Notably, the Czechs in Bohemia contributed far less to the war loans than their German counterparts, providing only 20.6% of the total for the second, third and fourth war loans.¹⁴⁵ Thun had explained that this was partly due to the Germans' greater wealth,¹⁴⁶ but the finance ministry disagreed, and pointed to the fact that between October 1914 and June 1916, deposits in savings banks had increased by 2.2 millions crowns in German institutions (a 0.16% rise), but by 118.2 million crowns in Czech ones (a 13.38% rise).¹⁴⁷ Thun's excuse was indeed flimsy, for although the Czechs were poorer, they still earned 54.1% of the taxable income in Bohemia,¹⁴⁸ which was not substantially inferior to their weight in the population, and could therefore not justify their paltry subscription to war loans. Their suspicion that these were bad investments, on the other, could.¹⁴⁹ However, according to Gebattel, the Czechs' contribution to war welfare was also small, accounting for instance for only 16% of Red Cross collections in Bohemia.¹⁵⁰

Of course, any data on nationality had its limitations. It is unclear, for instance, whether the figures for criminality were based on census information, on the declaration of the offender or the discretion of the official. Likewise, it is hard to conceive of a reliable method for establishing nationality in financial matters. In any case, information from the census – the last of which had been taken in 1910 – was famously flawed. The sole criterion for nationality was “language of daily use”, with which it was hardly synonymous. And by forcing respondents to define themselves and by restricting them to one answer, the authorities could not take into account national indifference or flexibility, or multiple identities, all of which had historically been features of the Bohemian lands, and indeed of all mixed regions of the Empire. Unsurprisingly, the census had become a fierce battleground for nationalists seeking to boost their nation's numbers and thereby bolster their national claims.¹⁵¹ Yet despite the shortcomings of its national data, the census should not be discarded or treated with exaggerated suspicion, and should instead be accepted as a fair indication of national weight. Since nationalists of all sides sought to influence the results, since

¹⁴⁵ *MRP*, K291, 6004.

¹⁴⁶ *MRP*. K240, 6930, Thun-Stürgkh, 19.12.1914.

¹⁴⁷ *MRP*. K291, 6004.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁹ *Ö101*, 39, Gebattel-Bethmann, 31.3.1917. The *Živnotenská Banka*, the largest Czech bank, advised its clients against them.

¹⁵⁰ *Ö101*, 39, Gebattel-Bethmann, 3.12.1916.

¹⁵¹ Emil Brix, *Die Umgangssprachen in Altösterreich zwischen Agitation und Assimilation: die Sprachenstatistik in den zisleithanischen Volkszählungen, 1880 bis 1910* (Vienna, 1982).

biased officials throughout the Empire probably tinkered with the figures, and since national switching occurred across the board, the methodological imperfections were, to an extent, evened out. Furthermore, by the outbreak of the First World War, national and linguistic identities were more clearly defined and more deeply entrenched than they had ever been, and politics and public life more nationalized.¹⁵² This even affected the countryside,¹⁵³ despite the ambiguity and inertia which continued to exist there, and which to a lesser extent also lingered in the cities.¹⁵⁴ Overall, this signified a gradual erosion of the multiple and often compatible supranational identities which had previously prevailed – whether imperial, provincial, local, religious, social or professional – in favour of a more exclusive national identity.¹⁵⁵ Of course, increased national separation meant increased national competition and conflict. The state proved largely unable to respond to these challenges, particularly in Bohemia, despite the commonplace assertion that only a “paper-thin wall” stood between Germans and Czechs.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, neither camp was willing to yield on its basic position: for the latter, the indivisibility and fundamental Czech character of Bohemia and for the former, autonomy for the German regions of the province.¹⁵⁷ Even ostensible successes – the compromises in Moravia in 1905 and in the Bukovina in 1910, and those agreed upon for Galicia and the Bohemian city of Budweis/České Budějovice (but not implemented due to the war) which divided the population into nationally exclusive cadastres – were in a sense admissions of defeat. For although these arrangements provided a *modus vivendi*, they nationalized citizens by forcing them to define themselves nationally, in effect permanently.¹⁵⁸ There was no recognition for those who thought themselves anational, binational, Utraquist, Budweiser, Moravian, Galician, Bukovinian or, crucially, Austrian.¹⁵⁹ These compromises represented “the ethnicizing of Austrian politics”,¹⁶⁰ a move away from

¹⁵² Cohen, pp.202-203; Wingfield, pp.74-75; Albrecht, in: Cornwall (ed.), pp.91, 94.

¹⁵³ Ibid.; Pieter M. Judson, “Nationalizing Rural Landscape in Cisleithania, 1880-1914”, in: *Creating the Other: Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield (New York, 2003), pp.127-184.

¹⁵⁴ Cohen, p.207. As Cohen indicates, most Praguers had chosen sides by 1900, but some still avoided a definitive choice.

¹⁵⁵ Cohen, pp.202-203; Wingfield, p.291.

¹⁵⁶ *Ö101*, 34, Gebattel-Bethmann, 8.8.1914; HHStA, *Nachlass Friedrich Wieser*, K1, diary, 3.5.1918. Auffenberg, p.193; Streeruwitz, p.35.

¹⁵⁷ Glassheim, p.40.

¹⁵⁸ Judson, pp.13-14; King, pp.114-115.

¹⁵⁹ Glassheim, p.39.

¹⁶⁰ In the words of Gerald Stourzh, in: “The Multi-National Empire Revisited: Reflections on Late Imperial Austria”, *AHY*, 23 (1992), p.18.

the supranational ideal, and only a short-term solution to the fundamental issues of national strife.

Internal war aims

In the first two years of war, national tensions did not obviously intensify within the population. In the political arena, however, German nationalists – not least those from Bohemia – were hard at work, though censorship and the suppression of public life restricted them to conspiratorial plotting. Confident of a decisive victory of Germany and Austria-Hungary over Russia and Serbia – of Germandom over Slavdom –, they sensed a unique opportunity for winning the domestic war they had waged for decades. In particular, the prospect of both parliament and diet remaining closed during the conflict encouraged them to press for the definitive resolution in their favour of long-standing issues by imperial fiat. At the forefront of their concerns were the cementing of constitutional relations with Hungary, the extension and deepening of ties with Berlin, the bolstering of German predominance in Austria and the solving of the nationality question, particularly in Bohemia. The first impulse in this direction was given in August 1914 by Gustav Groß, the chairman of the *Deutscher Nationalverband*, the loose and motley umbrella organization of the German liberal parties in parliament.¹⁶¹ By the following spring, a set of radical programmatic demands had been agreed upon and submitted to the government. It requested *inter alia* a permanent constitutional alliance with Germany, the removal of Galician representation in the *Reichsrat* to free the state “from the unbearable Slav predominance”,¹⁶² the establishment of German as the internal language of business and communication¹⁶³ in all state civil and military authorities and higher court hearings in Cisleithania, and the administrative division of Bohemia along linguistic lines.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ HHStA, *Nachlass Gustav Groß*, K4, Groß to Brass, Damm, Dobernig, d’Elvert, Freißler, Pacher, Steinwender, Stölzel and Teufel, 23.7.1914.

¹⁶² Sylvester, p.42. According to the figures of the 21st parliamentary session of February 1912, there were 80 Polish deputies out of 514. Their removal would therefore have ensured an absolute majority for the Germans, who had 222 deputies.

¹⁶³ “*Innere Amts- und Verkehrssprache*”.

¹⁶⁴ NGG, K4. It was finally distributed in March 1916, under the title “*Der Standpunkt des Deutschen Nationalverbandes zur Neuordnung der Dinge in Österreich*”.

Shortly after his initial soundings, and spurred on by some of his colleagues, Groß put out feelers to his pre-war allies, the Christian Social Party (*Christlichsoziale Partei*).¹⁶⁵ However, the nationalists had to mitigate both the tone and content of their claims in order to establish cooperation. Finally, in September 1915, the two parties agreed to a ten-point programme, which included a close economic alliance with Germany (with a possible tariff and trade union), constitutional changes, new standing orders for parliament, the securing of the position of the Germans in Austria, the reform of state administration, the organization of crownland autonomy, a special status for Galicia¹⁶⁶ and a language law.¹⁶⁷ Gone were the anti-Slav rhetoric, the specific measures for Bohemia and the constitutional alliance with Germany, while Galicia's future position was required to preserve the interests of the Empire, and changes to the Austrian constitution were to be made only "insofar as they have proved necessary". German was to be simply the undefined "language of communication",¹⁶⁸ and in mixed regions, the linguistic requirements of the non-German-speaking population were to be respected. Immediately handed to the prime minister (who ignored it), these *desiderata* were eventually published in January 1916.¹⁶⁹ On the surface, it appeared that a compromise had been reached, but doubts and fundamental divergences remained, and the two sides had taken precautions accordingly. Both insisted that they would continue to safeguard their party principles, with the *Nationalverband* stressing that this was a deliberately broad outline and vowing to uphold any demands which exceeded these joint aims.¹⁷⁰ It also admitted that not all its affiliated groups in the various provinces would agree with every point of the programme, notably on the question of autonomy.¹⁷¹ Indeed, crownland autonomy, which the Christian Socials supported unequivocally, stood in complete contradiction to the goals of the German nationalists in the Bohemian lands.¹⁷² In fact, schemes for the future of the Monarchy hatched by Christian Social politicians and theorists rarely coincided with the nationalists'.¹⁷³ Thus although the

¹⁶⁵ *NGG*, K2, Weiskirchner-Groß, 27.10; K4, Beurle-Groß, 16.9.1914.

¹⁶⁶ "Sonderstellung".

¹⁶⁷ *NGG*, K4, Fuchs-Groß, 10.9.1915.

¹⁶⁸ "Verkehrssprache".

¹⁶⁹ *Ö70*, 50, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 6.10.1915; *NFPM*, 22.1.1916, p.7.

¹⁷⁰ *NGG*, K4, Fuchs-Groß, 10.9.1915; *NFPM*, 22.1.1916, p.7.

¹⁷¹ *NFPM*, 22.1.1916, p.7.

¹⁷² *NFPM*, 5.3.1916, p.10.

¹⁷³ For Christian Social programmes, see: John W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna, Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918* (Chicago, 1995), pp.395-397.

alliance brought potential tactical benefits and political leverage to a party burdened with the administration of Vienna,¹⁷⁴ many of its members were uncomfortable with it and thought it doomed from the outset. The party's co-founder Albert Geßmann, for instance, felt that the *Nationalverband's* proposals would place Austria below Bavaria and thought its rabble-rousing was "damaging the Germans in Austria tremendously".¹⁷⁵ The Christian Socials also often appeared less buoyant about the much-trumpeted "victory peace".¹⁷⁶ And in autumn 1915, the party had demanded the recall of parliament with only the standing orders as a precondition.¹⁷⁷ (Later overtures by the *Nationalverband* towards the Austrian Social Democrats came to nothing, as the latter insisted on the prior reconvening of the *Reichsrat* as a matter of principle.¹⁷⁸ However, not all Socialists were insensitive to the idea of a German-dominated Central European economic unit – Karl Renner, most notably – or impervious to the belief in the superiority of German culture and necessity of German leadership.¹⁷⁹ There seems even to have been support within the party for the promulgation by decree of German as language of state,¹⁸⁰ of the division of Bohemia,¹⁸¹ and possibly even of new standing orders for the House, despite its professed aversion to Paragraph Fourteen and advocacy of a negotiated settlement.)¹⁸²

As a result of his collaboration with the Christian Socials and his comparative moderation, Groß was compromised in the eyes of the extremists of the *Nationalverband*, chiefly the German Bohemians of the Radical Party¹⁸³ such as Karl Hermann Wolf and Raphael Pacher. They, in turn, devised their own virulent pan-German and anti-Slav programme, essentially a re-edition of the political demands of the 1882 Linz Programme.¹⁸⁴ Their plans had burgeoned in late 1914 in nationalist and academic circles in Vienna and, after further consultations the following year

¹⁷⁴ Boyer, pp.373, 389.

¹⁷⁵ *RT*, II, 20.12.1915, 9.2.1916, pp.128, 140.

¹⁷⁶ *RT*, II, 9.2.1916, p.140.

¹⁷⁷ *Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Abgeordnetenhauses des Reichsrates*, 22nd session, 2nd sitting, 5.6.1917, p.65.

¹⁷⁸ Verein für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, Vienna, *Partei-Archiv vor 1934*, Mappe 1, meeting of the party executive, 4.5; 31.6.1916.

¹⁷⁹ Party leaders Victor Adler and Engelbert Pernerstorfer had signed the Linz Declaration in 1882.

¹⁸⁰ "Staatssprache".

¹⁸¹ *RPM*, 12.12.1916, p.4. The *Reichspost* later scoffed at the Socialists' professed adherence to constitutionality and pointed out that the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* had previously called for the national question in Bohemia to be sorted by decree once and for all.

¹⁸² AVA, *Ministerium des Innern Präsidium*, K2067, 5887; NB, K11, p.112.

¹⁸³ *Deutschradikale Partei*.

¹⁸⁴ Paul Molisch, *Geschichte der deutschnationalen Bewegung in Österreich von ihren Anfängen bis zum Zerfall der Monarchie* (Jena, 1926), p.241.

between these groups, the German National Councils of the various crownlands and the Radicals, had finally appeared in a memorandum at Easter 1916.¹⁸⁵ These “Demands of the Germans of Austria for Reorganization after the War” – the *Osterbegehrrschrift*, or “Easter Demands” – shared many of the goals of Groß’s programme, but were far more specific and uncompromising. Underpinning its policies was the conviction that “the relation between the Germans and the remaining nationalities [had] to be sorted according to the lasting preservation and securing of the leading political and cultural position which befits the German nation”. Consequently, German was to be established as the official language of state¹⁸⁶ – the exclusive internal language within and between all state offices, authorities, courts, state enterprises and foundations. Deputies from the Bukovina and Dalmatia as well as Galicia were to be removed from the *Reichsrat* to ensure a German majority.¹⁸⁷ German minorities in Carniola, the Littoral and the South Tyrol were to be protected and supported by the state. Moreover, all attempts at union between Slovenes and Croats were to be resolutely opposed. In Bohemia – the issue closest to the heart of many of the programme’s authors – a new constitution was to divide the province into German and bilingual administrative areas (with only German civil servants permitted in the former). In addition, large nationally demarcated units – circles, or *Kreise* – were to be created, with their own governments and representation, thus emasculating the diet in Prague and effectively breaking the unity of the crownland. (To underline the partition, Czechs were henceforth to be referred to officially as “Czech” and not as “Bohemians” or “Moravians”).¹⁸⁸ In summary, the Germans of Bohemia would gain the local self-rule they denied non-German minorities elsewhere in the Empire.

Exploiting reports of wartime Czech perfidy, and contrasting it with their own sacrificial loyalty, the German nationalists of Bohemia sought the unilateral and categorical resolution of a question which had failed to be settled in peacetime. Their programme, in Wolf’s words, represented their “internal war aims”.¹⁸⁹ Shunned by the Austrian government, they turned to Berlin for support, urging intervention to prevent

¹⁸⁵ NGG, K4, “Forderung der Deutschen Österreichs zur Neuordnung nach dem Kriege”; RT, II, 13.1.1915, 20.1, 27.7.1916, pp.5-6, 134-135, 190-191. Wolf repeatedly expounded on this plan.

¹⁸⁶ “*Staatsprache*”.

¹⁸⁷ Sylvester, p.42. This would have further removed at least 28 Ukrainian deputies, the seven members of the Dalmatian Club and the Zionist deputy from the Bukovina.

¹⁸⁸ In the Czech language, the words for “Czech” and “Bohemian” are identical (*Čech*).

¹⁸⁹ SPA, 22nd session, 7th sitting, 15.6.1917, p.296.

the Slavicizing of Austria.¹⁹⁰ As one German Bohemian deputy told Gebattel: “After the war, we certainly hope that Germany will tidy up here in Austria.”¹⁹¹ By January 1916, the German bourgeois parties of Bohemia had succeeded in overcoming personal differences in order to revive their pre-war diet union, and were joined by the Constitutionally Loyal Landowners,¹⁹² a historically pro-German, but moderate, group for whom this represented a considerable radicalization.¹⁹³

In addition, several other bands of professional and amateur politicians in the German camp were eagerly at work to exploit the singular conditions offered by the war and the lack of parliament. The group gathered around Gustav Marchet and Baernreither¹⁹⁴ was notable among these often overlapping *ad hoc* entities, as was that of the historian Heinrich Friedjung.¹⁹⁵ Yet irrespective of their divergences, all factions agreed that the fulfilment of their demands by decree – or *octroi* – had to precede the reopening of parliament (which would certainly reject them).¹⁹⁶ As Redlich, a noteworthy opponent of these plans within the *Nationalverband*,¹⁹⁷ pointed out: “They did not want it to meet again in its old form”.¹⁹⁸ But, under the influence of Berlin’s war aims and pan-German agitation, of joint successes on the battlefield, of the publication of Friedrich Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa*,¹⁹⁹ and of consultations between Austrian and German politicians, the climate became increasingly favourable to these ideas in 1915.²⁰⁰ In Austria (far more than in Germany),²⁰¹ the plans for a comprehensive economic and military union between Vienna and Berlin found considerable resonance – not only in the intelligentsia, the press, parts of the

¹⁹⁰ *Ö101*, 36, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 26.6.1915. The aforementioned memorandum entitled “German Bohemian thoughts on the Austrian question”, which came “from the circles of the *Deutscher Nationalverband*”, bemoaned Berlin’s ignorance and indifference in the matter.

¹⁹¹ *Ö101*, 35, Gebattel-Bethmann, 8.4.1915; *Ö70*, 50, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 14.12.1914.

¹⁹² *Verfassungstreue Grossgrundbesitzer*.

¹⁹³ *Ö101*, 37, Gebattel-Bethmann, 24.12.1915; 38, Gebattel-Bethmann, 25.1.1916; 38, report on the meeting of the Constitutionally Loyal Landowners, 13.6.1915.

¹⁹⁴ Czedik, IV, p.452; *RT*, II, 13.1, 30.1, 4.2, 6.5, 8.5, 21.10.1915, 3.2, 27.2, 28.4.1916, pp.5, 11, 14, 46-47, 96, 138, 143, 161; *NB*, K6, 4.3.1915; Grabmayr, p.182.

¹⁹⁵ This resulted in his *Denkschrift aus Deutsch-Österreich* (Leipzig, 1915).

¹⁹⁶ *RT*, II, 13.1.1915, 20.1.1916, pp.5-6, 134-135.

¹⁹⁷ *RT*, II, 13.1.1915, 20.1, 27.7, 28.7.1916, pp.5-6, 134-135, 190-192.

¹⁹⁸ Redlich, pp.140-141.

¹⁹⁹ Friedrich Naumann, *Mitteleuropa* (Berlin, 1915).

²⁰⁰ Polzer, p.279; Redlich, pp.138-139; Molisch, *Bewegung*, pp.240-241; *RT*, I, 19.12.1914, pp.693-694; *NB*, K6, 20.9.1914; 28.3.1915; 2.4; 3.4; 4.4; 5.4.1916; *NFPM*, 29.3.1915, p.6; 22.1.1916, p.8; *Ö101*, 38, Tschirschky-AA, 23.1.1916.

²⁰¹ *RT*, II, 30.10.1915, p.100; *NB*, K6, 4.4.1916.

bureaucracy and even big business, but also among broad sections of the population including Christian Social and Social Democratic supporters.²⁰²

These schemes were consistently encouraged by the German foreign office, with varying degrees of insistence. Prior to the war, Tschirschky had written a highly pessimistic report to chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, in which he had claimed that Austria-Hungary could not be sustained if Germandom were not secured in the crownlands.²⁰³ He often reminded the Austrians of this – sometimes threateningly – and supported political developments in this direction.²⁰⁴ Wilhelm himself told Karl in October 1915: “The great danger for the Monarchy represented by the Czechs, the Ruthenes and certain Poles can only be thwarted if Germandom is allocated the place to which it has a right and which, moreover, it has once again earned”. He insisted that every Austrian civil servant and officer speak German, and got the impression that Karl agreed with everything he said.²⁰⁵ On a visit to Vienna a few weeks later, the Kaiser repeated this point to the leading ministers, lectured them on the behaviour of the Czechs and stressed the necessity of an economic alliance.²⁰⁶ This reflected the Germans’ growing concern regarding their ally’s future. Indeed, shortly before, secretary of state Gottlieb von Jagow had suggested to Tschirschky that a close military and economic union with Austria was not enough, and that the opportunity to strengthen the German element in the organism of state and ensure its preponderance over the Slavs had to be seized.²⁰⁷ On 13 November, he drafted a memorandum for the attention of his Austrian counterpart in which, having established that “the relations between both empires, governments and peoples [had] become so intimate and indissoluble” as a result of the war, he stressed the necessity of “long-term contracts of a political, economic and military nature”.²⁰⁸ In addition, he emphasized that the Dual Alliance had been concluded on the basis of Magyar supremacy in Hungary and German supremacy in Austria, and demanded that measures be taken to salvage the latter from Slav ascendancy and thus preserve the Germanic Eastern March. Burián, though he gave his – admittedly cautious and

²⁰² Redlich, pp.138-139; *NBT*, K5, 4.2.1916; *RT*, II, 20.12.1915, 9.2.1916, pp.128, 140.

²⁰³ *Ö70*, 49, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 13.3.1914.

²⁰⁴ *Ö70*, 50, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 6.10.1915; *RT*, I, 19.12.1914, p.693; *NBT*, K5, 13.1.1915.

²⁰⁵ *Ö95G*, 4, Treutler-AA, 1.11.1915.

²⁰⁶ *Ö101*, 37, Treutler-Bethmann, 29.11.1915.

²⁰⁷ *Ö70G*, 1, Jagow-Tschirschky, 6.11; Tschirschky-AA, 9.11.1915.

²⁰⁸ *D180G*, 3, Jagow Memorandum, 13.11.1915.

noncommittal – approval to an economic *rapprochement*, rejected Jagow’s interpretation of the 1879 alliance and his description of the Monarchy as the *Ostmark*. He denied the risk of any Slavicizing of Austria and pointed out curtly: “The increase in the significance of other national elements is a result of their civilizational progress; rather than being repressed, it must on the contrary be greeted with satisfaction.”²⁰⁹

As ever, the German high command was in an even greater hurry than the foreign office to bring Vienna to heel. In September 1916, Hindenburg wrote to Bethmann urging not only a military convention with Austria-Hungary but also direct intervention in the country’s internal restructuring before the end of the war.²¹⁰ The chancellor, though he agreed on the need for a reorganization of the Dual Monarchy – on the basis of securing German predominance in Austria and Magyar predominance on Hungary – countered that the matter could not be addressed before the conclusion of peace and a change of leadership in Vienna (which he claimed to want desperately).²¹¹ He argued that too much pressure from Berlin could result in Austria-Hungary leaving the war or seeking a compromise with the enemy. As a result, he concluded: “For the time being, our activity must be limited to maintaining and deepening the feeling in broad Austro-Hungarian circles that things cannot go on as before”.²¹² And indeed, in November of that year, when Wilhelm told Karl of his desire for a military convention with Austria-Hungary after the conclusion of peace, he mentioned only equal armament and equipment.²¹³

In any case, neither the pressure from Berlin, nor from the *Armeeoberkommando*, nor indeed the propaganda of local German nationalists, could persuade Stürgkh to embark on a “German course”. Increasingly openly, however, his opponents sought his removal. In September 1915, the army high command asked Franz Joseph directly “to entrust a person with the leadership of the administration of [Austria] whose recognized capabilities and unshakable energy will guarantee an auspicious resolution of the decisive questions concerning the fate of Austria-Hungary.”²¹⁴ The following month, the three main groups of the House of Lords presented him with a vote of no

²⁰⁹ *D180G*, 3, note read out and transmitted by G. Hohenlohe, Berlin, 24.11.1915.

²¹⁰ *D180G*, 4, Hindenburg-Bethmann, 19.9.1916.

²¹¹ *Ö95G*, 4, Bethmann-Wilhelm, 30.9.1916.

²¹² *D180G*, 4, Bethmann-Hindenburg, 29.9.1916.

²¹³ *NBG*, Karl’s report, 9.10.1916.

²¹⁴ *AOK*, *OpAbt*, K36, Op.Nr.15724, written 24.9.1915.

confidence designed to topple him.²¹⁵ Though he retained the emperor's trust, the prime minister had to reshuffle his cabinet to placate his enemies.²¹⁶ Most notably, Konrad Hohenlohe, the governor of the Littoral, was made minister of the interior. On the eve of his official appointment, he visited Tschirschky and assured him of his intentions: unqualified, open and sincere connection to the *Reich* "as the supreme foundation of his political activity", a purge of the civil service and of the teaching body, the decreeing of new standing orders for parliament and an *Ausgleich* for Bohemia "which, after the experiences of the war, must be far more in favour of the Germans than previous drafts".²¹⁷ Privately, he envisaged a quadralist structure for the Monarchy.²¹⁸ Conrad was delighted by Hohenlohe's nomination, and the high command was soon pushing for his appointment as prime minister.²¹⁹ Hohenlohe himself felt that he had entered the cabinet *cum jure succedendi*.²²⁰

In the meantime, Stürgkh had given himself further breathing space by approving the elaboration of a programme for constitutional reform by Handel, the governor of Upper Austria who had been drafted into the interior ministry by Hohenlohe in January 1916.²²¹ Hohenlohe was determined for these constitutional changes to be carried out by decree before the end of the Kramář trial; in particular, he wanted a pro-German language law and the dismantling of municipal and crownland autonomy.²²² Handel drew up his plans accordingly, convinced of a complete victory of the Central Powers within the year and of a subsequent "German peace", fully counting on the loosening of ties with Galicia, and aware of the "tremendously strong moral depression of the Czechs" in the wake of Russian military setbacks.²²³ He envisaged a strongly centralizing constitution, reinforcing the

²¹⁵ The memorandum they presented to him on 27.10.1915 is printed in: Czedik, IV, pp.453-455.

²¹⁶ *NB*, K6, 28.10, 1.12.1915; Czedik, IV, pp.455-456; Plener, III, pp.443-444; *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 23.10, 31.10.1915; *RT*, II, 22.10, 30.10, 11.11, 27.11.1915, 20.9.1916, 30.12.1918, pp.96, 100-101, 103, 117, 208, 481.

²¹⁷ *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 30.11.1915.

²¹⁸ *SM*, p.117; *NB*, K6, 6.1.1916; *NBT*, K5.17.5.1916. Four parts, each with its own government and parliament: Austria, Hungary, Poland and Illyria (to include Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia, while Slovene territories, Trieste and Istria would stay in Austria). The army and foreign office were to remain common to all, and Austria and Hungary would be ensured preponderance.

²¹⁹ *RT*, II, 13.2, 11.4.1916, pp.141, 157; *NK*, K2, Conrad-Marterer, 20.9; Conrad-Hohenlohe, 12.12.1915.

²²⁰ *NB*, K11, p.10.

²²¹ Baron Max Hussarek-Heinlein (ed.), "Erinnerungen des Erasmus Freiherrn von Handel", *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Leo-Gesellschaft* (Vienna, 1930), pp.67-68; Handel's memoirs, dated August 1918, are also in: HHHStA, *Nachlass Erasmus Handel*, K1, "Erinnerungen".

²²² *NB*, K6, 6.1.1916; *RT*, II, [13.1], 27.1.1916, pp.132-133, 137.

²²³ "Handel", pp.67-69, 70-76; *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, p.292.

primary legislative right and veto of the emperor (to the point of absolutism) and extending the competence of the *Reichsrat* at the expense of the provincial diets.²²⁴ He established German as the “general language of state communication” for Cisleithania,²²⁵ while Bohemia was to be divided into three linguistic groups: bilingual, Czech and German. He also followed the nationalists’ demands for the creation of large, nationally demarcated autonomous circles, with their own constitutions, diets and governments, stripping most power away from Prague. The Bohemian Diet, in Redlich’s words, would have become an “empty farce”.²²⁶ Although they were ready by mid-June, Stürgkh used dilatory tactics to postpone their implementation, keeping the drafts unread in a drawer, avoiding their discussion in cabinet meetings, and arguing that their execution would have to wait until the renewal of the economic *Ausgleich* with Hungary – due every ten years – was concluded or the last shot of the war was fired. Finally, after a cursory glance at the proposals, he told Handel that he was disappointed by them.²²⁷ And while he assured the Germans that the octroi would eventually be carried out, he consistently promised the Czechs that no such thing would happen.²²⁸ Under increasing attack from the German nationalists after he had defended Kramář at his trial,²²⁹ Stürgkh was nevertheless able to steer his chosen course until his assassination. This was in no small part due to the fact that the high command, emboldened and energized by the success of the Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive in the previous year, had since been chastened by Brusilov.²³⁰ Handel himself watered down his drafts as a result.²³¹

Karl, though no great admirer of Stürgkh’s, watched passively. In October 1915, Tschirschky – who claimed to have “very good direct contact with the heir” – informed Jagow that Karl was completely won over to the idea of a change of prime minister but had not yet dared approach Franz Joseph about it. (The ambassador added that, for his part, he was working on Stürgkh’s removal “as far as is possible for

²²⁴ Planned patent in: “Handel”, pp.76-95.

²²⁵ “*Allgemeine staatliche Verkehrssprache*”.

²²⁶ *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, p.292.

²²⁷ *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, p.292; Handel, p.68, 95, 97, 99-100; Plener, III, p.443; *NB*, K7, 23.2.1917; K11, p.40; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Tschirschky-AA, 30.8.1916. According to Handel, Franz Joseph had asked him several times why there had been no octroi.

²²⁸ Czedit, IV, p.457; Plener, III, p.443; *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 30.11.1915; *RT*, II, 11.10.1916, p.214.

²²⁹ *Ö101*, 38, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 3.7.1916; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Tschirschky-AA, 8.9.1916.

²³⁰ *Führ*, pp.56, 176.

²³¹ *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, p.292.

me’).²³² A year later, Karl told Wilhelm that although Stürgkh was an honourable and decent man, he was wholly without initiative and a hindrance in many matters. In particular, he reproached him for having thwarted Hohenlohe’s plans for school and language reform, which he thought “very good” and which Franz Joseph had approved. He even suggested the interior minister as a replacement for Stürgkh.²³³ (In fact, at the time, Hohenlohe, angry and despondent as a result of his failure, was convalescing, having fallen seriously ill.)²³⁴

Political revival

For many people therefore, Stürgkh’s death was a relief.²³⁵ Almost immediately, the German nationalists claimed that the late prime minister had given the go-ahead for the octroi shortly before his death.²³⁶ Yet it seems highly unlikely that Stürgkh, who was determined until the last to maintain the *status quo*, would have made too many concessions to them at a time when he was also thwarting attempts by the opposing camp to have parliament recalled. (Although he had almost certainly decided on a new status for Galicia, this was designed first and foremost to prevent any irredentism in the province as a result of the imminent proclamation of an independent Kingdom of Poland by the Central Powers.)²³⁷ Had he really wanted the octroi, he would not have discarded Handel’s work. What is more, at the time of his murder, support for the plan was losing momentum. Increasingly, the Christian Socials and certain members of *Nationalverband* – usually from the Alpine regions – favoured the reconvening of the *Reichsrat* without the prior fulfilment of the specifically nationalist demands. When, in July 1916, Bohemian landowner Count Ernst von Silva-Tarouca invited parliamentarians of both Houses in order to discuss the steps to be taken to obtain the reopening of parliament,²³⁸ the German Radicals were characteristically vehement – Friedrich Wichtl spoke of “master races” and “servant

²³² *D180G*, 1, Tschirschky-Jagow, private letter, 10.10.1915.

²³³ *W20c*, 5, conversation with Wilhelm, 9.10.1916.

²³⁴ *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Tschirschky-AA, 30.8; 8.9.1916; *Ö95G*, 4, Goldmann report, 20.9.1916; *RT*, II, 20.9.1916, p.208.

²³⁵ *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 24.10.1916.

²³⁶ *RT*, II, 28.11.1916, p.235; Molisch, *Bewegung*, p.246; Harald Bachmann, “Raphael Pacher und die deutschradikale Bewegung in den Sudetenländern. Aus den Erinnerungen Pachers”, *Bohemia*, 5 (1964), pp.447-458, 458.

²³⁷ Czedik, IV, pp.530-531; Handel, pp.98-99, 101.

²³⁸ Czedik, IV, p.458; Redlich, p.146.

“races” and of the need to secure “the lasting predominance of the Germans in Austria” – but others in the German camp were more muted. Noting the disharmony of the meeting, the Christian Social representative Josef Schraffl agreed that parliament could not reopen under such circumstances, but mentioned only the necessity for new standing orders in order to prevent obstruction. Johann Dobernig, a *Nationalverband* member from Carinthia, explained that he, his friends and many high-placed generals supported the recall of parliament. Likewise, those Social Democrats, Czechs and Poles present expressed their desire for the House to reconvene.²³⁹

At a similar meeting a month later, the parties agreed to further discussions in this direction, though the *Nationalverband* and Christian Socials remained deliberately discreet in the debate.²⁴⁰ But changes were afoot. Most notably, on 12 September, a new independent liberal group – the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* – was formed within the *Nationalverband*²⁴¹ in order to strengthen its leadership against the Radicals and to broaden its appeal.²⁴² Immediately, it succeeded in passing a resolution within the union supporting the recall of parliament, against Radical opposition.²⁴³ The drive to reopen parliament continued to gather pace²⁴⁴ and was given a new impulse by Stürgkh’s death. The day after, at a joint meeting of the representatives of both chambers of the *Reichsrat*, almost all Lower House deputies – Social Democrats, Poles, Ukrainians and Slovenes – expressed their support for the rapid revival of parliamentary life.²⁴⁵ The Czechs, however, were more cautious. Staněk, speaking in the name of the Agrarians and of the Young Czechs, ostensibly supported the recall, but only if the preconditions were created “for a truly parliamentary government system to emerge”. Specifically, he demanded parliamentary immunity, freedom of the press and freedom of opinion.²⁴⁶ Šmeral, who

²³⁹ *RT*, II, 27.7.1916, pp.190-192. The Social Democrat Karl Seitz denounced Wolf’s tirade, pointing out that his was in any case a minority view and that most Germans in Bohemia had voted for the Social Democrats in 1911. The two Czechs present were the Agrarian Udržal and the Catholic Hruban.

²⁴⁰ *RT*, II, 25.8.1916, p.198.

²⁴¹ *NFPM*, 13.9, p.7; 14.9, p.9; 15.9.1916, pp.8-9. It was composed predominantly of urban deputies, regrouping all previously unaffiliated *Nationalverband* members (such as Groß, Redlich, Sylvester, Urban, Lodgman, Langenhan and Freißler), members of the now dissolved *Deutschvölkische Vereinigung* and men such as the former Agrarian Steinwender.

²⁴² Lothar Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler, die deutschfreiheitlichen Parteien Altösterreichs 1882-1908* (Vienna/Munich, 1993), p.336.

²⁴³ *NFPM*, 15.9.1916, p.9.

²⁴⁴ *NB*, K11, pp.1-3; Czedit, IV, pp.451, 458-464, 547-554; Plener, III, p.444. House of Lords members hatched a plan to reopen parliament via the prior recall of the Delegations, but Stürgkh skilfully defused the matter.

²⁴⁵ *NFPM*, 24.10.1916, pp.6-7.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8.

had noted his opposition to the recall of parliament in his diary, admitted that deliberately unrealizable conditions had been expressed.²⁴⁷ Similarly, Groß, though he spoke of the “intolerable and deeply shameful nature of the current situation”, gave a lengthy speech effectively discouraging the reopening of the *Reichsrat* and expressing in vague terms the necessity of certain “preconditions”.²⁴⁸ It was indeed paradoxical that both the Czechs and the German nationalists favoured the *status quo* – the former in the conviction that as long as the *Reichsrat* did not reconvene, Stürgkh would undertake nothing against them, and the latter in the belief that he might yet enact the octroi. The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* noted caustically that they were the only two groups to oppose the reopening of parliament.²⁴⁹ The Christian Socials, on the other hand, again restricted themselves to demanding the prior decreeing of new standing orders, insisting that the recall was necessary and that they had never believed it would harm the country.²⁵⁰

This further strained the collaboration between the German bourgeois parties. On 9 November, at a joint meeting to discuss economic and financial questions, Groß sprang an unpleasant surprise on his allies by declaring that their agreement also stretched to “important national demands which we must carry through if the streams of German blood which have flowed are not to have been spilt in vain”. He ended his speech by proposing a resolution according to which both groups stuck unshakeably to their demands and expected the government to take the necessary measures without delay.²⁵¹ Christian Social circles hurried to point out that reports of a unanimous adoption of the resolution were untrue.²⁵² Still, the alliance survived and the joint committee envisaged for further consultation went ahead.²⁵³

To replace Stürgkh, Franz Joseph took no risks and re-appointed Ernest von Koerber, who had served as his prime minister between 1900 and 1904.²⁵⁴ (Unsurprisingly, Conrad, who had asked Franz Joseph to sack Stürgkh up until, and indeed on, the day of his murder, had written to Karl expressing his conviction that a military man

²⁴⁷ *FŠ*, K18, S135, 2.9; 18.10; 23.10.1916. Šmeral’s main concern was that the Czechs would be forced to take a position, to vote, or to make official statements.

²⁴⁸ *NFPM*, 24.10.1916, pp.6-8.

²⁴⁹ *AZM*, 10.12, pp.1-2.

²⁵⁰ *NFPM*, 24.10.1916, p.8.

²⁵¹ *NFPM*, 10.11.1916, p.7.

²⁵² *RPM*, 10.11.1916, p.4.

²⁵³ *NFPM*, 10.11.1916, p.7.

²⁵⁴ *NFPM*, 29.10.1916, p.3.

should take the post.)²⁵⁵ Both at home and abroad, Koerber was widely considered one of the most capable statesmen in Austria, and his nomination was well received.²⁵⁶ As an archetypal liberal Josephist bureaucrat, his convictions were firmly centralizing and supranational – notwithstanding the inevitable German tendencies which they implied – but, during his first tenure, his attempts at constitutional and administrative reform in this direction had come to nothing.²⁵⁷ He had, however, stabilized parliamentary conditions through negotiations and compromise with as many factions as possible, although in the end, this had resulted in general distrust.²⁵⁸ After his resignation, he had taken no part in active politics for over ten years, until his appointment as joint finance minister in February 1915.²⁵⁹ Not only did he now have to address all the matters Stürgkh had left unresolved – chiefly the food question, the renewal of the economic *Ausgleich* with Hungary and the restoration of parliamentary life in Austria – but no sooner had he taken office than he was presented with Polish independence as a *fait accompli*.²⁶⁰ Indeed, four days later, on 5 November, Wilhelm and Franz Joseph proclaimed the creation of an independent Kingdom of Poland from occupied Russian territories. (Originally, the Germans had appeared to agree to the attachment of Congress Poland to Austria – the so-called Austro-Polish solution – but by early 1916 had firmly decided on the establishment of a Polish buffer state under their control.²⁶¹ Indebted to Berlin after its military assistance in the summer, the Austrians had to abandon their plan, salvaging only the ongoing joint administration of the occupied lands.)²⁶² The implications of this move were, of course, problematic for Vienna, as many Galician Poles had hoped for the unification of all Polish territories.²⁶³ To mitigate this disappointment and forestall the

²⁵⁵ Gina, p.132; Werkmann, p.71.

²⁵⁶ Polzer, pp.103, 122-123; Czedit, IV, p.525; Grabmayr, p.183; Plener, III, p.445; Margutti, p.163; *SM*, pp.27, 99, 150; *NB*, K6, 10.12.1915; 28.10.1916, 30.10.1916, pp.221-222; *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 20.2.1915; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Stollberg-AA, 28.10.1916; *NFPM*, 28.10.1916, p.1; 5.12, p.2. Some, such as Redlich (riled by the fact that he was not offered the ministerial post Koerber had promised him) and Renner, were more sceptical.

²⁵⁷ On Koerber's philosophy and career, see: Fredrik Lindström, *Empire and Identity: Biographies of the Austrian State Problem in the Late Habsburg Empire* (West Lafayette, 2008), Part I, pp.29-84.

²⁵⁸ Sieghart, pp.61-69; *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 20.2.1915. He had also worked for a Czech-German *Ausgleich*, in vain.

²⁵⁹ Heinrich Friedjung, "Ernest von Koerber", in: *Neue österreichische Biographie 1815-1918*, ed. Anton Bettelheim (Vienna, 1923), p.37; *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 20.2.1915; *NB*, K11, p.4.

²⁶⁰ *FJ*, II, Conversation with Koerber in late November 1916, p.414; *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.229.

²⁶¹ *D180G*, 3, Treutler-AA, 23.1.1916; *W20cG*, 2, Jagow-Tschirschky, 19.6.1916.

²⁶² Burián, pp.78-112; *W20G*, 5, Conversation with Wilhelm, 9.10.1916; *NBG*, Karl's report, 9.10.1916. One of Berlin's chief motivations had been to set up a Polish army and start training troops. Karl, however, doubted this would work.

²⁶³ Burián, p.103.

development of irredentism in the province, Franz Joseph had issued a handwritten letter on the eve of the Two Emperors' Manifesto, announcing the extension of Galician autonomy "to the full extent of what is compatible with its belonging to the entirety of the state, and its prosperity." (The Germans, who had not been informed, saw this as foreign political jockeying and were furious.)²⁶⁴ Koerber claimed that he had found the document on Galician autonomy completed on Stürgkh's desk, and had had no choice but to accept it. However, he amended it to make it as unclear as possible, adding the insistence on "lawful realization" – by parliament, implicitly – for obvious dilatory purposes.²⁶⁵ He, like many others, including Karl,²⁶⁶ foresaw the inevitable complications.²⁶⁷

Though the extent and timing of Galicia's new status were still uncertain (and parts of the province was still occupied by the Russian army), its proclamation represented – though this was not its primary aim – a step towards the fulfilment of the German nationalists' demands. Yet, as they quickly found out, the new prime minister was unsympathetic towards their schemes. A delegation of German Bohemian deputies – including Wolf, Pacher and Urban – visited him on 17 November and emphatically put forward their demands for the implementation of the preconditions they considered necessary for their national development and the prosperity of the state. Koerber took note of this but informed them that economic matters, in particular the food question, were more urgent.²⁶⁸ Though they pointed out to him that Stürgkh had made definite promises in the matter, that the Bohemian decrees were ready and that the emperor was prepared for them, Koerber claimed not to be aware of the existence of any such guarantees, let alone to have inherited any written evidence of them.²⁶⁹ Moreover, he took umbrage at their tone of voice and

²⁶⁴ *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Grünau-AA, 6.11; *Ö95G*, 4, Bethmann-Grünau, 6.11; Grünau-Bethmann, 7.11; Bethmann-Grünau, 10.11.1916.

²⁶⁵ Handel, p.101; *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, p.245; *NB*, K11, p.5; *FJ*, II, 11-12.1916, pp.414-415; Czedik, IV, p.530; Plener, III, p.446; *AZM*, 7.12, p.5; *PTM*, 6.12, p.3. When Koerber presented the draft to Franz Joseph, he stressed that it did not specify the extent of the autonomy, in: *MRP*, K290, 5849 (undated).

²⁶⁶ *W20G*, 5, conversation with Wilhelm, 9.10.1916. A month earlier, Karl had told Wilhelm that the restoration of an autonomous Poland would cause a disruptive irredenta and maintain Galicia in a state of permanent unrest. He also thought that it would be voided by the likely compromise peace with Russia, since she would have to be compensated with parts of Poland for returning occupied Austro-Hungarian territory.

²⁶⁷ *NB*, K11, p.5; *FJ*, II, 11.1916, p.415; Plener, III, p.446; Burián, p.103; *RT*, II, 3.11, 6.11, 23.11, pp.223-224, 229.

²⁶⁸ *NFPA*, 18.11.1916, pp.6-7.

²⁶⁹ Pacher, pp.457-458; *FJ*, II, 11.1916, pp.415-418.

even at the way they sat during his meeting with them.²⁷⁰ He had not forgotten the conflict which had opposed them during his first premiership, and had a particular dislike of Wolf.²⁷¹ He had opposed an octroi then and he would do so again.²⁷² In any case, his primary long-term concern for Cisleithania was administrative reform, and he intended to see through the centralizing programme he had attempted to implement twelve years previously.²⁷³ Regarding the recall of parliament, he met the presidents of both Houses on 9 November and told them that he hoped to open negotiations with the parties to this end, but that the government's chief priority was the food question.²⁷⁴ In political circles, the recall of the *Reichsrat* was therefore not expected before late February or March.²⁷⁵

Unsurprisingly, Stürgkh's death and the proclamation of Galician autonomy caused considerable anxiety among Czech politicians.²⁷⁶ (Eleven days later, their protector Thun followed his friend to the grave.)²⁷⁷ Moreover, although Koerber enjoyed a positive reputation and was welcomed accordingly,²⁷⁸ there was speculation over his intentions²⁷⁹ and resentment over the minimal Czech representation in his cabinet.²⁸⁰ With the reopening of parliament likely to occur within a few months, together with the German nationalists' pushing for the prior fulfilment of their demands, Czech fears were understandable.²⁸¹ On 6 November, the Young Czech politician Zdeněk Tobolka wrote in his diary: "What will we Czechs do? Watch all this passively?"²⁸² For over two years, drastic plans for the future reorganization of Austria – and in

²⁷⁰ FJ, II, 11.1916, p.417.

²⁷¹ Ibid.; Friedjung, *Biographie*, p.38; Pacher, pp.457-458; *PTM*, 3.12, p.1.

²⁷² Friedjung, *Biographie*, pp.25-26.

²⁷³ FJ, II, 11.1916, p.416; *MRP*, K291, 5977; *NFPM*, 2.12, pp.2-3. He wished to amalgamate state and autonomous administrations in the crownland. In linguistic matters, he did not intend to impose German as the language of state (*Staatssprache*), although he wanted to secure its position. As part of his attempt to strengthen the bureaucracy, he issued a decree on 18 November establishing a code of conduct for civil servants, which stressed lawfulness, equality of rights and the public weal.

²⁷⁴ *NFPA*, 9.11.1916, pp.1-2.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.

²⁷⁶ *NFPA*, 9.11.1916, p.2; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Gebsattel-Tschirschky, 24.10.1916. Gebsattel commented sarcastically on the Czech press' gushing and hyperbolic obituaries for Stürgkh.

²⁷⁷ The grief of Czech politicians is evident in: *TD*, 1.11.1916, pp.211-212.

²⁷⁸ *TD*, 30.10, 31.10.1916, pp.210-211.

²⁷⁹ *FŠ*, K18, S135, 3.11; *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, pp.229-230.

²⁸⁰ *TD*, 31.10.1916, pp.210-211. The only avowed Czech was the apolitical Otakar Trnka, retained as minister of public works.

²⁸¹ *RT*, II, 27.7.1916, p.191. At the meeting of parliamentarians in late July, Mořic Hruban, the leader of the National Catholic Party (*Katolická strana národní*) had commented that Wolf's speech had deprived him of every last morsel of optimism.

²⁸² *TD*, 6.11.1916, p.213.

particular of Bohemia – had been elaborated without them, as their nation’s stock plummeted. Without a public platform, they could do little to defend themselves, save for professing their loyalty and goodwill, in the hope that this might delay or alleviate their fate.²⁸³ (They had even turned to Berlin for support and mediation between them and German Bohemians.)²⁸⁴ But this policy of so-called “activism” could bring no firm guarantees, dependent as it was on the disposition of the individuals in power and on the developments of the war. The Czechs, however, had the advantage of increasing unity in adversity. Indeed, beyond the radical fringes of the small Realist Party and State-Right Progressive Party, the Czech political establishment was firmly activist by the time of Stürgkh’s death. At the forefront of this policy were Antonín Švehla’s Agrarian Party,²⁸⁵ the Czech Social Democratic Party,²⁸⁶ under the single-handed and single-minded – but not entirely unopposed – leadership of Bohumír Šmeral,²⁸⁷ and the Young Czech Party, which the moderate Tobolka had taken over after the incarceration of Kramář and Rašín. There were certainly tactical reasons for the approach of these leaders, not least the desire to safeguard the existence of their parties and press, avoid persecution and obtain the liberation of jailed Czech politicians. Additionally, most believed in the ultimate victory of the Central Powers and sought to curry favour with the government in order to mitigate the effects of a likely “German peace”. Šmeral, meanwhile, justified his policy with Marxist slogans and explained that the workers, the party and the people needed protection during the war in view of the true social struggles of the future.²⁸⁸ But even though wartime experiences had inevitably taken their toll on the loyalty and enthusiasm of many a Czech politician, the attitude of these parties was by no means entirely opportunistic, and they still contained plenty of genuine supporters of the Monarchy. In any case, the dissenters were still in a discreet minority, heavily outweighed by the Austrophiles, whether sincere, pragmatic or tactical.²⁸⁹ The activist path was an easy one to follow for traditionally pro-Habsburg parties such as the Old Czechs,²⁹⁰ the National

²⁸³ See: Šedivý, “České loajální projevy 1914-1918”, pp.293-309.

²⁸⁴ *Ö101*, 35, Naumann-Zimmermann, 14.4.1915; *NB*, K6, Baernreither-Fürstenberg, 20.11.1915.

²⁸⁵ *Česká strana agrární*.

²⁸⁶ *Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická*.

²⁸⁷ *FŠ*, K16, S107, 30.8.1916, incomplete minutes of the meeting of the executive committee and representatives of the club of deputies in which Šmeral was elected chairman of the former.

²⁸⁸ Beneš, I, pp.26, 28-30.

²⁸⁹ *TD*, 19.11.1916, p.220; *FŠ*, K16, S107, 30.8.1916.

²⁹⁰ Officially *Národní strana*.

Catholics and the Czech Christian Socials.²⁹¹ Now, even the virulent National Social Party, broken by official repression and emasculated by Klofáč's ongoing imprisonment without charge, had seemed to fall into line under Otakar Hübschmann.²⁹² Those actively working to bring down the Monarchy – Masaryk and Beneš abroad, and the *Maffie* at home – had achieved next to nothing, and still wielded very little influence on the domestic political scene. Nevertheless, this secret organization had collaborators in several important parties.²⁹³

Despite residual ideological differences, however, the war had considerably attenuated intranational divisions, and the political representatives of most nations understood that their interests were best served by national unity. The Poles had already completed their unification on 23 March 1916 when the Polish Social Democrats entered the *Koło Polskie*, or Polish Club.²⁹⁴ Thereafter, the announcement of the special status of Galicia quickly prompted the Ukrainian deputies of the province to disband their two existing clubs and to found a “Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation” on 8 November in light of “the threatening situation facing the Ukrainian nation”.²⁹⁵ Indeed, the Ukrainians had apparently been promised by Stürgkh that eastern Galicia would be separated from the rest of the province and administered autonomously, in close connection with Vienna. But the prime minister had eventually yielded to Polish pressure and abandoned the plan.²⁹⁶ The Croat–Slovene Club,²⁹⁷ meanwhile, continued to work for the unification of Croats and Slovenes within the framework of the Empire, though it was affected by the personal

²⁹¹ *Křesťansko sociální strana*.

²⁹² *TD*, 30.10, 19.12, pp.210, 235.

²⁹³ Beneš, I, p.41, pp.47-50, 90. The Clericals, considered unreliable, had been left out, likewise the Old Czechs. Ironically, in light of the persecution it suffered, the National Social Party had also been excluded, as it was considered too unthinking and indiscreet. The Agrarians were not invited to take part, due to their caution, but their leader Švehla was informed of the basics in order to ensure the party's cooperation at the decisive moment. The Social Democrats, though their official policy was condemned, were involved through František Soukup – who, as a result of his involvement, was caught in the so-called “Button Affair”, but acquitted – and Habrman. The organization was headed by Přemysl Šámal of the Realist Party.

²⁹⁴ *NFPM*, 27.3.1916, p.8.

²⁹⁵ *NFPA*, 9.11.1916, p.2.

²⁹⁶ *FJ*, II, 11.1916, pp.414-415; *NB*, K6, 13.11.1915.

²⁹⁷ *RPM*, 16.7.1911, pp.2-3; *NFPM*, 21.10.1912, p.6. The *Hrvatsko-slovenski klub* had been formed in July 1911 with members of the Pan-Slovene People's Party and the Croatian Party of Rights (*Stranka prava*) in Dalmatia. In October 1912, they (including the Transleithanian side of the Party of Rights) had adopted a resolution declaring Croats and Slovenes to be one unit and expressing their desire to work together “for the unity, the rights and free development of the Croatian-Slovene nation in the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy”.

divisions within the Pan-Slovene People's Party, namely between the radical clerics Korošec and Krek and the moderate Šusteršič.²⁹⁸

Fortunately for the Czechs, they suffered no such prominent, overt clashes. Nevertheless aware of the need to reinforce and formalize their unity, leading activists began to move in this direction in early November.²⁹⁹ (The first attempts at unification had begun a year before but had ended in failure.)³⁰⁰ On the ninth, Tobolka wrote to the Agrarian deputy František Udržal, insisting that the Galician proclamation made it indispensable for the representatives of all Czech parties to take a united stand on the matter and formulate their own programme.³⁰¹ As a result, the three leading activists, Tobolka, Švehla and Šmeral, met two days later in Prague and agreed on the creation of a unified organization.³⁰² Švehla and Šmeral, the representatives of the two largest parliamentary factions – the Agrarians and Social Democrats respectively – insisted on majority rule within the future structure in order not only to reflect the dominance of their own parties, but also to maintain discipline and harmony by preventing minority vetoes.³⁰³ At a conference on 15 November in Vienna, the representatives of the Social Democrats, the Agrarians, the Young Czechs, the National Socials, the Catholics, and the Moravian Progressive People's Party³⁰⁴ all agreed to unification.³⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the National Catholic leader Hruban warned that the Social Democrats' traditional insistence on national autonomy (and rejection of the Bohemian state rights to which, conversely, all the bourgeois parties subscribed) and lack of dynastic foundations could hinder the formation of the new body. In response, the Social Democratic representative, Vlastimil Tusar, vouched for his party's pragmatism and gave assurances that its principles would not impede the enterprise. He added that it would not oppose any pro-Habsburg proclamations if these were necessary and justified.³⁰⁶ (The following day, Czech, Slovene, Ukrainian and Romanian representatives held a meeting and agreed that all constitutional changes in Austria

²⁹⁸ *MKSM*, K1240, 28-3/1-4, AOK-Bolfras, 24.6.1916: report on the South Slavs, 20.5.1916; *MI*, K2064, 28405, 7.12.1916.

²⁹⁹ *TD*, 3.11.1916, p.212.

³⁰⁰ *Ö101*, 38, Gebattel-Bethmann, 21.11.1916.

³⁰¹ *TD*, 9.11, pp.214-215.

³⁰² *TD*, 10.11, 11.11.1916, pp.215-216.

³⁰³ *FŠ*, K18, S135, 11.11.1916.

³⁰⁴ The *Lidová strana pokroková na Moravě* was closely associated with the Young Czechs, who were not present in Moravia.

³⁰⁵ *TD*, Tusar Report, 16.11.1916, p.217.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.218-219.

should be approved by parliament. Yet, as they came to no formal decision, the result of the meeting was not communicated.)³⁰⁷

Nothing, therefore, stood in the way of the creation of the Czech Union (*Český svaz*) and National Committee (*Národní výbor*), which duly occurred on 18 November and was made public the following day. The former was made up of *Reichsrat* deputies and was to coordinate policy in all national and constitutional questions, while the latter, consisting of party representatives, was solely to support the Union and act as the “highest moral instance” in matters outside the parliamentarians’ competence.³⁰⁸ The Agrarian František Staněk became chairman of the Union’s presidium, flanked by Šmeral and the Young Czech Jindřich Maštálka as his first and second deputies respectively.³⁰⁹ In the organization’s parliamentary commission, each party was allocated one member for every five *Reichsrat* seats it held. All parties agreed to enter the union and the committee, save for the Realists and State-Right Progressives, who objected to their dynastic basis,³¹⁰ and the Social Democratic Centralists, who saw collaboration with the bourgeois parties as the abandonment of the class struggle.³¹¹ (The Austrian Social Democrats were likewise very critical of their Czech counterparts’ decision to join the Union.)³¹² The party of the Conservative Landowners³¹³ also stayed away.³¹⁴ (Incidentally, as Tobolka noted in his diary, not a single participant suggested including the Slovaks, none of whom were present.)³¹⁵ The declaration “to the Czech nation” which announced the foundation of both organizations confirmed their defensive nature: “Current events are forcing the Czech parties to adopt a uniform standpoint towards certain questions [...]. Changes are looming on the horizon which could affect the very foundations of our state and constitution – questions whose unilateral resolution would be neither in the interest of the state nor in ours.” The address also paid homage to “the time-honoured dynasty and historical mission of the Empire, which consists above all in the unification and

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p.219. This was in no small part due to the fact that the Ukrainians, as they openly admitted, were reliant on the help of the Germans against the Poles.

³⁰⁸ *NFP, Nachmittagsblatt*, 20.11.1916, p.7.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.; *TD*, 19.11.1916, p.220.

³¹⁰ *TD*, 19.11.1916, pp.220-221.

³¹¹ *NFPM*, 29.11.1916, p.9.

³¹² *TD*, Tusar-Šmeral, 16.11.1916, pp.216-217.

³¹³ *Konservative Großgrundbesitzer*.

³¹⁴ *Ö101*, 38, Gebtsattel-Bethmann, 21.11.1916.

³¹⁵ *TD*, 19.11.1916, p.221; *RT*, II, 16.12.1915, p.126. In December 1915, when Redlich had met Milan Hodža, he had noted that the latter stuck firmly to Slovak interests in the face of Czech state-rights thought.

perpetuation of the indivisibility of its crownlands and provinces, as well as in the absolute equality of rights of all its nations”.³¹⁶ Though it was well received by those in the population who still followed political developments, claims that the action was “fulfilling the will of the entire nation” were vastly exaggerated.³¹⁷ Indeed, as the military commander in Prague noted at the end of year, it had had no deep impact on a population “almost exclusively preoccupied by the direct consequences of the war”.³¹⁸ Undeniably, the concerns of most Czechs – and indeed of most citizens – were by now focused on peace, money and food.

War-weariness, poverty and hunger

By November 1916, conditions in Cisleithania were little short of catastrophic. Fertile Galicia had been devastated by war,³¹⁹ and the overall harvest of 1915 had been poor. In consequence, food shortages had begun early, particularly for cereals and potatoes.³²⁰ The crop yield for 1916 proved even worse than the previous year, and by early 1917 almost all foodstuffs except meat were under state control.³²¹ To make matters worse, the better-off areas of the Monarchy – Hungary in particular, on whom Austria already depended for grain in peacetime – resisted efforts to distribute food more evenly.³²² From spring 1916, wool, cotton, shoes and iron were also in short supply.³²³ Conditions were particularly bad in Vienna.³²⁴ In October 1915, Redlich had already observed that the city had no flour, no potatoes and no fat, and that milk and butter were unaffordable.³²⁵ American ambassador Penfield wondered how poor people could still find ways of existing, though he admitted that they did, and without complaining, at that.³²⁶ In May of the following year, however, there were food riots

³¹⁶ *NFPN*, 20.11.1916, p.7.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*; *ÖIOI*, 38, Gebattel-Bethmann, 21.11.1916.

³¹⁸ *PMV/R*, K190, 1115, *MKPSB*, 1916 summary, 31.12.1916.

³¹⁹ Rudolf Jeřábek, “The Eastern Front”, in: Mark Cornwall (ed.), *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (Exeter, 2002), p.161.

³²⁰ Redlich, p.110; Gratz-Schüller, pp.45-46, 50-51.

³²¹ Gratz-Schüller, pp.45-46, 50-51, 67, 70; Landwehr, p.24.

³²² Gratz-Schüller, pp.42, 54, 71, 197-198; Landwehr, pp.24-25. Before the war, only four of Austria’s fifteen crownlands – Galicia, Bohemia, Moravia and Upper Austria – had a grain surplus. All others required imports, chiefly from Hungary (where 10.5 million of its inhabitants were self-sufficient, and 6.5 million not, compared to Austria’s 9 and 16.5 million respectively).

³²³ Gratz-Schüller, p.197.

³²⁴ Gratz-Schüller, p.71; Landwehr, p.25.

³²⁵ *RT*, II, 13.10.1915, p.92.

³²⁶ USDS, *The Lansing papers, 1914-1920*, I (Washington, 1939), Penfield-Lansing, 11.11.1915, p.644.

and shops were plundered.³²⁷ By winter, there was a dearth of coal for heating and for civilian industry.³²⁸ In addition, the amount of money in circulation increased almost threefold from July 1914 to December 1916, causing tremendous inflation.³²⁹ The maximum prices set by the state merely encouraged the development of the black market, while wage increases made prices go up further.³³⁰

When Tschirschky went to pay his respects to the members of the ministerial council³³¹ on the day of Stürgkh's murder, the shocked and despondent ministers bluntly exposed Austria's situation. Handel told the ambassador that the country would have no food left by late spring if Germany did not help. Trnka, the minister of public works, pointed to the "dangerous" mood among miners and likened his position to sitting atop a volcano. The minister of railways described the situation among his men as "anarchic", while finance minister von Leth showed him a telegram which had just arrived, reporting food riots in Hainburg in Lower Austria.³³² These incidents, however, were not isolated. Vienna by now regularly witnessed expressions of public discontent due to the lack of food, through demonstrations, protests and strikes which involved hundreds, sometimes thousands.³³³ Penfield described the mood as one of "utter and complete despair".³³⁴ When this translated into anger and agitation, however, the masses were always dispersed with ease or temporarily placated with promises. In Graz, however, 500 soldiers were required to put an end to rioting due to the lack of flour and potatoes on 11 and 12 October, which resulted in the destruction of 120 shop windows, 200 house windows and 130 streetlights, and 48 arrests.³³⁵ Later in the month in Lwów, a crowd of women and adolescents who had received no food went through the streets shouting slogans against Germany and smashing the windows of public and private buildings. Again the military had to intervene but refrained from using its weapons.³³⁶

³²⁷ *RT*, II, 15.5.1916, p.166; *MRP*, K281, 3613.

³²⁸ Gratz-Schüller, pp.81, 197.

³²⁹ Gratz-Schüller, pp.181, 183-184; Landwehr, p.26.

³³⁰ Gratz-Schüller, p.198; Landwehr, pp.26-27.

³³¹ *Ministerrat*.

³³² *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Tschirschky-AA, 21.10.1916; HHStA, *Kabinettsarchiv, Geheimakten*, 37b, K37, 295/T.R.

³³³ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 257/T.R.; 268/T.R.; 270/T.R.; 273/T.R.; 278/T.R.; 279/T.R.; 280/T.R.; 281/T.R.; 287/T.R.; 299/T.R.; 305/T.R. On 13.9, 21.9, 22.9, 25.9, 28.9, 3.10, 4.10, 5.10, 6.10, 12.10, 24.10 and 27.10.1916.

³³⁴ *USDS, LP*, I, Penfield-Lansing, 23.9.1916, p.662.

³³⁵ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 287/T.R.

³³⁶ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 302/T.R.

The situation in Bohemia, though relatively serene in the first half of the year,³³⁷ also deteriorated.³³⁸ During that summer, throughout the crownland, demonstrations and protests grew more frequent, in Czech- as well as German-speaking localities – indeed particularly in the latter.³³⁹ These movements continued in October and November, with growing numbers – often hundreds and sometime more – involved.³⁴⁰ However, they were generally non-violent and the security forces, though they regularly made arrests, restored order in every case without recourse to the use of weapons.

Yet the authorities had no way of saving the situation, and further deterioration seemed inevitable throughout Cisleithania. In late November, just over a month after Tschirschky's discussion with the cabinet, his successor Count Botho von Wedel heard much the same from Koerber: Austria lacked bread, grain and potatoes, and, in light of Hungarian recalcitrance, she could not last beyond the beginning of April without German help.³⁴¹ A dedicated food office, the *Amt für Volksernährung*, was set up on 1 December³⁴² to coordinate and consolidate the government's efforts but did little to reverse the tide.³⁴³

The increasingly dismal circumstances naturally affected public morale. In November 1916, the monthly report gathered from intercepted correspondence at the border post in Feldkirch painted a mixed picture of the popular mood in Austria-Hungary.³⁴⁴ The censors scrutinizing German correspondence – who had processed 590,000 letters between 1 and 26 November – noted that all German Austrians were “absolutely confident and certain of victory”, which they saw as one of “good over evil, of truth over lies”. They expressed “boundless repulsion” towards anyone delaying or doubting final victory, particularly war profiteers and the Hungarians. The Germans of Austria were “entirely reliable politically”, and willing to bear all manner of privations for the fatherland. The Hungarians were equally convinced of a favourable

³³⁷ *PMV/R*, K161, 24565, *MKPSB*, 3.10.1916; *SH*, 1125, 1189, 1227, pp.142, 149, 153.

³³⁸ *PMV/R*, K160, 10529, *MKPSB*, 15.4.1916; K161, 24565, *MKPSB*, 31.8.1916; *SH*, 1355, 1376, 1379, pp.168, 171.

³³⁹ *SH*, 1342, 1348, 1352, 1369, 1387, 1390, 1393, 1401, 1402, 1403, 1408, 1415, 1421, 1422, 1435, pp.166-167, 170, 172-176, 178; *PMV/R*, K161, 21753, *MKPSB*, 14.8.1916; 24565, *MKPSB*, 31.8.1916.

³⁴⁰ *SH*, 1434, 1436, 1443, 1444, 1446, 1454, 1467, 1473, 1475, 1481, 1487, 1489, 1496, pp.178-185; *KBA*, 37b, K37, 279/T.R.; 284/T.R.

³⁴¹ *Ö70G*, 1, Wedel-AA, 27.11.

³⁴² *NFPM*, 1.12, p.14.

³⁴³ Polzer, p.103.

³⁴⁴ *KÜA*, K169, 90747.

outcome of the war. The Poles, meanwhile, almost all manifested their joy with the Two Emperors' Manifesto, describing the jubilation, hugging, crying and laughing which this act – “the realization of their most foolhardy dream” – had provoked. On the other hand, the Ukrainians were terribly disappointed by the announced extension of Galician autonomy, since they had expected the ethnographic division of the province to occur during the war; however, they still held out hope for a change of policy. Finally, among the Italians of the Monarchy, irredentism continued to blossom, chiefly within educated circles. The censor warned that their claims of loyalty were not to be believed and that Italian irredentism, as the most dangerous political movement in the country, should be fought ruthlessly. Nevertheless, all nations were united in hoping for a rapid peace and deploring the lack of food and rise in prices. Even among the Germans, 90% of the correspondence, irrespective of social stratum, expressed a desire for the war to end. However, no evidence of socialist or peace propaganda was recorded.³⁴⁵

In mid-December, a more extensive report on the mood in the hinterland – this time compiled from the correspondence to prisoners of war – painted a bleaker picture of a hungry, indigent and war-weary population.³⁴⁶ The popular mood was primarily influenced by price increases and the fear of worsening economic conditions; urban dwellers in particular complained about the difficulties in acquiring food. All awaited spring with great apprehension. The censor also noted that, unlike previously, attention was no longer paid to developments on the battlefield, and that the events of the war were mentioned only in connection with the desire for its rapid end. The Germans, whether of the Alps or the Sudetenland, remained the most moderate, and steadfastly optimistic, leading officials to note with satisfaction: “The confidence in victory and the hope for a quick successful outcome constitute here a most agreeable contrast to the monotonous letters of grievance of the other nations.” Indeed, the remaining peoples of Cisleithania generally bore their hardships less willingly. The Italians, for instance, complained bitterly, especially about the authorities' failings in the distribution of food. Patriotic declarations were extremely rare among them, though irredentist tendencies had faded somewhat. The Slovenes likewise condemned the unfair allocation of food, and denounced profiteering, but displayed strong

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ *MI*, K2065, 106 ex1917, information post for POWs, censorship department, to the intelligence bureau of the chief of general staff, political department, 15.12.1916.

feelings of loyalty to the Empire, particularly when discussing the war against Italy. The Croats of Istria and Dalmatia appeared to face the greatest economic distress and were therefore particularly despondent; yet their rectitude and patriotic disposition remained unshaken. (Likewise, declarations of loyalty and urgings to suffer patiently for emperor and fatherland were not rare among their brethren in Bosnia and Herzegovina.) Serbs, whether in Dalmatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, all complained of their economic conditions, but very few irredentist declarations had been observed since the occupation of Serbia and Montenegro. Polish dissatisfaction was expressed comparatively mildly. The population in the countryside chiefly lamented requisitions of food and restrictions on grain trade, while their urban compatriots denounced the rise in prices. All, however, united in celebrating the promised restoration of Poland, though younger and more educated elements displayed anxious impatience with regard to its realization. Naturally, the Ukrainians feared that it would place them “at the mercy of the despotism of the Polish majority”. Otherwise, the refrain from their overwhelmingly rural correspondence was typical, revealing war-weariness, hunger and bitterness at requisitions of food by the military, often carried out without compensation.³⁴⁷

Regarding Czech correspondence, the censor bemoaned the large number of unpatriotic, often treacherous declarations and the expression of anti-Austrian views culminating in the desire for the erection of an “independent Kingdom of Bohemia” and hope for Russian liberation. (The Slovaks, however, were reported to be impeccably loyal and confident in victory.)³⁴⁸ Yet this was a very selective and generalizing interpretation,³⁴⁹ which did not tally with other reports or correspond to the reality on the ground. Certainly, the military authorities continued to point to numerous cases of alleged Czech treachery,³⁵⁰ but these were still usually amateurish, anecdotal or insignificant, from schoolchildren misbehaving during the national anthem and towns forgetting to ring church bells on solemn occasions, to provocative inscriptions on walls, anonymous letters and idle coffee-house chatter.³⁵¹ In mid-December, the war surveillance office had to admit that the number of criminal

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ For the bias of the censors, see: Alon Rachamimov, “Arbiters of Allegiance. Austro-Hungarian censors during WWI”, in: Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit (eds.), *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York/Oxford, 2005).

³⁵⁰ *PMV/R*, K161, 24565, *MKPSB*, 31.8.1916; 21753, *MKPSB*, 15.9.1916.

³⁵¹ *MRP*, K293, 6620; *PMV/R*, K190, 207, *KM-SB*, 14.12.1916; *SH*, 1449, 1450, p.180.

proceedings for political offences had remained low (though it continued to highlight the existence of anti-state and pro-Russian tendencies in the Czech population, as proved, apparently, by the frequent appearance of advertisements for Russian language classes in newspapers.).³⁵² But General Paul Kestřanek, the new, nationally impartial military commander in Prague,³⁵³ provided a more nuanced depiction of local popular mood in his twice-monthly reports.³⁵⁴ And in his summary of 1916, he expressed overall satisfaction: “Through the consolidation of the success of our weapons – and perhaps through the lack of parliamentary life – a calming of the population has without doubt occurred overall.”³⁵⁵ Though he warned that exceptions and excesses still existed, and that Russophilia and unhealthy Slavism had to be eradicated from people’s minds, especially among the neglected youth, he remained positive. According to him, repeated Russian defeats, the replacement of subversive teachers by loyal elements, the neutralizing of openly Slavophile politicians, the promotion by the military and political authorities of patriotism, of the Austrian idea, and of love for the dynasty, had all had a beneficial effect. He praised the population’s discipline and self-denial in the face of severe privations, in particular the heavy labourers. Even the tension between the Hungarian troops deployed in the area and the local population had abated considerably. Indeed, ethnic strife seemed minimal, and Kestřanek thought it high time “to effect the *rapprochement* of both nationalities in Bohemia with the politically less sensitive masses and to be able to establish the salvation of the future of the land”. (Yet age-old controversies over matters such as the language of street names in Prague continued to rage.)³⁵⁶ And though many Czechs expressed little more than indifference or resigned acceptance, there was enough evidence of loyalty to cheer Kestřanek, who reported patriotic declarations in Klatovy to celebrate the capture of Bucharest and Karl’s accession to the throne, and a solemn service in Pilsen on the latter occasion.³⁵⁷ The death of Franz Joseph and

³⁵² *MRP*, K293, 6620.

³⁵³ Richard Lein, “Paul Kestřanek, der letzte Militärkommandant in Prag”, *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 2 (Vienna, 2010). Despite his birth in Prague, Czech surname and the Czech Christian names given to his children, his Czech was poor. He had been appointed in June 1916.

³⁵⁴ This covered all of Bohemia bar the north, which was in the sphere of the military commander in Leitmeritz.

³⁵⁵ *PMV/R*, K190, 1115, *MKPSB*, 31.12.1916.

³⁵⁶ *NFPM*, 3.12, p.11; *PTA*, 2.12, p.2.

³⁵⁷ *PMV/R*, K190, 1115, *MKPSB*, 31.12.1916.

Karl's advent seemed to make a strong impression, albeit chiefly through the hope that peace would be brought closer.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE EMPEROR IS DEAD – LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!

Outwardly, Franz Joseph's death immediately triggered a wave of public mourning throughout the Empire. Black flags bedecked the country and expressions of grief poured in from representatives of every province, town, party, institution, corporation and club, irrespective of nationality or political creed.¹ Newspapers fell over themselves to celebrate the emperor's life and lament his death, with non-German-language publications rivalling their German-speaking counterparts in their hagiographical tones.² In Hungary, the press uniformly extolled Franz Joseph and underlined his historical significance – the nationalist, conservative daily *Budapesti Hírlap* called him “greater than the greats”.³ Both Houses of Parliament in Budapest likewise paid homage to him and to his life's work: the 1867 Compromise, the *Kiegyezés*.⁴ Meanwhile, Polish newspapers – in Cisleithania as well as both occupied zones of Congress Poland – praised him unreservedly for allowing the nation's free development in Galicia and proclaiming the creation of a Polish kingdom. The *Gazeta Wieczorna* in Lwów commented: “During the one hundred and twenty-three years of our slavery, Emperor Franz Joseph was the only monarch of the partitioned states who earned his title as a friend of Poland”. Cracow's *Nowa Reforma* concurred and wrote: “Of all the citizens of the orphaned Monarchy, the Poles will cry the most fervent tears”.⁵ Echoing these feelings, the Galician provincial committee officially expressed its “most reverent homage and boundless pain in the name of the whole population of Galicia” and attested to the “steadfast fidelity and devotion” of the crownland.⁶ And the Polish Club, describing Franz Joseph as “the idolized ruler, loved and celebrated by all nations of the Monarchy [...], and rightly held up by the Polish nation as its magnanimous protector”, proclaimed that he would live for ever in Polish memory.⁷ At the same time, Ukrainian deputies from eastern Galicia and the Bukovina

¹ *RP*, *Nachmittagsausgabe*, 22.11, p.2; *RPM*, 23.11, p.5; 25.11, pp.2-4; *NFPM*, 23.11, pp.7-8; 24.11.1916, p.7-8.

² *ZA*, K45, Viennese press review.

³ *Ibid.*, Hungarian press review, 22.11.1916.

⁴ *NFPM*, 28.11.1916, p.4.

⁵ *ZA*, K45, Polish press review, 23.11; 24.11; 25.11; 27.11.1916.

⁶ *NFPA*, 23.11.1916, p.3.

⁷ *FBM*, 29.11.1916, p.4.

expressed their gratitude towards the late emperor for having granted their nation a new lease of life.⁸ Testaments of deep mourning also emerged from the Slovene camp. The head of the Croat–Slovene Club Anton Korošec expressed the Slovenes’ grief and lauded the “lasting and glorious” memory of Franz Joseph, under whom his nation had maintained the preconditions for its free development.⁹ *Slovenec*, the main organ of the Pan-Slovene People’s Party, wrote: “At the bier of its ruler, the Slovene nation renews its oath of steadfast loyalty to the Habsburg dynasty.”¹⁰

Czech obituaries were similarly emotional – all the main newspapers bar the (nevertheless loyal) Social Democratic *Právo lidu* carried a black border – and bemoaned the immeasurable loss to the nation. There was unanimous agreement that Franz Joseph had always shown great benevolence towards the Czechs and that his rule had allowed a previously unimaginable upswing in their fortunes. A clear distinction was made between his noble intentions on the one hand, and the system of government and political opposition on the other. Indeed, the Young Czech *Národní listy* highlighted his national impartiality.¹¹ Kestřánek concluded with satisfaction that “regardless of party affiliation, the press took a most dignified and most loyal attitude to this world event.”¹² The Moravian press displayed particular warmth, pointing out that the crownland’s population virtually idolized the deceased monarch.¹³ Many Czech organizations sent their condolences, including the presidium of the Union of Czech Districts and that of the Union of Czech Towns in the Kingdom of Bohemia, as well as the Council of Professors of Czech Engineering.¹⁴ In addition, Prague city council held a meeting to commemorate the emperor’s death during which the indefatigable mayor Groš described him as a “true father of the nation” and praised his “blessed rule”.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the presidium of the freshly created Czech Union wasted no time in sending a message to the prime minister, stating: “Tremendously shaken by the sad news of the sudden death of His Apostolic Majesty, our dearly beloved and unforgettable emperor and king, we beseech you to transmit the expression of the deepest sympathy of the entire Czech nation to the imperial house.

⁸ *NFPM*, 25.11, p.6; 26.11.1916, p.6.

⁹ *MI*, K2064, 29169, meeting of the Croat–Slovene Club in Graz, 28.11.1916.

¹⁰ *RPM*, 2.12.1916, p.6.

¹¹ *ZA*, K45, Czech press review, 23.11; 24.11; 1.12; 2.12.1916.

¹² *MRP*, K293, *MKPSB*, 30.11.1916.

¹³ *ZA*, K45, Czech press review, 24.11.1916.

¹⁴ *NFPM*, 24.11.1916, p.8.

¹⁵ *NFPM*, 23.11.1916, p.8.

The Czech nation will always look back on the blessed rule of His late Majesty with sincere gratitude as a period of cultural and economic upturn.”¹⁶ The National Council followed suit, and transmitted its address to Coudenhove.¹⁷

Admittedly, failure to express these feelings would have attracted the authorities’ suspicion and disfavour, not to mention attacks from political and national opponents. But, to an extent, the outpouring of emotion did reflect popular sentiment in many parts of the Empire. For instance, the official censor noted the sincere pain frequently in evidence in Polish and Ukrainian correspondence.¹⁸ However, formal displays and declarations of grief could not entirely conceal the apathy of much of the population. Redlich noted the weariness and listless indifference of the Viennese, discerning “neither sorrow for the deceased nor complete rejoicing for the successor”.¹⁹ Though Franz Joseph had long been a monumental and widely esteemed figure, his tired and hungry subjects scarcely paused to mourn or to contemplate the significance of his passing (beyond its potential for peace), even though most had known no other ruler.²⁰ Certainly, his stock, as well as the dynasty’s, had fallen since the fiasco of the Serbian campaign.²¹ Subsequent wartime developments had also taken their toll, and, in September 1916, Redlich heard that the mood in the Viennese popular masses was turning increasingly against the government and the ruling house, and that dynastic feelings were weakened among German Austrian officers, who apparently had little sympathy for Karl.²² At the same time, Tschirschky reported that the Habsburgs’ prestige had “sunk quite extraordinarily” among the masses – even the emperor’s and even in thoroughly *schwarzgelb* Tyrol.²³ A local aristocrat had even told him that Franz Joseph should be forced to abdicate, like Ferdinand.²⁴ Likewise, the German journalist Paul Goldmann noted after his stay in Austria in August and September of that year that “the popularity of the emperor, the love and adoration for the person of the venerable monarch [...] are essentially gone”.²⁵ These were perhaps exaggerations by unsympathetic or blinkered observers, but the war had undeniably

¹⁶ *NFPM*, 23.11.1916, p.8. The note was signed by Šmeral, Staněk and Maštálka.

¹⁷ *TD*, 25.11.1916, p.223.

¹⁸ *MI*, K2065, 106 ex1917.

¹⁹ *RT*, II, 21.10, 23.10, [22.11], 23.11.1916, pp.217-218, 227, 230.

²⁰ Anonymous, p.238. Certainly, the matter was not often discussed in the correspondence seen by the censor.

²¹ *Ö70*, 50, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 18.12.1914.

²² *RT*, II, 1.9, 16.9.1916, pp.203, 205.

²³ *Ö95G*, 4, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 28.9.1916.

²⁴ *Ö86Nr.IG*, 4, Tschirschky-Jagow, 8.8.1916.

²⁵ *Ö95G*, 4, Goldmann report, 26.9.1916.

robbed Franz Joseph and his house of a degree of the popular goodwill which had been carefully built up during the decades of peace. On the other hand, men such as Polzer believed that public opinion placed the blame solely on Franz Joseph's advisers, statesmen and court dignitaries for isolating him and monopolizing power.²⁶

Karl himself had been spared opprobrium, though this was partly due to the fact that he was still comparatively little known among the population.²⁷ As *De Telegraaf* quipped sarcastically after Franz Joseph's passing: "The emperor is dead! Long live...an emperor whose name his subjects barely know".²⁸ This anonymity was certainly an advantage in comparison to his famously misanthropic and bigoted uncle, who had been widely loathed.²⁹ But, despite Karl's increased exposure in the press after Sarajevo, the situation did not change significantly.³⁰ Although his image was now carefully cultivated,³¹ old clichés died hard. As Goldmann reported two months before Karl's accession to the throne: "He is seen as a charming, but most insignificant, young man who prior to the war devoted his main attention to the cinema and operettas."³² Three days into his reign, the Parisian daily *Le Petit Journal* reproduced pre-war gossip according to which Karl was "a rake, a gambler and drunkard, arrogant and unintelligent".³³ Meanwhile, in Austria-Hungary, the portrayals of the new emperor in the press were limited to officially sanctioned – or indeed officially manufactured – vignettes, often claiming to be from sources in his entourage.³⁴ His portrait in the *Fremden-Blatt* was characteristic of these, highlighting his popular appeal, his benevolence, his equanimity, his simultaneous single-mindedness and receptiveness to the opinions of others, his devotion as a husband and father, his love of Viennese music and expertise in the local dialect, his skills as a driver, his enjoyment of riding and fishing and, of course, his and Zita's hunting

²⁶ Polzer, p.121.

²⁷ Kray, p.14.

²⁸ ZA, K45, 29.11.1916.

²⁹ Auffenberg, p.226; Czernin, pp.34-35, 46; RT, I, 28.6.1914, p.610.

³⁰ Kray, p.15.

³¹ NFPM, 29.11.1914, p.4; special report of the *Neues Wiener Journal* in 7.1916, approved by the AOK, quoted in: A-H, pp.68-71.

³² Ö95G, 4, Goldmann report, 26.9.1916.

³³ ZA, K45, French press review, 1.12.1916.

³⁴ NFPA, 22.11, p.3; RPN, 22.11, p.2; RPM, 25.11, p.6; 9.12, p.6; FBM, 22.11.1916, pp.19-20.

pro prowess.³⁵ Newspapers generally emphasized his reputation for modesty, bonhomie, kindness, humanity, courage, chivalry – none of which were necessarily untrue.³⁶

His wartime service, however, provided the most valuable publicity. As the emperor's representative on the front, he had used his linguistic ability,³⁷ affability, humour and common touch to good effect, while his active duty – commanding Alpine Germans, Magyars, Czechs and Romanians on the Italian Front – had established his credentials as “a successful army leader and war hero”.³⁸ That he had taken part in battle and witnessed bloodshed certainly brought him closer to millions of his future subjects, and helped boost his fame and popularity.³⁹ To compensate for Karl's indisputable inexperience, the press argued that the war had provided all the training, maturity and wisdom required for his calling, going so far as to claim that no other heir had enjoyed such a valuable apprenticeship.⁴⁰

Uncontroversial, likeable, youthful and surrounded by his picturesque family,⁴¹ Karl was an easy figure to promote and for whom to drum up enthusiasm. And although convention and deference to the monarch – not to mention censorship – allowed for nothing less than a grateful, eager and reverent reception of the new emperor, there was nonetheless a degree of genuine enthusiasm for Karl. Not only was he blameless in the decision to go to war and untainted by the decay, nepotism and corruption of the old system, he had never dabbled in politics. As the liberal *Neue Freie Presse* wrote: “He has the advantage of arriving on the throne with the full impartiality of youth, without any party able to boast of greater closeness to him or any political group having to fear [...] that he approaches it with prejudice.”⁴² As a result, he seemed to be welcomed from all quarters. General Krauß noted: “Everybody expected from [him] the liberating act, everybody expected improvement, recovery”.⁴³ *Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.*⁴⁴ Informed

³⁵ *FBM*, 22.11.1916, p.20. The article noted that two-thirds of Karl's time was taken up by military work and other duties and that he devoted the rest of his time to further education and relaxation.

³⁶ *ZA*, K45, Viennese press review; *RPM*, 9.12.1916, p.6.

³⁷ Czernin, p.35. Which Franz Ferdinand was notably lacking.

³⁸ *NBT*, K5, 16.1; *NFPA*, 22.11, p.3; *RPN*, 22.11.1916, p.2; *ÖIZ*, p.70; A-H, pp.61-81. The *Neue Freie Presse* stressed that he was “a soldier in body and soul”.

³⁹ *NFPM*, 22.11.1916, p.2.

⁴⁰ *FBM*, 22.11.1916, p.19.

⁴¹ *NB*, K11, p.7; Auffenberg, p.462; Plener, III, p.449; *RT*, II, p.236, 30.11; *Ö86Nr.1*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 3.12.1916. On the occasion of Franz Joseph's funeral, Karl, Zita and particularly the young Crown Prince Otto made a touching impression on the crowd.

⁴² *NFPM*, 22.11.1916, p.2.

⁴³ Krauß, p.81.

circles expected fundamental political changes,⁴⁵ a purge at the court,⁴⁶ or even a redefining of Austria-Hungary's relation with Germany.⁴⁷

Inevitably, each nation of the Empire hoped that the new emperor would satisfy their respective (and often mutually incompatible) aspirations. The Polish Club, for instance, sent him a telegram with “the assurance of its unbreakable dynastic loyalty and deepest reverence”, and wishing him success in the fulfilment of his historical mission.⁴⁸ To be sure, the Poles interpreted this mission very differently from the Ukrainians. And while the Czech press universally expressed the desire to see the crown of Saint Wenceslas on Karl's head,⁴⁹ few local Germans longed for his coronation as King of Bohemia. Czech newspapers also made clear their conviction that Karl would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor in his munificence towards a nation he knew well – having lived,⁵⁰ studied and served⁵¹ in Bohemia – and of whose “absolute loyalty and devotion” he was “surely aware”.⁵² Again, Czechs and Germans assessed these footsteps differently. In fact, the military commander in Prague had complained to the war surveillance office that the obituary for Franz Joseph in *Národní listy* had intimated that the late emperor had wanted to help the Czechs achieve their state rights.⁵³ Still, Karl could genuinely take heart from the position of the Czech Union, whose presidium transmitted the following declaration to him after his accession to the throne: “The fate of our nation still remains inseparably bound to that of the dynasty and of the state, which is currently leading a hard fight against a world of enemies. In this solemn and sad moment, we vow to contribute with all our strength in order to bring this hard struggle to an honourable conclusion as soon as possible, which guarantees the continued existence and further untroubled development of the Monarchy and of its peoples [...]. Gathered around the august person of His Imperial and Royal Majesty Karl, we want to devote all our

⁴⁴ Anonymous, p.238; Auffenberg, p.462; Károlyi, p.154; Kray, p.114; Margutti, pp.87-155; Sylvester, p.53.

⁴⁵ *NPH*, pp.19-20.

⁴⁶ Polzer, p.121.

⁴⁷ Werkmann, p.38.

⁴⁸ *FBM*, 29.11.1916, p.4.

⁴⁹ *ZA*, K45, Czech press review, 2.12.1916.

⁵⁰ *NFPM*, 17.8.1917, p.7. Karl had spent some of the first years of his youth in Brno and Prague, where his father was garrisoned.

⁵¹ For Karl's time in Brandýs, see: Milan Novák, *Náš arcivévoda, císař a král Karel I. Rakouský v městě Brandýse nad Labem – Staré Boleslavi* (Brno, 2011).

⁵² *ZA*, K45, Czech press review, 24.12.1916.

⁵³ *KŮA*, K167, 89779, *MKP-KŮA*, 24.11.1916.

strength to the peaceful work which will begin after the successful end to the war.”⁵⁴ The Croat–Slovene Club also presented Karl “with the most respectful homage of the Croats and Slovenes and vow[ed] loyalty to him, as before not only in word, but also in deed”. However, it also resolved to “to take every suitable measure for the joining of all Slovene and Croat forces and for the unification of the Slovene and Croat peoples under the sceptre of the Habsburgs, in order thereby to strengthen the glory and power of the dynasty and monarchy, and on the other hand to secure the existence and the development of the population”.⁵⁵ The latter part of the declaration was, unsurprisingly, censored.⁵⁶ Slovene newspapers, while they welcomed Karl warmly, expressed their expectation that he would rule on the basis of the equality of all nations in Austria.⁵⁷ Yet the Hungarian press, full of praise for Karl’s knowledge of Hungarian, his awe of Hungarian soldiers and his apparent love of the Hungarian people, also expected Karl to stay faithful to Franz Joseph’s guiding principles – the *Pester Lloyd* wrote that he could not possibly rule any other way.⁵⁸ This, of course, signified the strict upholding of the dualist system, of German and Magyar dominance, and the preservation of the integrity of the lands of the crown of Saint Stephen, all of which was intolerable to most other nationalities of the Empire (not to mention to the new emperor himself). Largely unaware of Karl’s inclinations, convictions and plans, national representatives had to tread carefully. Somewhat nervously, therefore, they sought to curry favour with the new emperor by stressing their boundless loyalty to him and underlining the inalienable rights which, they claimed, his predecessor had granted them.

On the other hand, *Reich* Germans were confident about Karl: neither the civilian nor the military authorities really doubted his good disposition towards them and the alliance. In their paternalistic eyes, the heir was not only *nibelungentreu* and German-minded but also reasonable and amenable, not to say pliable. Aware of his isolation in Vienna, they had sought to fill the void, with Wilhelm the obvious choice of mentor. Karl had already met the Kaiser in Breslau in December 1914⁵⁹ and in Mézières in

⁵⁴ *NFPM*, 25.11, p.6.

⁵⁵ *MI*, K2064, 29169.

⁵⁶ Feliks J. Bister, “*Majestät, es ist zu spät...*”, *Anton Korošec und die slowenische Politik im Wiener Reichsrat bis 1918* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1995), p.193.

⁵⁷ *RPM*, 2.12, p.6.

⁵⁸ *ZA*, K45, Hungarian press review, 22.11; 24.11.1916.

⁵⁹ Conrad, V, p.649.

January 1915⁶⁰ but, later that year, Tschirschky pleaded in favour of closer contact between the two, arguing that “the young man needs support somewhere; he can and should only find it with us”. In particular, he thought that Karl would be more receptive to criticism of his country if it came from the Kaiser’s mouth.⁶¹ He also pointed out that Karl had repeatedly stressed his desire to see more often a man “in whom he had full confidence and from whom he had already learnt a lot”.⁶² The two were certainly on very friendly terms and exchanged telegrams.⁶³ Yet Karl apparently believed that Archduke Friedrich’s clan – which presumably included his wife Isabella as well as Conrad – was preventing this.⁶⁴ Prince Max Egon zu Fürstenberg, vice-president of the Austrian House of Lords and a member of the Prussian House of Lords, confirmed to Baernreither that the Austrians were not fostering contact between Wilhelm and Karl. He revealed that, upon the recent announcement of the Kaiser’s visit to Austrian headquarters, Karl had been deliberately called away. Baernreither thought this attitude a grave mistake, believing that Austria-Hungary’s fate depended on Karl’s ability to take Wilhelm’s advice and form his political thoughts and designs accordingly. He hoped that the German emperor would spare no effort “to influence the still malleable mind of our current heir.”⁶⁵ This was precisely Wilhelm’s aim and he therefore approved Tschirschky’s proposal enthusiastically.⁶⁶ In the following weeks of October and November 1915, he met Karl twice and spoke unsparingly about Austria-Hungary’s need for reform – Karl seemed to agree or, at least, did not openly disagree.⁶⁷

True, the German hierarchy eventually recognized that Karl was powerless for the time being and that no changes would occur as long as Franz Joseph and Stürgkh were in power.⁶⁸ Bethmann lamented the fact that the old emperor could not be made to abdicate in favour of his great-nephew, who was not even in a position to lay the

⁶⁰ *PA*, I, K500, 2-6, G. Hohenlohe-AA, 15.1; G. Hohenlohe-Berchtold, 18.1.1915; Josef Stürgkh, p.112.

⁶¹ *Ö86Nr.IG*, 4, Tschirschky-Jagow, 16.10.1915.

⁶² *D180G*, 1, Tschirschky-Jagow, Private letter, 10.10; *NB*, K6, 28.10.1915. According to Baernreither, Karl was completely enamoured with Wilhelm.

⁶³ *NSE*, K1, 5, Wilhelm-Karl, 9.5.1915; undated (but mentions the recent sacking of Sarraill, which occurred on 22.7.1915). In both these messages, Wilhelm thanked Karl warmly for his kind telegrams.

⁶⁴ *D180G*, 1, Tschirschky-Jagow, Private letter, 10.10.1915. This comment was added at the end of Tschirschky’s letter to Jagow, perhaps by Jagow himself.

⁶⁵ *NB*, K6, 28.10.1915.

⁶⁶ *Ö86Nr.IG*, 4, Tschirschky-AA, 29.10.1915; *NB*, K6, 28.10.1915. Tucher, the Bavarian Legate in Vienna, told Baernreither that Wilhelm had made Karl the particular object of his care and attention and that he was nurturing this relationship most eagerly.

⁶⁷ *Ö95G*, 4, Treutler-AA, 1.11.1915; *Ö101*, 37, Treutler-Bethmann, 29.11.1915.

⁶⁸ *D180G*, 4, Hindenburg-Bethmann, 19.9; Bethmann-Hindenburg, 29.9.1916.

foundations for the transformation of the Habsburg Monarchy.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the chancellor saw Karl as his best hope of influencing Austrian policy. In September 1916, he suggested inviting him to army headquarters so that the military and Wilhelm could underline the considerable dangers threatening Austria-Hungary, and enjoin him to spur Franz Joseph into action.⁷⁰ It was during Wilhelm and Karl's long discussion a few days later in Pleß that Karl agreed that Stürgkh and Burián were dispensable and that the country wanted new men.⁷¹ From the summer of 1916, Seeckt's position as Karl's chief of staff had offered a further opportunity to influence Karl, and both Wilhelm and Ludendorff had urged the general to "win him over to the German standpoint".⁷² But when reports emerged of the increasingly strained relationship between Karl and Seeckt, Grünau warned the chancellor and the secretary of state that the situation could not be allowed to continue as "it goes against our striving to instil confidence in Karl and to get him to act in accordance with our views".⁷³ Convinced that they had a staunch ally in the future emperor of Austria-Hungary, it was only natural that the Germans sought to cultivate him accordingly. Certainly, Karl rarely gave them reason to doubt his understanding for their position and respect for their interests. In late August 1916, for example, he told Seeckt that he did not wish to annex Poland and that he was happy to support the German-Polish solution, as his chief concern was to avoid tension between the allies.⁷⁴

This is not to say that Karl was a soft touch. He acquitted himself well of his mission to German headquarters in Mézières in January 1915, where he had gone to defend both his country's stance on the Italian question and, in light of alleged Czech desertions, its army's reputation.⁷⁵ In the former matter, when his hosts suggested that Austria-Hungary should sacrifice the South Tyrol to stave off the Italians, he had apparently riposted: "The renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine would certainly have avoided the World War [...]: why did you not cede Alsace-Lorraine long ago?"

⁶⁹ *D180G*, 4, Bethmann-Hindenburg, 29.9.1916.

⁷⁰ *Ö95G*, 4, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 28.9.1916; *Ö95G*, 4, Bethmann-Wilhelm, 30.9.1916.

⁷¹ *W20c*, 5, conversation with Wilhelm, 9.10.1916; *NBG*, Karl's report, 9.10. Karl named Count Nikolaus Szécsen and the ambassador to Berlin Gottfried Hohenlohe as possible successors to Burián (and Konrad Hohenlohe as Stürgkh's replacement). Wilhelm urged him to pursue these changes for the sake of his fatherland and his future as emperor. Karl mentioned none of this in his report to Franz Joseph.

⁷² Seeckt, pp.460, 471.

⁷³ *Ö86Nr. IG*, 4, Grünau-AA, 7.10.1916.

⁷⁴ Seeckt, Seeckt-Ludendorff, 10.1916, pp.471-472.

⁷⁵ Josef Stürgkh, p.112.

Moreover, the Tyrol is more to us than Alsace-Lorraine to the Germans.”⁷⁶ And when speaking to Wilhelm in Pleß, Karl insisted that Austria-Hungary had to maintain her presence in occupied Poland and that these territories had to remain a bargaining tool for future negotiations with Russia. Such views were hardly conducive to avoiding tension, and Wilhelm was obviously displeased.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the abiding impression Karl made was one of loyalty and malleability (although Jagow did once express concern about Braganza influences on Karl – that is, those of his family-in-law).⁷⁸ As soon as he arrived on the throne, he sent a telegram to Wilhelm, assuring him of his unbreakable commitment: “Just as your and [Franz Joseph’s] loyalty to the alliance stood firm during this World War, so it will remain for us, as the shining memory and the blessing of the immortal lead us on the joint path towards the honourable success of our just cause. Amen.”⁷⁹

In Allied countries, despite his popularity in Germany and his enemy status, Karl’s reception was not entirely negative, especially in France. Much to the chagrin of the Monarchy’s foes, such as Masaryk and Beneš, the case for Karl was easily (and frequently) made: his wife was a Bourbon Princess, two of his brothers-in-law were fighting in the Belgian army and, crucially, he had not been responsible for the war. Consequently, he would have no interest in prolonging it and endangering his throne.⁸⁰ Newspapers in France, though admitting their ignorance of Karl and his intentions, generally appeared to welcome the new imperial couple, even though the belief prevailed that they would not succeed in setting the Monarchy upon a different foreign political course.⁸¹ Karl’s controversial remark in Teschen on the Germans’ role and mission in Austria-Hungary was frequently regurgitated as evidence of his convictions and of the inevitability of his becoming Wilhelm’s satellite.⁸² But, as a

⁷⁶ Werkmann, pp.26-27; *NB*, K6, 7.3.1915; *NBT*, K5, 26.1.1915. Montenuovo reported gleefully to Berchtold that Karl – showered with fatherly advice and instructions on domestic and foreign policy by Wilhelm – had apparently stood his ground.

⁷⁷ *W20G*, 5, conversation with Wilhelm, 9.10.1916. He retorted that Austria had to re-conquer her lost territories herself since Russia would never swap them for the wasteland of Congress Poland. He also insisted that Germany needed Russian Poland as a buffer state, since the Russian border was too close to Berlin. According to him, Karl said nothing in response.

⁷⁸ *NB*, K6, 8.11.1915. Baernreither responded that he had it on good authority that Zita did not meddle in politics but Jagow had replied “come, come”, as if to say he knew better.

⁷⁹ *NFPM*, 24.11, p.2.

⁸⁰ Beneš, I, p.236; Masaryk, p.250. Beneš wrote that Karl’s accession to the throne was “the beginning of a tough period for us”.

⁸¹ *ZA*, K45, French press review, 29.11.1916, 5.2.1917; *KÜA*, K173, 93123, *PDW-KÜA*, 29.12.1916.

⁸² *KÜA*, K173, 93123.

Bourbon, Zita was considered a beneficial and promising influence.⁸³ In July 1914, *Le Figaro* had already reported with satisfaction that she was “une vraie Française d’esprit et de cœur” and that she and Karl spoke French to each other.⁸⁴ Her keen political interest was also reported, as was the apparent concern in Vienna and Budapest regarding her future involvement in these matters.⁸⁵ British newspapers were more determinedly of the opinion that Karl would only be a puppet in the hands of the German emperor, and that Vienna was condemned to be Berlin’s vassal.⁸⁶ According to *The New Statesman*, the road to *Mitteleuropa* was now wide open.⁸⁷ The *Daily Telegraph* described Karl as an unknown quantity, but pointed out that his new position required a level of wisdom and tact which there was no reason to expect from somebody whose life so far had been no different to that of the average prince of any royal family. Austrian policy would in any case stifle any great qualities he might have.⁸⁸ In Italy, the media were even more dismissive, expecting little from a deeply clerical Habsburg married to a Parma.⁸⁹ Conversely, the Vatican’s *L’Osservatore Romano* attracted sharp criticism for its praise of Karl.⁹⁰

Karl also received positive reviews in the neutral press. In Denmark, *Politiken* argued that the war had revealed Austria-Hungary’s resilience and predicted that Karl would succeed in his task: “From all sides, praise rings out for his modest manner, his strong sense of justice, his enthusiasm for work and his striving for the deepest possible understanding of the circumstances. He and his wife enjoy a popularity which extends to all strata of society and all nationalities.”⁹¹ In Switzerland, Germanophone newspapers – unsurprisingly – welcomed Karl with friendly wishes.⁹² The Francophone press, however, largely echoed the feelings of the French media in adopting a wait-and-see attitude towards the new couple, though fearing that the transition signified a further stage in the Germanization of Austria-Hungary and a

⁸³ *Ibid.*; ZA, K45, French press review, 1.12.1916.

⁸⁴ *Ö86Nr.1*, 20, 8.7.1914; ZA, K45, Swiss press review, 27.11.1916. However, she had once told an Italian correspondent in Vienna, stunned to hear her fluency in Italian: “But I am an Italian! I was born in the *Villa delle Pianore*, and in the family we prefer to speak Italian”.

⁸⁵ ZA, K45, French press review, 18.12; *NFPA*, 1.12.1916, p.3; A-H, p.53.

⁸⁶ *KÜA*, K173, 93123

⁸⁷ ZA, K45, British press review, 5.12.1916.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; 4.12.1916.

⁸⁹ *KÜA*, K173, 93123, *PDW-KÜA*, 29.12; ZA, K45, Italian press review, 28.11.1916.

⁹⁰ ZA, K45, Italian press review, 28.11.1916.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Danish press review, 27.11.1916.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Swiss press review, 27.11.1916; *KÜA*, K173, 93123.

strengthening of the Berlin–Budapest axis.⁹³ The *New York Times* admitted that Karl had the merit of being a twenty-nine-year-old, cheery *Wiener Blut*. It wondered whether Karl would tire of Wilhelm’s domination and of dualism, but concluded: “If [he] is a true Habsburg, his main aim will be to increase the glory of his crown.”⁹⁴

All observers could nevertheless agree that Karl’s task was formidable. The *Extrablatt* in Vienna commented that although conditions had been trying when Franz Joseph came to the throne, they were now “gloomy and fateful beyond compare”.⁹⁵ The *Züricher Post* remarked that destiny had loaded him with a burden which few mortals faced.⁹⁶ As the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* wrote cheerlessly: “At this moment, there is not a beggar on earth who would envy [him] his Dual crown.”⁹⁷

It had long become a cliché both at home and abroad that the Monarchy would not survive the death of Franz Joseph.⁹⁸ Yet there were few signs of fissuring upon Karl’s accession to the throne. As the *Neue Freie Presse* pointed out, Karl was receiving the crown “in full civil peace”.⁹⁹ In the population, war-weariness was the prevailing emotion. Penfield had already written in April 1916: “Probably there is not one person in the Dual Monarchy who is not heartily sick of the war and wishes for an early peace.”¹⁰⁰ This had undoubtedly begun to damage the people’s confidence in the institutions of the Monarchy, and therefore in the dynasty, but had not dented their loyalty. Helped by his youth, charm and neutrality, Karl enjoyed popular goodwill, albeit bound up with considerable expectations. In order to meet these, good preparation, favourable opportunities and considerable skill were required. The first he did not have, the second he did not seize and the third he did not show.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ ZA, K45, American press review, 21.11.1916.

⁹⁵ ZA, K45.

⁹⁶ Ibid., Swiss press review, 27.11.1916.

⁹⁷ ZA, K45, 29.11.1916.

⁹⁸ Alexander Freiherr von Musulin, *Das Haus am Ballplatz, Erinnerungen eines österreichisch-ungarischen Diplomaten* (Munich, 1924), p.284; *Erdödy*, pp.18-19; Ludendorff, I, p.322; Chlumecky, p.51; ZA, K45, Dutch press review, 29.11.1916.

⁹⁹ *NFPA*, 22.11.1916, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ USDS, *LP*, I, Penfield-Lansing, 15.4.1916, p.654.

CHAPTER IV

KARL'S PRECARIOUS FIRST STEPS

Astonishingly, none of the statesmen or ministers who oversaw Karl's limited initiation into the business of government had helped him plan his first steps in power. In fact, the matter had been ignored, and even as Franz Joseph lay dying, no preparations were made to guide him.¹ Konrad Hohenlohe therefore took it upon himself to discuss the matter with "a few gentlemen", who agreed to start by advising Karl to retain existing ministers and court dignitaries. Caught on the hop, the young emperor complied.² Likewise, no provisions had been made for Karl's accession manifesto, which was hurriedly composed overnight following Franz Joseph's death, in order to be published the following day.³ Two civil servants in the foreign ministry, Baron Alexander von Musulin, the original author of the ultimatum to Serbia, and Baron Franz von Matscheko, composer of the eponymous memorandum, each submitted a draft.⁴ The former's contained a panegyric to the late emperor, and a pious, modest and emotional declaration by the new monarch; the latter's, which was chosen, was less sentimental and more forward-looking.⁵ In this version, Karl nevertheless praised Franz Joseph for creating "the lasting foundations for peaceful coexistence and free development" in Austria-Hungary and – even more optimistically – for leading her "to the height of power, where she is now winning the battle against enemies all around". He emphasized the image of a militarily strong empire, defiant towards its enemies, ardently loyal to its allies, and fighting only for its integrity. Despite this, Karl had ordered the inclusion of a sentence expressing his burning desire for peace:⁶ "I want to do everything to banish the horrors and sacrifices of the war as soon as possible and to win back for my peoples the sorely missed

¹ Polzer, pp.111-112, 122.

² *NFPM*, 23.11, p.2; *NFPA*, 25.11, p.2. Handwritten letters to Koerber and Tisza, 21.11 (original of the former in: *MRP*, K291, 6009); to members of the royal household, 23.11.1916.

³ *NFPA*, 22.11, p.2; *NFPM*, 23.11.1916, p.1; Polzer, p.111. Polzer noted that, on the other hand, "a number of distinguished men" had prepared an accession manifesto for Franz Ferdinand in which "every word had been scrupulously weighed and had been the object of exhaustive discussion". This is probably a reference to the drafts composed by his friend Eichhoff (several of which are in: *NE*, 18; one version was published by Eichhoff himself in: *RP*, 28.3.1926, p.2).

⁴ *NS*, K6, 23.11.1916; Musulin, p.283.

⁵ *Ibid.*; both in HHSStA, *MdÄ*, *Administrative Registratur*, Fach 1, K58.

⁶ *Ibid.*; Polzer, p.111; Kray, pp.114, 119. The passage was indeed added in pencil to the first typed draft. In total, three drafts were produced based on Matscheko's original.

blessings of peace”. But despite the manifesto’s stylistic excellence, dignified tone, and enthusiastic reception by the press,⁷ it was devoid of real content. In Polzer’s words: “It gave the painful impression of a piece of work barren of ideas, carried out confusedly and at the last moment”.⁸ The ill-prepared government contributed virtually nothing – Koerber’s only input was the hurried intercalation of a well-meaning but platitudinous passage:⁹ “I will be a just and loving prince to my peoples. I will maintain their constitutional liberties and other rights, and will carefully guard the equity of rights for all. It will be my unceasing endeavour to foster the moral and spiritual welfare of my peoples, to protect freedom and order in my states, and to secure the fruits of honest toil for all working members of society.” Even though reforms were eagerly expected of the young emperor, none were announced.¹⁰ Karl merely expressed his confidence that his peoples, “carried by the feeling of a common bond and by deep love for the fatherland [would] work together in the enterprise of peaceful renewal and rejuvenation in order to lead both states of the Monarchy and the affiliated lands of Bosnia and Herzegovina to a time of internal bloom, of uplifting and strengthening”.¹¹ If anything, this statement suggested that the dualist structure (and the awkward, unsettled status of Bosnia-Herzegovina) would remain unchanged. Indeed, he vowed to “continue and complete” the work of his uncle, who had left the throne in a state of “undiminished resplendence”. In light of Karl’s lack of political preparation and of prior contact with Koerber’s newly formed government, such a vague and non-committal manifesto was probably inevitable. And ultimately, it was without consequence.

On the day of its publication, however, Karl took an altogether more fateful step when he agreed to be crowned in Budapest. Indeed, the coronation oath bound the king to maintain the constitution and the lands of the crown of Saint Stephen, thus making him dependent on the gentry-dominated Hungarian parliament and preventing any reform of the Empire affecting Hungarian territorial integrity.¹² Polzer, who had long feared the coronation and its consequences, claimed that he had not had the opportunity to discuss the matter with Karl due to the latter’s military postings – an

⁷ *NFPM*, 23.11.1916, p.1.

⁸ Polzer, p.111; *NS*, K6, 23.11.1916.

⁹ *AR*, 1, K58; Polzer, p.112; *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.229. Again, this passage was added in pencil to the original draft.

¹⁰ Polzer, pp.111-112.

¹¹ *AR*, 1, K58.

¹² Polzer, p.112-114. Until he took the oath, the king could sanction no Hungarian law.

implausible oversight in light of their frequent political exchanges, and contradicted elsewhere in his memoirs.¹³ Only when Franz Joseph's health took a turn for the worse had he composed a memorandum exposing the several contradictions between the oaths to the Austrian *Reichsrat* and to the Hungarian crown and recommending their postponement until these legal conflicts were removed – of course, he hoped that this process would be lengthy, or even fail.¹⁴ However, wary of pestering Karl at such a time, he turned to Wallis, although due to the “small vagaries of destiny” he was unable to transmit it until the evening of Franz Joseph's passing. By then, Polzer knew he would be beaten to it by Tisza.¹⁵ Indeed, the Hungarian prime minister appeared in Schönbrunn at 11.00 the following morning¹⁶ and obtained Karl's consent. Tisza had the relevant autograph letter drafted immediately after.¹⁷ Even though according to Hungarian law the new king had up to six months after the death of his predecessor to be crowned, Tisza knew he could not afford to waste time, lest Karl listen to the counsel of men determined to break Magyar hegemony, such as his late uncle's former advisers, in particular Hohenlohe.¹⁸ Indeed, Franz Ferdinand had intended immediately to delay the coronation in order to avoid being bound by its prescriptions. Eichhoff, who had composed the relevant accession manifesto drafts for him, claimed to have had several long conversations with Karl during his heirship – obviously not on that subject.¹⁹ Thus Tisza, who had cultivated his relationship with Karl during the war – he had been the first to present himself to him only a few days after Sarajevo²⁰ – had no difficulty in convincing the inexperienced young emperor, awed by him,²¹ still grieving, and unaware of the full implications of his decision. In particular, Tisza persuaded him that the coronation was the first step towards peace.²² Consequently, on 23 November, Karl issued a handwritten letter to Tisza announcing his intention of “being crowned as soon as possible King of Hungary, Croatia-

¹³ Polzer, pp.50, 112.

¹⁴ Polzer, pp.112-113; *NPH*, p.52. This had not been a problem for Franz Joseph, as he had never taken the Austrian oath. Polzer composed his memorandum in conjunction with “a certain person familiar with the intentions of Franz Ferdinand” – again, this was probably Eichhoff, whose drafts highlighted these contradictions and made the emperor's oaths dependent on their removal.

¹⁵ Polzer, p.113.

¹⁶ Polzer, p.115; *NFPM*, 23.11.1916, p.5.

¹⁷ Polzer, p.115.

¹⁸ Polzer, pp.116-117; *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.230.

¹⁹ *NE*, 150, p.36.

²⁰ Margutti, p.87; *NPH*, p.24; Polzer, p.78. Stürgkh had still not introduced himself to Karl five months later.

²¹ *UR*, II, 3, pp.67-68. In his personal notes, he had described him as “the cleverest statesman in the Monarchy”.

²² Polzer, pp.115-116.

Slavonia and Dalmatia” and instructing him to initiate preparations with parliament on the matter.²³

On the same day, Karl also signed a letter for Koerber ordering him to make the relevant suggestions for his taking the oath to the Austrian constitution.²⁴ (According to Article Eight of the 1867 Constitution, the emperor had to swear before both Houses of Parliament to “maintain steadfastly the constitution of the kingdoms and provinces represented in the *Reichsrat* and to govern in agreement with the latter and with the general laws.”)²⁵ Although there was no deadline for the oath, Koerber, having obtained the approval of the cabinet after a lively debate that morning,²⁶ recommended that Karl take the first steps immediately.²⁷ The prime minister, however, knew that the constitution was inadequate and irremediable, and accepted that it would have to be violated. Indeed, he had advised Karl to refrain initially from rule by decree, take the oath, recall parliament and wait for it to prove itself unfit for work before reneging on his word and governing via Paragraph Fourteen.²⁸ In Koerber’s eyes, the *Reichsrat*’s inevitable failure would provide the justification for authoritarian action. Thereafter, Koerber even told Karl that, after the oath-taking, he would vacate his office in order to give him a completely free hand and let him appoint whomever he wanted.²⁹ In the meantime, the oath would re-establish parity with Hungary, and serve to inaugurate Karl’s reign with a show of strict constitutionality, and thus avoid damaging not only the new emperor and the dynasty, but also the state and Koerber himself.³⁰ This was a matter of principle for Koerber who, though he opposed parliamentary rule and considered the civil service to be the basis of power, did not oppose parliament.³¹ Bypassing it *a priori* was therefore inconceivable. Aware that his own programme had been torn apart by Franz Joseph’s death,³² his chief concern was now to avoid upheaval, to ensure the legitimacy and

²³ *NFPM*, 24.11.1916, pp.1, 5.

²⁴ *NFPM*, 24.11.1916, p.1; original in *MRP*, K291, 6035, 23.11.

²⁵ *RGBl. 1867*, Nr.145, 21.12.1867, p.400.

²⁶ *NFPM*, 23.11, p.6; *RT*, II, 26.11, p.232; *AVA, Ministerratsprotokolle*, Band 17, 23.11.1916.

²⁷ *MRP*, K291, 6042, Koerber’s report to Karl, undated (but necessarily 23 November since Koerber referred to the approval of the ministerial council which had taken place that morning, and since Karl signed the relevant letter that day).

²⁸ *SM*, p.149; Polzer, p.122; *RT*, II, 23.11, 26.11, 16.12, pp.229, 233, 244; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12; *FJ*, II, 11.1916, pp.415-416, 418.

²⁹ *RT*, II, 26.11.1916, p.233.

³⁰ *SM*, p.149; *RT*, II, 23.11, 26.11.1916, pp.228, 233; *NB*, K11, p.7.

³¹ Friedjung’s obituary, “Ernest von Koerber”, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.3; *RT*, II, [22.11], 7.12.1916, pp.227, 238; Lindström, pp.49, 52.

³² *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12.1916.

continuity of the state,³³ and to maintain the country's economic life until a satisfactory end to the war.³⁴

According to Hohenlohe, Karl admitted that Koerber might be right but refused, as a new monarch, to adopt his view.³⁵ On the other hand, Karl had told Wallis that he intended to be crowned not just in Hungary but also in Austria and Bohemia.³⁶ Thus, in spite of his apparent opposition to Koerber's plan and of his awareness of existing conflicts between the Austrian and Hungarian constitutions,³⁷ he signed the document which the prime minister submitted to him.³⁸ In any case, the passage which the prime minister had added to the accession manifesto made any evasion of the oath difficult.

Koerber's fall

Having obtained Karl's consent, Koerber forged ahead single-mindedly. The same afternoon, he met Sylvester, the president of the Lower House, and again confirmed his intention to ensure constitutionality and to re-open parliament.³⁹ On 28 November, the first steps were taken to clear up the *Reichsrat* building, which had been turned into a hospital – the interior ministry expected it to be ready by 15 December, or earlier.⁴⁰ Most deputies therefore inferred that parliament would reconvene in order to settle some formalities – either in late December prior to the Hungarian coronation or during January – before beginning work in full a few weeks after.⁴¹ In the meantime, Koerber did nothing to conciliate those Germans who had expected the prior fulfilment by decree of their so-called preconditions.⁴² Though these men continually called attention to the fact that Stürgkh had assented to these shortly before his death,⁴³ he remained unmoved. (He was not alone – many expressed derisive

³³ Lindström, p.71.

³⁴ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12.1916.

³⁵ Polzer, pp.122-123.

³⁶ Polzer, p.118.

³⁷ Polzer, p.118.

³⁸ *SM*, p.149. Apparently after "haggling" with him.

³⁹ *NFPM*, 24.11, p.4; *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.229.

⁴⁰ *NFPM*, 24.11, p.4; 29.11, p.9; 2.12, p.8; *NFPA*, 9.11, p.1; 24.11.1916, p.3.

⁴¹ *NFPM*, 3.12, p.9; 10.12, p.9; *RPM*, 26.11, p.2; 29.11, p.4; *PTM*, 2.12, p.7; *RT*, II, 23.11, p.229; *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, p.419.

⁴² *NFPM*, 6.12, p.6; 14.12, p.3; *RT*, II, 23.11, 26.11, 28.11.1916, pp.229, 233, 235; *NB*, K11, p.8.

⁴³ *NFPM*, 6.12, p.6; 10.12, p.9; 14.12, p.3; 17.12, p.1; *RPM*, 7.12, p.6; *AZM*, 7.12, p.5; Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich, *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher to King Ludwig III of Bavaria, 14.12.1916.

scepticism about Stürgkh's alleged testament, which was nowhere to be found and which nobody had ever read.)⁴⁴ On 28 November, when Koerber met the deputies from the German Workers' Party⁴⁵ (a small constituent of the *Nationalverband*), he flatly rejected any octroi and insisted that it was parliament's responsibility to find a solution to all outstanding issues.⁴⁶ Likewise, he reassured the board of the Czech Union three days later that he placed the greatest value on the parliamentary resolution of all political matters.⁴⁷ Karl played along, and when he and Zita received the presidium of the Lower House on 1 December, he expressed his hope that parliament would soon return to prosperous work.⁴⁸

The press welcomed Karl's decision to take the oath on the constitution, and pointed to its good reception by the public, and even by German deputies.⁴⁹ Despite patent dismay in certain circles, the German bourgeois camp did initially seem to react with equanimity. Indeed, many who were shocked and displeased by the turn of events nevertheless believed that Koerber would help achieve their programme, at least in part.⁵⁰ Certainly, the basic outlook of this staunch Josephist bureaucrat was not wildly at odds with the nationalists': he thought the power of the provincial diets a "cancer", he favoured the imposition of German as language of state,⁵¹ was enthused by Naumann's *Mitteleuropa*⁵² and was by no means pro-Czech.⁵³ Not unreasonably therefore, the *Nationalverband* at first showed benevolence towards the cabinet, even though Groß twice expostulated with the prime minister and made no secret of his frustration with his lack of amenability.⁵⁴ The increasingly prominent *Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft* – the largest grouping within the organization with its forty-four

Depending on the version, he had promised several or all of the following: the special status of Galicia, the *Staatssprache*, the division of Bohemia into circles and new standing orders for parliament.

⁴⁴ *NFPM*, 17.12, p.1; *AZM*, 7.12, p.5; 10.12.1916, p.1.

⁴⁵ *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*.

⁴⁶ *NFPM*, 7.12, pp.8-9; 9.12, p.8; 14.12, pp.2-3; *RPM*, 7.12, p.6; *AZM*, 3.12, p.6; *FBM*, 30.11, p.6; *RT*, II, 7.12.1916, pp.237-238. The party's official *communiqué* on the audience was published on 7.12.

⁴⁷ *NFPM*, 2.12.1916, p.8.

⁴⁸ *NFPA*, 1.12.1916, p.3.

⁴⁹ *NFPM*, 24.11, p.4; 25.11.1916, p.1.

⁵⁰ *RPM*, 7.12, p.6; *AZM*, 7.12, p.5; *FJ*, II, 11.1916, p.417. Even after it had become clear that Koerber would seek a mediated settlement on most issues, it was still considered certain that he would decree German as language of state.

⁵¹ *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, pp.426-428.

⁵² Lindström, p.68.

⁵³ *RT*, I, 11.10.1914, p.674; Masaryk, pp.43-44. In October 1914, he had complained to Redlich about the collusion between Stürgkh, Thun and Kramář and had told him: "The whole Czech intelligentsia is Czechophile! And still, those above will not see that one can only rely on Germans and Magyars!" Nevertheless, he had been on friendly terms with Masaryk.

⁵⁴ *RT*, II, 28.11, 7.12.1916, pp.235, 237-238; *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.428.

members (including Groß himself)⁵⁵ – was crucial in helping to hold this line by officially resolving to adopt a “friendly, patient” attitude towards the government. Many of its leading members repeatedly stressed that there was no reason for either the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* or the *Nationalverband* to change their attitude.⁵⁶ But after Koerber’s implacable words to the members of the German Workers’ Party became known, it was obvious that the prime minister would issue no decree whatever before the recall of parliament. The tide now turned against him.

At the forefront of this agitation were the irreconcilable German Radicals, who refused to countenance the reconvening of the *Reichsrat* until their demands were met.⁵⁷ They too had shown restraint at first but when, at a club sitting on 1 December, Deputy Rudolf Heine confirmed their suspicions by revealing Koerber’s declarations to the Workers’ Party, they erupted with indignation and resolved to change their stance.⁵⁸ They made clear to the prime minister that he could spare himself the charade of reopening parliament, as they would ensure that the constitution proved unworkable.⁵⁹ Of course, Bohemian voices were often the loudest. Writing in Gustav Hummer’s *Politische Tagebücher*, an unnamed deputy castigated Koerber for having appropriated Taaffe’s old policy of “muddling through”, for not being equal to the challenge of the times (both morally and physically) and for striving to prevent the fulfilment of the demands of the Germans of Austria.⁶⁰ The *Deutschböhmisches Korrespondenz* accused the government of ignoring the lessons of the war and of seeking to burden parliament with issues which it had failed to settle with several cabinets during peacetime, and which now threatened its viability.⁶¹ Wolf’s virulent *Ostdeutsche Rundschau* joined in the attacks.⁶² Koerber also believed that Wilhelm Singer, the editor of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, was part of the conspiracy.⁶³ At first, however, the Radicals’ war cry was not taken entirely seriously, and many thought it simply a result of the long-standing personal feud between Wolf and Koerber, or revenge for Hochenburger’s removal as minister of justice.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ *NFPM*, 12.12, p.9.

⁵⁶ *NFPM*, 9.12, p.8; 12.12.1916, p.7.

⁵⁷ *NFPM*, 6.12, p.6; 14.12, pp.2-3; *RT*, II, 7.12.1916, pp.237-238.

⁵⁸ *AZM*, 3.12, p.6; 7.12.1916, p.5.

⁵⁹ *RT*, II, 7.12.1916, p.238.

⁶⁰ *PTM*, 4.12.1916, p.2.

⁶¹ *RPM*, 7.12.1916, p.6.

⁶² *PTM*, 6.12.1916, pp.3-4.

⁶³ *RT*, II, 8.12.1916, p.239.

⁶⁴ *PTM*, 3.12, p.1; 6.12, p.4; 8.12.1916, p.9.

But soon, the Radicals' vehement and relentless "battue"⁶⁵ against the prime minister forced the remainder of the bourgeois camp to react.⁶⁶ And though several factions in the *Nationalverband* disassociated themselves from them and denounced their methods,⁶⁷ many members nevertheless concurred that the reopening of parliament could occur only with certain guarantees.⁶⁸ Koerber's dogmatic refusal to consider any use of Paragraph Fourteen could only drive them away.⁶⁹ Baernreither nevertheless thought that the majority of deputies in the organization still supported him.⁷⁰ But there were also loud rumblings among German nobles of the House of Lords.⁷¹ The Christian Socials too were unhappy with his attitude. Though the party generally remained tight-lipped and vague on the nature and extent of the decrees it was willing to support, it repeatedly made clear that the House required new standing orders.⁷² Furthermore, its main organ, the *Reichspost*, urged the "securing of future constitutionality [...] through prior expedient measures, as recommended by the experiences of war", and denounced the Social Democrats' and the Liberals' objections.⁷³ Meanwhile, representatives of the party warned Koerber that they would not offer parliamentary support for an *Ausgleich* less favourable to Austria than the previous one.⁷⁴ In this climate, the continued alliance of the *Nationalverband* and of the Christian Socials boded ill for Koerber. And indeed, at the constituent sitting of the parties' joint committee on 9 December, supporters of the octroi took pride of place, as the nationalists chose Pacher, Urban and Wolf among their nine representatives.⁷⁵ Ten House of Lords members were soon added to the committee, including active champions of the policy such as Baernreither, Fürstenberg and Nostitz, whom Koerber considered the ringleaders of the movement against him.⁷⁶ At its inaugural meeting, it discussed domestic political demands (in particular the language question), the relationship with Hungary and a closer economic and political

⁶⁵ *PTM*, 4.12.1916, p.2.

⁶⁶ *NFPM*, 10.12.1916, p.9.

⁶⁷ *PTA*, 7.12, p.2; *PTM*, 8.12, p.3; *PTM*, 8.12, p.9; *PTM*, 10.12, p.5; *NFPM*, 9.12.1916, p.8.

⁶⁸ *NFPA*, 14.12.1916, p.1.

⁶⁹ *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 14.12.1916. As Tucher noted, even a superficial observer of Austrian politics knew that referring these issues to parliament meant their "postponement *ad calendas graecas*".

⁷⁰ *NB*, K11, p.9.

⁷¹ *RPM*, 12.12, p.4; *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.229.

⁷² *NFPA*, 14.12, p.1; *RPM*, 7.12.1916, p.6.

⁷³ *RPM*, 12.12.1916, p.4.

⁷⁴ *NFPA*, 14.12, p.1; *RPN*, 13.12.1916, p.4.

⁷⁵ *NFPM*, 9.12.1916, p.8.

⁷⁶ *NFPA*, 9.12, p.3; *RT*, II, 8.12, 16.12.1916, pp.239, 245.

union with Germany; it stressed the necessity of joint action on these questions, “for the sake of the German nation”.⁷⁷ The board of the *Nationalverband* met immediately after and insisted that the recall of the *Reichsrat* be preceded by the fulfilment of certain preconditions, in order to avoid lasting damage to Austrian parliamentarism. In consequence, the organization’s stance towards the government would now depend on its attitude “in this question as well as in other national demands of the Germans”.⁷⁸ And the *Deutsche Nachrichten* – seen as the union’s semi-official publication – echoed its Radical counterparts by also accusing Koerber of muddling through, of failing to learn the lessons of the war and of pursuing a policy at odds with the desires of the German people.⁷⁹

Increasingly isolated and destabilized, the prime minister groped for support. He turned to the German ambassador and, complaining about the Radicals’ stinging attacks on him, expressed his hope that Berlin would not encourage them.⁸⁰ But Wedel, though he showed perfunctory understanding for Koerber’s predicament, made clear to him that the opportunity for an octroi had to be seized immediately, as it would never again present itself so favourably. Pointing to the strong impression made in Germany by alleged Czech and South Slav disloyalty and by official laxness, he declared: “Germany expects the Austrian government – as its self-evident duty – to take energetic measures in order to dam the Slavic flood.” Koerber responded evasively, arguing that the Czechs had become more docile since men such as Kramář had been replaced, and that the Germans were an unreliable political force, less united and less skilfully led than the Czechs, Slovenes, Croats, Poles and Italians.⁸¹ This was perhaps the case, but they nonetheless were strong enough to topple him.

Spurned by Berlin, belaboured by the Radicals, under pressure from the bourgeois’ joint committee, and out of favour with the emperor, Koerber’s situation appeared untenable. It was probably little consolation to him that he had established good relations with the Czechs. In early November, he had already attempted to set their minds at rest ahead of the proclamation of Galicia.⁸² When he met the presidium of the Czech Union on 1 December,⁸³ he was courteous, considerate and conciliatory.

⁷⁷ *NFPM*, 10.12, p.10; *PTM*, 10.12.1916, p.5.

⁷⁸ *NFPM*, 10.12.1916, p.10.

⁷⁹ *RPM*, 14.12.1916, p.3.

⁸⁰ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12.1916.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *TD*, 3.11.1916, p.212.

⁸³ *NFPM*, 2.12, p.8; *RPM*, 2.12, p.4. The date is erroneously recorded as 30.11 by Šmeral and Tobolka.

He assured them emphatically that Karl and he would stay on strictly constitutional ground.⁸⁴ Moreover, he condemned any form of repression of the nationalities. He also promised them that “in the important questions, the government [would] always get in touch with the parties in advance before stepping out onto the smooth parquet of parliament, especially in negotiations about national questions”, adding: “You are not threatened by any kind of surprise in any respect”. In the Bohemian question, he referred them to the plans he had put forward during his first tenure and insisted that national demarcation and the division into circles was the best guarantee of efficient and peaceful cohabitation.⁸⁵ The Czechs understood that painful times awaited them in crownland and linguistic matters – German as the official language, for instance – but they appreciated the fact that Koerber had recognized their political strength and committed himself to parliamentary negotiations.⁸⁶ As Šmeral later explained: “He promised no concessions but through his polite handling, he made matters so bearable that the Czechs were neither shamed nor insulted.”⁸⁷ Koerber was, however, vastly exaggerating when he later claimed that he had obtained the Czechs’ agreement on the circles.⁸⁸

In the German camp, the Social Democrats⁸⁹ and the Liberals⁹⁰ rallied to his defence and denounced the Radicals and their preconditions. (Though routinely discussed in nationalist circles, the prospect of German unification on the Czech model now seemed very remote indeed.)⁹¹ Among the German bourgeois groups, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* continued to support him openly. During a speech in Graz on 9 December, member August Einspinner disavowed the Radicals’ “idiosyncratic policy” and denied anybody who supported it the right to speak in the name of the *Nationalverband*.⁹² The *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* disputed the rumours of disunity within the union, but nobody was taken in. In fact, there were divisions within the

⁸⁴ *TD*, 15.2.1917, p.283; *NFPM*, 2.12.1916, p.8.

⁸⁵ *TD*, 15.2.1917, pp.282-284.

⁸⁶ *TD*, 15.2.1917, p.284.

⁸⁷ *NB*, K7, 28.2.1917; Baernreither, *Verfall*, p.283. The conversation between Baernreither and Šmeral is recorded as having been in “March 1917” in the former’s memoirs, but according to his diary, it was on 28.2.1917.

⁸⁸ Glaise, p.31.

⁸⁹ *AZM*, 7.12, p.5; 10.12.1916, pp.1, 6.

⁹⁰ *MI*, K1645, 28230; *NFPM*, 24.5.1917, p.6. Deputies Friedmann, Zenker and Ganser – who gathered in the German Liberal Union (*Deutschfreiheitliche Vereinigung*) in May 1917 – denounced the Radicals and accused the Christian Socials of tacit complicity.

⁹¹ *NFPM*, 3.12, p.11; *NFPA*, 24.11, p.3; *Ö101*, 38, Gebstattel-Bethmann, 21.11; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12.1916. *Reich* Germans were particularly uncomprehending of this failure.

⁹² *NFPM*, 12.12.1916, p.7.

Arbeitsgemeinschaft itself. At a sitting on 12 December, Redlich, along with most speakers, praised the government's adherence to constitutionality, but Stölzel insisted on the fulfilment of certain preconditions. They could unite only in condemning the Radicals' tactics. A leading member of the formation admitted that its attitude was still friendly and patient, but that the government now had to publish its programme.⁹³ When it met Koerber the following day, it submitted a list of demands in line with the German programme – the removal of Galicia, the resolution of the Bohemian question, and the tightening of parliamentary procedure – though it objected to its promulgation by octroi.⁹⁴ Unbeknown to them, however, Koerber had just resigned.⁹⁵

On top of this conflict with the Germans, Koerber's woeful tenure had also been plagued by the issue of the renewal of the economic Compromise – or *Ausgleich* – with Hungary, for which negotiations had been ongoing all year.⁹⁶ The Austrians' insistence on a longer agreement – twenty years instead of ten – in order to lay the foundations for the future economic union with Germany⁹⁷ had strengthened the Hungarian bargaining position. Stürgkh had therefore made several concessions, which many Austrians thought too dear. Still, he and Tisza had reached an understanding, even though nothing had been signed.⁹⁸ But Koerber, an expert on the subject, objected to several of the provisions of this agreement and had travelled to Budapest immediately after his nomination in order to renegotiate it.⁹⁹ Discussions continued in both capitals, but divergences remained.¹⁰⁰ Tisza, unsettled by the appointment of Koerber – often considered an opponent of Hungary¹⁰¹ – and unwilling to surrender his gains, was spurred into action by Franz Joseph's death.¹⁰²

⁹³ *NFPM*, 13.12, p.9; *RT*, II, 13.12.1916, p.240.

⁹⁴ *NFPA*, 13.12, p.3; *RPM*, 14.12.1916, p.3.

⁹⁵ *NFPA*, 14.12.1916, p.1.

⁹⁶ *SM*, p.107.

⁹⁷ *NFPM*, 15.12, p.2; *Ö97*, 14, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.12; *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.12.1916.

⁹⁸ *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.12.1916; *SM*, pp.102, 107-108, p.112.

⁹⁹ Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, *Fond Stjepan Sarkotić*, HR-HDA-1773-3, 26.12; *Ö97*, 14, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.12; *FJ*, II, 11.1916, 5.2.1917, pp.415, 425-426; Glaise, p.20; Plener, III, p.446; Polzer, p.123; Spitzmüller, *Ausgleich*, pp.50-54; *RT*, II, 28.10, 23.11, 8.12, 14.12, 20.12, pp.219, 228, 239, 242, p.247; *NFPM*, 14.12, pp.1-2; 15.12, p.2; *RPM*, 14.12.1916, p.2. As joint minister of finance, Koerber had approved the policy of the Austrian negotiators, but was not involved in the talks. He complained about cattle duty and the twenty-year clause among other things, but it was uncertain whether he would accept the Stürgkh-Tisza *Ausgleich* at all, even if amended.

¹⁰⁰ *RT*, II, 28.10, 23.11.1916, pp.219, 228; Czedik, IV, p.541; *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.426; Friedjung, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.3; *Ausgleich*, p.52. Tisza and Koerber later blamed each other.

¹⁰¹ *RT*, II, 4.1.1915, 24.4.1915, 6.11.1916, pp.1, 40, 224; Plener, III, p.446; Sieghart, p.178; Polzer, p.90. He had agreed with Redlich that dualism would destroy the Monarchy.

¹⁰² Friedjung, *Biographie*, p.39; *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.12.1916.

Having easily obtained Karl's assent to the coronation, he now insisted that the renewal of the Compromise be settled before the ceremony, and called attention to Koerber's obstructive and dilatory attitude.¹⁰³ Tisza's pressure eventually paid off. Only hours after Karl received him in audience on 10 December, the emperor ordered Koerber's dismissal.¹⁰⁴

Hohenlohe claimed that Karl had lost confidence in Koerber during their first meeting.¹⁰⁵ Though this was perhaps true, it is in any case improbable that he ever intended to govern with a man of the old guard appointed by his predecessor.¹⁰⁶ Koerber was thus unlikely to survive once the formalities of Karl's accession had been expedited. With hindsight, Koerber also recalled that differences between him and the emperor had come to light during their first meeting;¹⁰⁷ yet at the time, he had been confident of his influence on the emperor, whom he thought "amicable" and "very eager to learn".¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, their relationship deteriorated quickly. A small conflict occurred as early as the third day of Karl's reign. Incensed by a passage in the *Neue Freie Presse's* front-page editorial on the death of Franz Joseph,¹⁰⁹ Karl had telephoned Koerber, angrily demanding to know how this had come to pass.¹¹⁰ He had ordered an immediate ban on all officers writing for that particular newspaper, though he eventually calmed down and grudgingly desisted from this drastic measure on the advice of the minister of war.¹¹¹ In any case, it rapidly became clear that Karl disliked Koerber personally.¹¹² Indeed, Pacher later admitted that his party had been emboldened in its attempts to topple Koerber upon discovering that Karl wished to be rid of him too, as he "did not know where to begin with his awkward, ponderous manner".¹¹³ On 1 December, Wedel reported to Bethmann that Koerber would

¹⁰³ *NFPM*, 14.12, p.2; 15.12, p.2; *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, p.243; Glaise, p.20; Czedik, IV, p.541; *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.426.

¹⁰⁴ *RP*, *Mittagsausgabe*, 11.12, p.4; *NBT*, K5, 10.12; *NFPM*, 12.12.1916, p.4.

¹⁰⁵ Polzer, pp.122-123.

¹⁰⁶ *NB*, K11, pp.9-10.

¹⁰⁷ *RT*, II, 14.12.1916, p.242; *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.425. He even told Redlich that he had realized then that nothing could be done.

¹⁰⁸ *RT*, II, 23.11, 26.11, pp.228-232; *FJ*, 11.1916, p.414.

¹⁰⁹ *NFPM*, 22.11.1916, p.1. The passage had merely suggested that Franz Joseph had not had the same success in domestic matters as he had had in foreign policy.

¹¹⁰ *RT*, II, 26.11, p.232. The censoring of dailies was the responsibility of the political authorities, who only consulted the war surveillance office when in doubt.

¹¹¹ *RT*, II, 26.11, pp.232-233; *MKSM*, K1238, 15-4/7, pencilled note by Karl, undated; *MKSM-KM*, 24.11; *KM-MKSM*, 27.11; 29.11; note of the *MKSM*, 30.11.1916.

¹¹² *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 14.12.1916.

¹¹³ "Pacher", p.458.

probably not remain in office for long.¹¹⁴ Karl certainly wasted little time in scouting for candidates.¹¹⁵ Already on 24 November, he had summoned Hohenlohe and explained to him that he valued him too much to make him prime minister – proof that he was already thinking about potential replacements for Koerber.¹¹⁶ He explained to Hohenlohe that he needed him by his side as a friend and adviser and would therefore appoint him lord chamberlain since, as prime minister, he could lose him all too quickly.¹¹⁷ In the meantime, however, on 2 December, he named him joint finance minister, without informing Koerber.¹¹⁸ Hohenlohe, who had coveted the post of prime minister for some time, had already expected to be appointed after Stürgkh’s assassination.¹¹⁹ Once again overlooked, he put forward his friend Czernin, whom Karl knew superficially from his time in Bohemia.¹²⁰ (After their first couple of meetings in 1908, Czernin had noted that Karl was for him “a closed – and, incidentally, a rather uninteresting – book.”)¹²¹ The former ambassador to Bucharest, an aristocrat who represented the Constitutionally Loyal Landowners in the Bohemian Diet, was received in audience on 8 December,¹²² and for a few days appeared to be the premier in waiting.¹²³ His views were nothing if not radical: he opposed the oath and fully supported an authoritarian solution to Austria’s problems; in Bohemia, he envisaged the full separation of both nationalities, including in the diet.¹²⁴ Through Hohenlohe, he had approached Handel in early December and obtained his constitutional drafts for perusal.¹²⁵

According to Koerber, around the time of Czernin’s audience, Karl also received the former prime minister, Baron Max Wladimir von Beck, and the

¹¹⁴ *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 1.12.1916.

¹¹⁵ *Ausgleich*, p.54. According to Spitzmüller, Karl made his first moves in the direction “around fourteen days after his accession”.

¹¹⁶ *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 1.12.1916; *RT*, II, 21.11.1917, p.355; *NB*, K7, Book XVII, 20.1.1918. According to Wedel, Karl had nevertheless hinted that he would rather have found Hohenlohe in place of Koerber upon his accession. A disenchanted Hohenlohe later gave his version of the entire saga of Karl’s appointment of a prime minister, to Redlich in November 1917 and to Baernreither in January 1918.

¹¹⁷ *RT*, II, 21.11.1917, p.355; *SM*, p.153.

¹¹⁸ *NFPN*, 4.12, p.3; *RT*, II, 13.12, pp.240-241; *Ö86Nr.IG*, 4, Wedel-Zimmermann, 20.12.1916; *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918. Or indeed Tisza.

¹¹⁹ *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918; *RT*, II, 23.10, 13.12, pp.218, 241; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 1.12.1916.

¹²⁰ Czernin, p.114; *NB*, K11, p.10; Polzer, p.144.

¹²¹ *Pozůstalost Czernin*, K1, Political overview 1905-1908, undated.

¹²² *NFPN*, 9.12.1916, p.9. The content of the audience is unknown but the time coincides with Czernin’s angling for the premiership.

¹²³ *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918; K11, p.10; *NS*, K6, 15.12.1916; “Handel”, p.101.

¹²⁴ *NB*, K7; 10.12.1916; K11, p.9.

¹²⁵ “Handel”, p.101.

Bohemian House of Lords member Ernst von Plener,¹²⁶ who talked him into reneging on his promise to take the oath and ruling by octroi. As a result, Koerber claimed, an irreconcilable difference of opinion between him and Karl came to the fore during a subsequent audience. Owing to Koerber's inconsistent accounts, doubts surround both these meetings.¹²⁷ A broadly uniform picture nevertheless emerges in the case of his discussion with Karl. In one of several differing stories Koerber told Redlich, Karl had simply told him that he wanted the *Ausgleich* renewal concluded by 31 December and did not intend to fulfil his promise to take the oath.¹²⁸ In the version retold to General Stjepan Sarkotić, the governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Karl pointed out to Koerber that he had heard from "eight to ten" different sides that the introduction of a state language,¹²⁹ the circle division in Bohemia and the *Ausgleich* agreement with Hungary had to be carried out immediately, as this was already the twelfth hour. The emperor therefore asked Koerber whether he could do this. Koerber replied that he could not make Karl enter history with a breach of the constitution but added that if parliament failed, "then our conscience will be clear and I will do everything, within twenty-four hours even".¹³⁰ On the subject of the *Ausgleich* renewal, Koerber highlighted how unfavourable to Austria Stürgkh's agreement with Tisza was and insisted that major corrections were needed. Karl protested meekly: "But very significant people are giving me the opposite advice". However, Koerber stuck to his guns and told Karl that he should appoint somebody else if he were determined to follow that path. The emperor asked for time to think.¹³¹ Similarly, in the depiction which he provided for Friedjung, Koerber responded to Karl's insistence on the octroi by arguing that Franz Joseph, after his many bitter experiences, would have been entitled to resort to this but that Karl had to give parliament a chance in order to prove his commitment to the constitution. When Karl responded that he could not afford to wait several months – Koerber detected Hohenlohe behind these words – the prime minister responded that he understood but that he would not take this responsibility.

¹²⁶ In their capacity as presidents of Supreme Court of Audit (*Oberster Rechnungshof*).

¹²⁷ *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, 5.1.1917, 19.2.1917, pp.244, 255, 276; *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, p.418; *NBT*, K5, 10.12, 11.12; *WA*, 11.12, p.3; *NFPM*, 12.12.1916, p.4.

¹²⁸ *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, 5.1.1917, 19.2.1917, pp.244, 255, 276. In his first account to Redlich on 16.12, however, he did not mention this audience.

¹²⁹ *Staatssprache*.

¹³⁰ Koerber contended that in this case, they would also enjoy the support of the population.

¹³¹ *FSS*, HR-HDA-1773-3, 26.12; *NFPA*, 14.12.1916, p.1.

The conversation was polite and ended cordially, but Koerber understood that he and Karl were parting ways.¹³²

And indeed, on 10 December, after his audience with Tisza, Karl received Berchtold,¹³³ who now held the normally ceremonial post of lord steward,¹³⁴ and informed him that he had a mission for him which, he warned, was “not very pleasant”. Berchtold was to go to the prime minister’s the following morning and “bring him the silken rope”. The pretext which Karl gave was his disagreement with Koerber on the questions of the oath to the Austrian constitution and of the *Ausgleich* renewal.¹³⁵ When he recalled his meeting with Berchtold, however, Koerber mentioned only the latter.¹³⁶ Though Berchtold expressed Karl’s gratitude and asked Koerber whether he wished for any favours,¹³⁷ such pleasantries could not hide the abruptness and finality of Koerber’s sacking, or compensate for the fact that the emperor had not dared or deigned tell him in person.¹³⁸ Koerber was asked to exercise discretion for a few days in order not to unsettle the public at a time when the deadline for the subscription of war loans was due. Koerber complied: in a conversation with Baernreither on the day after his dismissal, he was recalcitrant to the point of incoherence, mumbling and whispering incomprehensible answers to his interlocutor’s questions on domestic policy.¹³⁹ However, a meeting between Koerber and Karl on 13 December¹⁴⁰ resulted in the publication of a handwritten letter the following morning announcing the prime minister’s resignation.¹⁴¹ Koerber again gave a variety of accounts of the event in the following days.¹⁴² According to the most sober version, given to Heinrich Friedjung, Karl treated the matter as a *fait accompli*, merely reiterating the necessity of concluding the *Ausgleich* negotiations and again

¹³² FJ, II, 16.12, pp.418-419; *NBT*, K5, 11.12; *RT*, II, 20.12.1916, p.247. Yet he later told Redlich that he had explained the reasons against an octroi “with great firmness, even abruptness”. He did not, however, specify on which occasion.

¹³³ *NBT*, K5, 10.12; *RPMT*, 11.12.1916, p.4. Karl received Tisza at 11.00 and Berchtold at 17.30.

¹³⁴ *NFPA*, 24.11.1916, p.1. *Zweiter Obersthofmeister*.

¹³⁵ *NBT*, K5, 10.12.1916.

¹³⁶ FJ, II, 16.12.1916, pp.419-420; Friedjung, *Biographie*, p.39. He claimed that he was ordered to accept the Stürgkh-Tisza *Ausgleich* and had refused.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*; *NBT*, K5, 11.12.1916.

¹³⁸ *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, p.245. It was apparently said at court that Zita had written Koerber a letter out of charity and had showed it to Karl, who had torn it up and told her not to interfere with business.

¹³⁹ *NB*, K7, conversation with Koerber, 12.12; 14.12.

¹⁴⁰ *NFPA*, 14.12, p.1. The meeting took place between 10.00 and 12.30.

¹⁴¹ *NFPM*, 14.12, p.1; original in *MRP*, K292, 6393, Karl-Koerber, 13.12.1916.

¹⁴² FJ, II, 16.12, pp.418, 420; *RT*, II, 16.12, pp.243-244; *FBM*, 13.12.1916, p.8.

asking him if he desired anything.¹⁴³ Likewise, Koerber told Sarkotić that Karl had received him with a speech put together “from the sentences of Tisza, Fürstenberg and *tutti quanti*” and had offered him the Imperial Court of Justice.¹⁴⁴ Koerber refused any honours or position and announced his retirement.¹⁴⁵ In his more colourful account to Redlich, Koerber claimed that a ninety-minute showdown between him and the emperor had taken place, which had led to his resignation. He claimed that Karl had “returned to the main theme of all his discussions with [him] since taking power: the necessity of an octroi”. Koerber’s contention that it would be more judicious to wait and to work on an entirely new constitution was apparently dismissed by Karl, who had been “completely won over to the idea of an octroi”, not only by Beck and Plener but also by the Fürstenberg-Nostitz group. In the end, again according to Koerber’s account, Karl asked him whether he still had reservations about the *Ausgleich* renewal and informed him that if this were the case, he would have to pass over the task to somebody else, whereupon Koerber offered his government’s resignation, which Karl accepted immediately.¹⁴⁶ This description was obviously untrue, since Koerber had already been sacked, and the two men therefore had nothing to discuss. Yet their meeting caused enough bad blood for Koerber’s resignation to be announced four days ahead of schedule.¹⁴⁷ The version reported by Wedel seems plausible: Karl had apparently “given Koerber a piece of his mind” and had rebuked him for having wrongly counselled him. Koerber had responded in kind, whereupon Karl had demanded his immediate resignation.¹⁴⁸ Margutti claimed to have encountered Koerber as he stormed out of his last audience, snapping: “The Emperor Karl is thirty, he looks twenty and thinks and speaks like a ten-year-old child”.¹⁴⁹

Although rumours of Koerber’s resignation had circulated,¹⁵⁰ the news came as a surprise on both sides of the Leitha.¹⁵¹ In the press and in political circles, the

¹⁴³ FJ, II, 16.12.1916, p.420.

¹⁴⁴ FSS, HR-HDA-1773-3, 26.12.1916. According to Koerber, Karl then spoke genially about other questions and said suddenly: “I also had to replace Burián with Czernin”. This does not fit with the timing of Czernin’s appointment and is therefore wrong.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.; FJ, II, 16.12.1916, pp.418, 420.

¹⁴⁶ RT, II, 16.12.1916, pp.243-244.

¹⁴⁷ NBT, K5, 11.12.1916.

¹⁴⁸ Ö86Nr.IG, 4, Wedel-Zimmermann, 20.12.1916; FJ, II, 5.2.1917, p.426. Nevertheless, according to Koerber, Karl was very talkative during their last meeting on 22.12.

¹⁴⁹ Margutti, p.163.

¹⁵⁰ NFPM, 14.12, p.2; NB, K7, 14.12.1916.

¹⁵¹ AZM, 14.12, pp.1, 5; NFPA, 13.12, p.4; 14.12, p.1; RPN, 14.12, p.1; Ö86Nr.2, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 13.12; 15.12; Ö86Nr.IG, 4, Wedel-Zimmermann, 20.12; MA, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 14.12; MRP, K292, 6370; 6422; RT, II, 16.12, p.244; FJ, II, 16.12.1916, p.420.

speculation surrounding the reasons for his fall was overwhelmingly correct: the octroi, the *Ausgleich*, or both.¹⁵² The indignant *Arbeiter-Zeitung* feigned incomprehension but its conjectures were purged by the censor.¹⁵³ It did, however, complain that none of the Vienna newspapers dared to write openly that an Austrian government had fallen for failing to fulfil Tisza's desires.¹⁵⁴ In Budapest, meanwhile, newspapers ascribed Koerber's resignation purely to domestic Austrian matters.¹⁵⁵ The Radicals gladly took credit for his demise.¹⁵⁶

Koerber himself accepted his fate calmly and even appeared relieved.¹⁵⁷ He described the time since 21 November as "terrible".¹⁵⁸ He never forgave Karl and never again spoke well of him. Such was his resentment that he was suspected of being the author of the scathing recollections edited by Schneider.¹⁵⁹ Of Karl, he said to Glaise: "The poor soul really could not do anything right for anyone. [...] For example, he asked deputies Korošec and Tusar whether they were happy with me – I do not need to put up with this".¹⁶⁰ (He told Redlich that the emperor was far more sympathetic to the Slavs than people imagined.)¹⁶¹ He maintained that all would have been fine had he been allowed to proceed in peace, and blamed outside influences on Karl. According to him, Karl, though benevolent, was open to these interferences in difficult questions "due to a lack of insight".¹⁶² Aside from the Baernreither-Fürstenberg-Nostitz group, he thought Tisza the main culprit (in collaboration with Czernin and Hohenlohe), and was happy to portray himself as a victim of Hungarian pigheadedness.¹⁶³ Ultimately, Koerber had lost the battle against Tisza in the questions of the coronation and of the *Ausgleich* renewal.

¹⁵² *NFPM*, 14.12, pp.1-2; 15.12, p.2; *NFPA*, 14.12, p.1; *RT*, II, 13.12, 16.12, pp.241-242; *NB*, K7, 14.12; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 15.12; *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.12.1916; *Ausgleich*, pp.54-55; *SM*, p.149.

¹⁵³ *AZM*, 14.12, p.1; 15.12, p.1.

¹⁵⁴ *AZM*, 15.12, p.2.

¹⁵⁵ *RT*, II, 14.12, p.242; *NFPM*, 14.12.1916, p.1.

¹⁵⁶ *MI*, K1646, 671, Wolf's speech on 7.1.1917; "Pacher", p.458.

¹⁵⁷ *FJ*, II, 16.12, p.418; *RT*, II, 14.12.1916, p.242.

¹⁵⁸ *RT*, II, 14.12.1916, p.242.

¹⁵⁹ *KA*, *NMö*, 1, II, p.315.

¹⁶⁰ *GH*, I, p.418; Glaise, p.20. Glaise later remarked that "Koerber spent the rest of his life in retirement animated by an unquenchable hatred of his young emperor."

¹⁶¹ *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, p.245.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *FSS*, HR-HDA-1773-3, 26.12; *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.12; *RT*, II, 14.12, 16.12, pp.242-243, 245; *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, 5.2.1917, pp.418, 420-421, 426.

Not a few eyebrows were raised by the sudden dismissal – after only forty-six days in office¹⁶⁴ – of a man of Koerber’s experience, ability, popularity and standing. According to Czedik, his departure “was universally considered to be the loss of a first-class force”.¹⁶⁵ This was something of an exaggeration, but several distinguished figures did consider his removal a misfortune.¹⁶⁶ Spitzmüller thought it particularly unwise in the absence of “any firm idea of his successor or of the policy to follow”.¹⁶⁷ Sarkotić regretted Koerber’s rapid dismissal and often suggested to Karl that he recall him, in vain. He later wrote: “Perhaps much would have been different and would have worked out better.”¹⁶⁸ Koerber was certainly a man of exceptional qualities. A workhorse, one of the brightest minds of his era, his knowledge and experience were unparalleled; an administrative expert, his talents also extended to financial and commercial matters.¹⁶⁹ Additionally he was a master in the art of press manipulation, enjoying close contact and good relations with socialist, liberal, German and Slav newspapers – a considerable asset under the circumstances.¹⁷⁰

Yet Koerber was not without his flaws. Chief among these was his near pathological pessimism – his despair, in fact – which had worsened during his decade of retirement.¹⁷¹ His sharp critical eye everywhere saw problems and obstacles.¹⁷² When, shortly before leaving the country, Masaryk had asked him whether an Austrian victory in the war would bring about the necessary reforms, he had responded unambiguously: “No! Victory would strengthen the old system, and a new system under the young heir-apparent, the Archduke Carl Franz Joseph, would be no better than the old. The soldiers would have the upper hand after a victorious war and they would centralize and Germanize. It would be absolutism with parliamentary embellishments.”¹⁷³ In October 1915, now joint finance minister, he told Redlich that the country’s problems were “utterly incredible”, adding: “Austria-Hungary is like a patient for whom medical skill will ultimately fail: one day the organism will simply

¹⁶⁴ *NFPM*, 14.12.1916, p.2.

¹⁶⁵ Czedik, IV, p.542.

¹⁶⁶ Glaise, p.20.

¹⁶⁷ *Ausgleich*, p.57; *SM*, p.150.

¹⁶⁸ Stjepan Sarkotić, “Meine Beurlaubung nach Wien und mein Zusammentreffen mit Koerber”, *Staatswehr*, 19.3.1920, quoted in: Friedjung, *Biographie*, p.41.

¹⁶⁹ *NFPM*, 5.12, p.2; 14.12, p.1; *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, p.421; Friedjung, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.2. Under Karl, Koerber had worked every day from 6.00 to 1.00 in the morning.

¹⁷⁰ *NB*, K11, p.9; *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 20.2.1915; *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.229; *Ausgleich*, p.51; Friedjung, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.3. 124 journalists were registered with him.

¹⁷¹ Friedjung, *Biographie*, p.38, 40; *ibid.*, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.2.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Masaryk, pp.43-44.

stop”.¹⁷⁴ His reappointment as prime minister did little to lift his scepticism, quite the contrary. When the American journalist Karl Henry von Wiegand pointed out that the public seemed to harbour great hope for a new era under his leadership, Koerber answered that this would be difficult and that there was not enough time.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, he routinely complained that the task was beyond his strength.¹⁷⁶ During his visit to army headquarters in Teschen shortly after, when Conrad had asked him his opinion of Karl, Koerber said pensively: “The old emperor strove for sixty years to destroy the Monarchy but did not succeed. This young ruler will be done in two”.¹⁷⁷ A day after his return, on 8 December, tired and lying on his couch, he received Redlich and gave him the impression that he did not believe in success and was resigned to being replaced by Hohenlohe. He admitted that the situation in Austria was so exacting that he did not want the burden of heading a government.¹⁷⁸ Spitzmüller conceded that this aspect of Koerber’s character “left the question open as to whether such a statesman was fitted for his position during a war that involved the fate of the Monarchy, when only men filled with unconditional faith in its mission could do full justice to so heavy a responsibility”.¹⁷⁹ Friedjung commented in his otherwise laudatory obituary that he lacked “the momentum and the belief in his own salutary mission”.¹⁸⁰

Koerber also suffered from a degree of bureaucratic rigidity and a lack of creative ability.¹⁸¹ He favoured small, gradual steps to radical action¹⁸² – a quality perhaps ill-suited to the times. What is more, during his years of self-imposed exile, he had lost touch with the political world; now he was also out of step with its mood.¹⁸³ And though not as impaired as his enemies suggested, he was, at sixty-five, no longer the man he had once been.¹⁸⁴ Nor was he an easy character. Redlich, a close (though somewhat wearied) acquaintance, called him “sensitive, petty and nervous” and remarked: “He makes it easy for his enemies and hard for his friends!”¹⁸⁵ For

¹⁷⁴ *RT*, II, 18.10.1915, p.94.

¹⁷⁵ *NFPM*, 5.12.1916, p.2.

¹⁷⁶ *RT*, II, 26.11, pp.232-233; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12; *FJ*, II, 11.1916, p.414.

¹⁷⁷ *Gina*, p.158.

¹⁷⁸ *RT*, II, 8.12.1916, p.239.

¹⁷⁹ *SM*, pp, 28, 150.

¹⁸⁰ Friedjung, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.2.

¹⁸¹ *RT*, II, [22.11], 26.11.1916, p.227, p.233; *SM*, p.28.

¹⁸² *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12.1916.

¹⁸³ *NFPM*, 14.12.1916, p.1.

¹⁸⁴ *PTM*, 4.12, p.2; *NB*, K11, p.9; *FJ*, II, 16.12, p.421; *ibid.*, *Biographie*, pp.39-40; *RT*, II, 28.10, 16.12.1916, 5.1.1917, pp.221, 243, 255; *SM*, p.149; Sieghart, p.178. He had a stroke in autumn 1918, and died in March 1919 after a second stroke.

¹⁸⁵ *RT*, II, [22.11.1916], p.227.

these reasons, Koerber was bound to clash with the young, fresh, impatient, new emperor. Friedjung characterized his friend as “too serious, too ponderous, too independent” for Karl.¹⁸⁶

Though his decision was influenced by men such as Hohenlohe, Czernin and Tisza,¹⁸⁷ Karl therefore had legitimate reasons to separate from Koerber, even though both the timing and the execution of the dismissal left much to be desired. In his post-war recollections, Karl stated bluntly: “I sacked prime minister Koerber because he was a muddler of the old system”.¹⁸⁸ At the time, rumour had it that clerical influences were responsible for the change.¹⁸⁹ Ironically, Koerber himself had been to Cardinal Piffl to explain that his conscience could not allow Karl to appear to the whole of Europe as a constitution-breaker and a *putschist*.¹⁹⁰ (Zita’s claim that Koerber was dismissed for being a freemason need not be investigated further.¹⁹¹ However, his closeness to the controversial Jewish banker Rudolf Sieghart¹⁹² – loathed by Karl, Hohenlohe¹⁹³ and previously by Franz Ferdinand¹⁹⁴ – most likely played a part.)

The Spitzmüller interlude

In a second handwritten letter published on 14 December, Karl announced that he had entrusted Baron Alexander von Spitzmüller with the formation of a new cabinet.¹⁹⁵ Though Spitzmüller had been included in a list of potential prime ministers drawn up by Franz Ferdinand,¹⁹⁶ this was not a factor in Karl’s choice – he and Spitzmüller had never been close.¹⁹⁷ Rather, Spitzmüller’s appointment was dictated solely by Karl’s

¹⁸⁶ Friedjung, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.3.

¹⁸⁷ *SM*, p.150; Friedjung, *NWT*, 11.3.1919, p.2; *ibid.*, *Biographie*, p.39; *Ö97*, 14, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.12.1916. Berlin, too, had become impatient with Koerber and wanted the swift resolution of the *Ausgleich* as the basis for Germany’s future *rapprochement* with Austria-Hungary; yet there is no evidence that its statesmen intervened directly in the matter.

¹⁸⁸ *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, pp.609-610. “*Ein Wurschtler des alten Systems*”.

¹⁸⁹ *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 15.12; *RT*, II, 19.12.1916, p.246.

¹⁹⁰ *RT*, II, 20.12.1916, p.247.

¹⁹¹ *UR*, I, p.104. Not only were the freemasons banned in Austria at the time, his membership is entirely unsubstantiated.

¹⁹² *Ausgleich*, p.51; *RT*, II, 27.12.1916, p.251. In Redlich’s words, in the original English, he was the “Corrupter General of Austria”.

¹⁹³ Sieghart, p.95; *Ö88*, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 30.11.1915; *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.608.

¹⁹⁴ *NBT*, K5, 4.3.1916; Funder, pp.498-499.

¹⁹⁵ *NFPM*, 14.12, p.1; original in *MRP*, K292, 6394, Karl-Spitzmüller, 13.12.1916.

¹⁹⁶ *SM*, p.151.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*; *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, pp.420-421.

desire to conclude the *Ausgleich* negotiations. As minister of trade in the last Stürgkh cabinet, Spitzmüller had worked on the matter intensely for eleven months, and had come to embody, and identify with, the Stürgkh-Tisza Compromise. He was therefore a natural choice.¹⁹⁸ It was widely believed that Tisza himself had talked Karl into choosing Spitzmüller, whom he esteemed for his impartiality and expertise and, most importantly, whom he considered the guarantor of his agreement with Stürgkh.¹⁹⁹ Koerber was convinced this was the case.²⁰⁰

But Hohenlohe and Czernin – who saw themselves as Karl’s mentors²⁰¹ – also played a substantial part in convincing Karl that the next Austrian government’s most urgent task was the renewal of the *Ausgleich*. Once this was complete, they expected it to make way for another cabinet whose mission would be the execution of the octroi in Bohemia. Indeed, they did not want one administration to be burdened with both tasks.²⁰² They had certainly not given up on securing the position for one of their own, but had seemingly decided to bide their time while somebody else took responsibility for the conclusion of an unpopular *Ausgleich* arrangement. Spitzmüller appeared perfectly suited to their purpose; as Baernreither wrote: “Spitzmüller was to roast the chestnuts and take them out of the fire – but then others wanted to eat them.”²⁰³ Therefore on 11 December – while Koerber was being given his notice by Berchtold – Hohenlohe approached Spitzmüller on Karl’s instructions, and asked him to form a short-term provisional government in order to settle the *Ausgleich* renewal by emergency decree.²⁰⁴ Hohenlohe tried to make the assignment appear easy and promised Spitzmüller the post of governor of the *Bodenkreditanstalt* in replacement of Sieghart.²⁰⁵ But Spitzmüller, who thought the use of Paragraph Fourteen “extremely dangerous, even beyond discussion” in that matter, refused.²⁰⁶ Hohenlohe

¹⁹⁸ *NFPM*, 14.12, p.1; *MA*, 2481/4, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.12.1916; *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918.

¹⁹⁹ *NFPM*, 14.12, p.1; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 15.12; *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, pp.420-421; Polzer, p.125.

²⁰⁰ *RT*, II, 14.12, 16.12.1916, 19.2.1917, pp.242-244, 276; *FJ*, II, 16.12, pp.420-421; *FSS*, HR-HDA-1773-3, 26.12; *Ausgleich*, pp.55-56; *SM*, p.151.

²⁰¹ *RT*, II, 21.11.1917, p.355.

²⁰² *Ausgleich* pp.54-56; *SM*, p.150; *NB*, K11, p.10; *NBT*, K5, 10.12.1916. On 10.12, Berchtold was surprised to hear Hohenlohe support the Stürgkh *Ausgleich*, since he had called it “high treason” two weeks before. Incidentally, Spitzmüller did not understand why Czernin and Hohenlohe thought the unfinished *Ausgleich* an obstacle to the octroi (which they wanted carried out in the first half of 1917). In any case, since they wanted the *Ausgleich* renewal concluded immediately, they expected Paragraph Fourteen to be used.

²⁰³ *NB*, K11, p.11.

²⁰⁴ *Ausgleich*, pp.55-56; *SM*, p.151.

²⁰⁵ *Ausgleich*, p.57.

²⁰⁶ *SM*, p.151.

therefore told him to report to the emperor in person.²⁰⁷ When Spitzmüller did so on the evening of 13 December, Karl – who had dismissed Koerber earlier in the day – immediately offered him the premiership and promised him Sieghart’s position in case his tenure were cut short.²⁰⁸ Spitzmüller declined both posts,²⁰⁹ and explained the reasons for his opposition to the ratification of the *Ausgleich* renewal by decree. Karl was swiftly won over by his arguments and again asked him to form a cabinet.²¹⁰ The men then discussed the government’s other potential tasks, and when Spitzmüller dismissed the idea of an octroi in Bohemia, Karl apparently exclaimed: “Thank God that I finally have found a politician who is opposed to this octroi!”²¹¹ Indeed, Karl thought that it required “serious examination and discussion with all concerned parties”.²¹² Reassured, and under the spell of the emperor’s “irresistible charm”, Spitzmüller agreed.²¹³ The following day, he set about trying to form a cabinet, certain that the emperor intended it to be more than a mere interim administration.²¹⁴

Hohenlohe and Czernin were of course dismayed and immediately set about thwarting him.²¹⁵ At first unaware of their machinations, Spitzmüller was surprised to find his task so arduous. Several politicians – notably the Bohemian trio of Clam-Martinic, Baernreither and Urban – turned down his approaches, professing a reluctance to enter a temporary government.²¹⁶ In fact, the real reason was their commitment to the implementation of the octroi.²¹⁷ Since Spitzmüller had made no secret of his aversion to the measure, his struggle was unsurprising.²¹⁸ Michał Bobrzyński, who had agreed to stay on as minister for Galicia, felt compelled to ask Spitzmüller whether he really wanted to force through a cabinet against the opposition of prominent aristocrats close to the court.²¹⁹ Spitzmüller also found little support from the Christian Socials, who feared that he would push through an economically

²⁰⁷ *Ausgleich*, p.57.

²⁰⁸ *SM*, p.152. Karl told Spitzmüller that he would have to appoint somebody else after the eventual promulgation of a new constitution for Cisleithania.

²⁰⁹ *SM*, pp.152-153.

²¹⁰ *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918; *SM*, p.151; *Ausgleich*, p.58.

²¹¹ *SM*, pp.152-153.

²¹² *Ausgleich*, p.58.

²¹³ *SM*, pp.151-152.

²¹⁴ *SM*, p.152; *NFPM*, 15.12.1916, p.2.

²¹⁵ *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918. Hohenlohe later told Baernreither that Spitzmüller’s nomination had been a “misunderstanding”.

²¹⁶ *RT*, II, 20.12, 21.12, pp.246, 248; *NB*, K7, 24.12.1916; K11, pp.11-12.

²¹⁷ *SM*, p.154; *Ausgleich*, p.59; *RT*, II, 20.12.1916, p.246.

²¹⁸ *SM*, p.154.

²¹⁹ *Ausgleich*, p.60.

disadvantageous *Ausgleich* by decree.²²⁰ He was also astonished to find out that the world of finance did not look favourably upon his appointment, although his later complaints that the press had been against him – for which he blamed Koerber and Sieghart – were barely justified.²²¹ What is more, despite his belief to the contrary, many thought that his mission was limited in scope and time.²²² Meanwhile, the names of Hohenlohe and Czernin continued to pop up as likely successors.²²³ In any case, should his responsibilities extend beyond the *Ausgleich*, Spitzmüller’s principles and talents would be severely tested. German political circles continued to insist that their national-political demands be addressed, and let it be known that no future government should share Koerber’s views on the use of extra-parliamentary means.²²⁴ Meanwhile, the Poles indicated that they fully expected him to expedite the special status of Galicia; the Ukrainians, the opposite.²²⁵

Despite the difficulties, Spitzmüller persevered and, within three days, had managed to cobble together a cabinet list.²²⁶ He had settled into his role and was more than ever convinced that his government was to be permanent.²²⁷ This spurred his opponents into action.²²⁸ On 17 December,²²⁹ he faced a direct onslaught from the men determined to frustrate him. Having already fended off Hohenlohe and Baernreither, he received the visit of Czernin late that evening.²³⁰ The count had already been active in the matter, urging Baernreither not to accept a portfolio “for the sake of [their] old friendship” while advising Spitzmüller not to turn to Baernreither.²³¹ Czernin now explained that “the poor little emperor” needed special care at the beginning of his reign, which he, Spitzmüller, was unable to give. What is more, Czernin argued that Spitzmüller was not qualified to tackle the Bohemian

²²⁰ *SM*, pp.153-154; *NFPA*, 16.12, p.2; *AZM*, 17.12.1916, p.5.

²²¹ *SM*, p.153-154; *AZM*, 15.12, p.2; 16.12, p.1; 17.12.1916, p.5. Press coverage was favourable in the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Reichspost*, though he did attract the ire of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* after it fell victim to heavy censorship.

²²² *RPM*, 16.12, p.5; *RT*, II, 16.12, p.244; *FJ*, II, 16.12, pp.420-421; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 15.12.1916.

²²³ *FJ*, II, 16.12, pp.420-421; *NS*, K6, 15.12; *NB*, K11, p.10.

²²⁴ *NFPM*, 15.12, p.2; 16.12, p.2; *NFPA*, 16.12.1916, p.2.

²²⁵ *NFPM*, 16.12, p.2; 17.12, p.3; 19.12.1916, p.2.

²²⁶ *NFPM*, 16.12, p.2; 17.12, p.3; 19.12.1916, p.2; *NB*, K11, p.11; *Ausgleich*, p.59.

²²⁷ *Ausgleich*, p.60; *NB*, K11, p.11; *RT*, II, 21.12.1916, p.248. Groß told Redlich that, on 15 December, Spitzmüller’s mission had been extended by Karl to include all political matters. His account is, however, unreliable.

²²⁸ *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918.

²²⁹ *Ausgleich*, p.60; *SM*, p.154. The date is incorrectly recorded as 18 December in his later memoirs.

²³⁰ *Ausgleich*, p.60; *SM*, pp.154-155.

²³¹ *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918.

question, which only an octroi could solve.²³² When Spitzmüller pointed out that Karl also had doubts on the matter, Czernin snapped: “These doubts will be removed by appropriate information.” Czernin then openly admitted to his designs on the premiership, and offered Spitzmüller the ministry of finance in his future administration. Since Czernin and Hohenlohe obviously had the emperor’s ear, and both opposed his appointment, Spitzmüller foresaw the difficulties he would face as prime minister, and lost confidence. And, as finance minister, he would have a free hand in concluding the *Ausgleich* renewal, a matter close to his heart. As a result, he accepted the plan suggested by Czernin, who acknowledged that he was making “a patriotic sacrifice”.²³³ Nevertheless, the following day,²³⁴ Karl informed him – to his surprise – that he intended to appoint Czernin as foreign minister, and once again offered him the premiership. Dismayed and irritated, but also undermined by the events of the previous week,²³⁵ he declined – a decision which he later deeply regretted.²³⁶

The Clam-Martinić cabinet

Ever the cynic, Koerber claimed that Karl had secretly sent Handel to Prague in order to offer Coudenhove the position of prime minister while Spitzmüller was still toiling to form his government.²³⁷ Newspapers did report that Handel had travelled there in relation to the cabinet-building, but stated that the discussions he held with Coudenhove – in the presence of Czernin – merely concerned preparations towards the resolution of the Bohemian question by the future government.²³⁸ Czernin had, indeed, recently acquired Handel’s drafts. Furthermore, as Handel was only in Prague between 14 and 16 December,²³⁹ it is unlikely that he was there on Karl’s orders to tout the premiership. On the other hand, Coudenhove was perhaps considered as a possible executor of the octroi after the conclusion of the *Ausgleich* negotiations by a

²³² *Ausgleich*, p.60; *SM*, p.155; *NW*, K1, 14.5.1918. Spitzmüller later told Wieser that Czernin had in fact insisted on the renewal of the economic *Ausgleich* through Paragraph Fourteen.

²³³ *Ausgleich*, p.60; *SM*, p.155.

²³⁴ *NFPN*, 18.12, p.2; *RPM*, 18.12, p.1; Polzer, p.126, footnote 1. Karl received Czernin in audience alone from 9.15 to 10.00 and then with Spitzmüller from 10.30 to 11.50.

²³⁵ *Ausgleich*, p.60; *SM*, p.155; *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.425; *NB*, K11, pp.11-12.

²³⁶ *Ausgleich*, pp.60-62; *SM*, pp.155-156. He also felt that this rejection lost him the emperor’s unlimited confidence, which he was never able fully to win back.

²³⁷ *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, p.425; *Ausgleich*, p.61; *SM*, p.156. Spitzmüller did not, however, believe this.

²³⁸ *NFPN*, 17.12.1916, p.3; *NB*, K11, pp.10-11.

²³⁹ *NFPN*, 17.12.1916, p.3.

Spitzmüller cabinet. In addition, at the time, Czernin still had his prime-ministerial ambitions. As it happened, Coudenhove was indeed offered the position, but only after Spitzmüller's withdrawal.²⁴⁰ In any case, he refused and recommended his friend Clam.²⁴¹

On the morning of 19 December, Karl consulted Spitzmüller to ask him his opinion on this suggestion.²⁴² Spitzmüller gave a favourable assessment of Clam,²⁴³ whereupon Karl received him and offered him the post.²⁴⁴ Yet the delay in the appointment of a government had become embarrassing. The press used several pretexts, such as Karl's visit to the Isonzo Front or the difficulties in finding a minister for trade, and insisted Spitzmüller's work was ongoing.²⁴⁵ On the evening of 19 December, an official announcement was published, according to which negotiations were continuing with the aim of forming a permanent government, in order to address all national and political questions.²⁴⁶ Spitzmüller's name was conspicuously absent from this announcement, but the newspapers nevertheless kept up the pretence, which was believed.²⁴⁷ Meanwhile, unbeknown to most, Clam was hurriedly putting his cabinet together.

A member of the historically Czech-friendly Conservative Landowners in the Bohemian Diet, Count Heinrich Clam-Martinić²⁴⁸ was still relatively little known nationally.²⁴⁹ In Karl Renner's lapidary assessment, he was a "political nonentity".²⁵⁰ For most of his career, he had chiefly concerned himself with Bohemian politics and, in particular, had worked for a Czech-German *Ausgleich*. His profile had risen with his nomination as Chairman of the Right in the House of Lords in late December 1913, and his inclusion as minister of agriculture in Koerber's last government.

²⁴⁰ Werkmann, p.93; Czedik, IV, p.516.

²⁴¹ FJ, II, 16.12.1916, p.425; Czedik, IV, p.516; Werkmann, p.93.

²⁴² *NFPM*, 20.12, p.4; Polzer, p.126, footnote 1. Again according to Polzer, Karl received Czernin in audience alone from 9.25 to 9.45 and then with Spitzmüller from 9.45 to 10.00.

²⁴³ *SM*, p.156.

²⁴⁴ Polzer, p.126, footnote 1.

²⁴⁵ *NFPM*, 16.12, p.2; 17.12, p.3; 19.12, p.11; *RPMT*, 18.12, p.1; *RPM*, 19.12, p.4; *RPN*, 19.12.1916, p.2.

²⁴⁶ *NFPA*, 19.12.1916, p.1.

²⁴⁷ *NFPA*, 20.12, p.4; *NFPA*, 20.12, p.1; *RT*, II, 20.12.1916, p.246.

²⁴⁸ Felix Höglinger, *Ministerpräsident Heinrich Graf Clam-Martinić* (Graz, 1964).

²⁴⁹ Sieghart, p.178; *RT*, I, 18.2.1909, 16.6.1909, 8.11.1909, pp.220, 238, 266; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.4.1917. He was, however, mentioned as potential minister or prime minister in political circles as early as 1909.

²⁵⁰ *Bunte Woche*, 25.12.1932, p.8.

Considered a “feudal lord of the purest water”,²⁵¹ he had, in accordance with his family’s tradition, supported Bohemian autonomy and been close to the Czechs.²⁵² But, having volunteered to fight in 1914, his experience in the trenches had resulted in a radical turnaround. Although he had helped stage the Czech–German demonstration in Prague in August, he was already dubious of the sincerity of those Czechs involved.²⁵³ Subsequently, in the first winter of war, he had told Franz Joseph that regrettable incidences of unreliability had occurred among Czech units.²⁵⁴ He also wrote a letter to Thun to ask him about the allegations of Czech treachery in the hinterland. The governor’s reassurances obviously failed to convince him.²⁵⁵ Indeed, three months later, in April 1915, he wrote a long memorandum to the parliamentary commission of the Conservative Landowners in Bohemia in which he bemoaned “the regrettable passivity of most of the Czech population regarding events in the war”, which he explained through their antipathy towards Germandom and their affection for Slavs outside the Monarchy. In particular, he pointed out the lamentable attitude of significant parts of the intelligentsia. Nevertheless, he admitted that, with a few exceptions, the situation in Bohemia was neither serious nor alarming, though he worried that it might deteriorate if the military situation worsened and the Russian army approached. As a result, he recommended – much like Coudenhove – the stimulation of patriotism within the Czech population, which he believed overwhelmingly loyal.²⁵⁶ His personal contribution was an article in *Hlas národa* entitled: “Away with passivity!”²⁵⁷ However, the alleged desertion of the 28th Prague Infantry Regiment (which occurred the day after he had written to his party), and continued reports of Czech treachery, eventually led to a complete change of heart.²⁵⁸ Many called it “trench staggers”.²⁵⁹ His health had certainly suffered on the battlefield and, after over two years of distinguished service, he returned to civilian life.²⁶⁰ Having taken part in the failed attempt of Upper House members to obtain the recall

²⁵¹ Polzer, p.126.

²⁵² Höglinger, *Clam*, pp.62-63. He had at first even defended Bohemian state rights, but soon moved towards the idea of “centralistic federalism”.

²⁵³ *RT*, I, 22.8.1914, p.639.

²⁵⁴ Heinrich Graf Clam-Martinic, “Kaiser Franz Joseph und die Nationalitäten”, in: *Erinnerungen an Franz Joseph I*, ed. Eduard Steinitz, (Berlin, 1931), pp.161-162.

²⁵⁵ Thun-Clam, 11.1.1915, in: Paul Molisch, *Briefe zur deutschen Politik in Österreich von 1848 bis 1918* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1934), p.391.

²⁵⁶ BC, Clam to parliamentary commission of the Conservative Landowners, 2.4.1915.

²⁵⁷ *TD*, 19.12.1916, p.233.

²⁵⁸ Polzer, p.127.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ BC, parting letter of Clam to his company, 4.11.1916; Czedik, IV, pp.546-547.

of parliament under Stürgkh,²⁶¹ he quickly found himself with a ministerial portfolio under Koerber. The prime minister urged Czech politicians to treat Clam as a conational, but they could not possibly believe this pretence. On the other hand, the German Radicals complained to Koerber that he had included somebody of “outspoken party political taint” with no German counterbalance.²⁶² By then, however, Clam’s feelings were hardly a secret. Goldmann had already reported to Berlin in September that Clam’s views had changed as a result of the war.²⁶³ Redlich later heard that Clam was “denying his Czechness”.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, when he entered the cabinet, his friends and supporters fully expected him to help promulgate a new Austrian constitution by octroi.²⁶⁵ Koerber, meanwhile, was convinced that Clam agreed with him on the necessity of amalgamating state and autonomous administration.²⁶⁶ These plans were of course anathema to the Czechs. If they needed tangible proof of his new-found hostility, he soon provided it. On 8 December, at a meeting of the Conservative Landowners, he put forward a motion to condemn the “deplorable” and “shameful” wartime occurrences among the Czech population, and to dissociate the party from these in its upcoming declaration on the occasion of the change on the throne.²⁶⁷ Despite acknowledging the bravery and sacrifices of many Czech men and refusing to extend the above reproaches to the entire nation, the address was blunt and severe in parts, calling attention to failings on the battlefield and treachery in the hinterland, and to “the cooling of the holy feelings of civic duty and military honour in the bosom of members of the Czech nation.”²⁶⁸ When the committee rejected these passages, Clam left the party, taking with him some of the *fine fleur* of the Bohemian aristocracy, including Windischgraetz, the president of the House of Lords.²⁶⁹

Only delusion or lack of information could therefore make anybody think – as Spitzmüller, Baernreither and Karl did – that Clam would be able to wield any

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.547-549; *NB*, K11, pp.1-3. Their resolution, dated 6.10.1916, nevertheless demanded the creation of certain “preconditions”.

²⁶² *TD*, 31.10, pp.210-211; *PTM*, 3.12.1916, p.1.

²⁶³ *Ö95G*, 4, Goldmann report, 26.9.1916.

²⁶⁴ *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.230.

²⁶⁵ *BC*, Czernin-Clam, 24.11.1916.

²⁶⁶ *FJ*, II, 11.1916, pp.416-417.

²⁶⁷ *NWT*, 22.12.1916, p.4.

²⁶⁸ *NFPM*, 24.12, p.12; differently worded draft in: *BC*.

²⁶⁹ *NFPM*, 24.12, p.12; *NWT*, 22.12, p.4.

influence on the Czechs.²⁷⁰ Even Koerber thought that, “as a Slav”, he might succeed in imposing German as the official language.²⁷¹ Most probably, Karl was not intimately acquainted with the latest developments in aristocratic Bohemian politics. Furthermore, the name Clam-Martinic remained indelibly associated with Heinrich Jaroslav, Heinrich’s uncle, who had allied with František Palacký and František Rieger in support of Bohemian state rights.²⁷² In any case, Clam had been recommended to Karl from many sides, by Coudenhove, Spitzmüller,²⁷³ Werkmann²⁷⁴ and Berchtold;²⁷⁵ possibly also by Polzer,²⁷⁶ and by Koerber, who thought very highly of him.²⁷⁷ Much was made of Clam’s loyalty and self-sacrifice.²⁷⁸ Certainly, the fact that he had been close to Franz Ferdinand did not harm his cause;²⁷⁹ nor did the fact that he had appeared to be in favour with Franz Joseph in the emperor’s twilight.²⁸⁰ But again, Czernin and Hohenlohe were the decisive influences in Karl’s choice. Just as they had succeeded in displacing Spitzmüller, they had convinced Karl to take on their friend.²⁸¹ To this end, they had conferred with Clam all day on 18 and 19 December.²⁸² It is tempting to agree with Koerber’s contention that the three men simply shared out the key posts among themselves: Clam was to become prime minister, Czernin foreign minister and Hohenlohe lord chamberlain.²⁸³ (Convention dictated that if the foreign minister were Austrian, the joint finance minister had to be Hungarian, and vice versa; therefore Czernin’s appointment would necessarily lead to Hohenlohe’s departure.)²⁸⁴

²⁷⁰ *NB*, K7, 7.3.1917; *SM*, pp.156-157, 162; *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, pp.609-610.

²⁷¹ *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, pp.427-428.

²⁷² *NFPM*, 21.12.1916, p.1.

²⁷³ *SM*, pp.156-157. Spitzmüller later regretted this.

²⁷⁴ Werkmann, p.70. On the night of 21-22.10, after Stürgkh’s murder. He also recommended Czernin. He too later regretted having named any names.

²⁷⁵ *NBT*, K5, 20.12.1916.

²⁷⁶ Polzer, p.126; *NB*, K11, p.10; *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, p.245.

²⁷⁷ *RT*, II, 23.11.1916, p.230; *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.427.

²⁷⁸ *Czedik*, IV, p.516.

²⁷⁹ Polzer, p.126; Auffenberg, pp.228-229; Neck, “Verfassungsgarantien”, p.437. He had accompanied him on his world tour in 1892–1893. He was also a witness to Franz Ferdinand’s protest note against Hungarian constitutional guarantees.

²⁸⁰ *RT*, II, 3.11.1916, p.223.

²⁸¹ Polzer, p.126; *NB*, K11, pp.10, 12; *BC*, Czernin-Clam, 24.11.1916. Czernin had addressed him as “my best friend”.

²⁸² *RT*, II, 20.12, 21.12, pp.247-248. Along with Fürstenberg.

²⁸³ *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.425.

²⁸⁴ *NB*, K11, p.12. An indication that, at the time of Hohenlohe’s appointment, Czernin was not yet being considered for the post of foreign minister.

Clam encountered far fewer difficulties than his predecessor in putting together his cabinet. Most of those who had given their assent to Spitzmüller²⁸⁵ now entered Clam's government: Baron Josef von Schenk for justice, Baron Zdenko von Forster for railways, Trnka for public works, Georgi for defence, Hussarek for religion and education, and Bobrzyński for Galicia.²⁸⁶ Spitzmüller himself, as agreed, took the ministry of finance, with Tisza's blessing.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, Clam easily convinced Handel to take the interior ministry, by expressing his complete agreement with the execution by decree of Galician autonomy, of the Bohemian question, and of the language law. Handel was not a little surprised by Clam's stance, but the latter explained that his experience in the trenches had changed his views.²⁸⁸ Finally, where his predecessor had faltered on account of his opposition to the octroi, Clam quickly succeeded. Swayed by the prospect of finally helping implement the policy, and encouraged by important *Nationalverband* and Christian Social figures, the two Prague-born Germans, Urban and Baernreither, joined as minister of trade and as minister without portfolio respectively. In Urban's case, the *Nationalverband* had consulted its Christian Social allies, and then discussed the matter with Clam, before unanimously approving of his participation during a plenary session on the evening of 20 December. It noted that the fact Clam "did not belong to the German nation" was not a sufficient reason to prevent one of its members from entering his government.²⁸⁹ Indeed, Clam himself had told Groß that "he was no German, but that he was a good Austrian, who has only ever done Austrian politics and who, in recent years, had revised many of his earlier views."²⁹⁰ Baernreither's route into the cabinet had been less straightforward, and the Christian Socials – who refused a ministry out of principle – denied any involvement in his appointment, rather unconvincingly.²⁹¹

Unmistakeably, these were highly political and partisan choices. Baernreither, though he continually described the octroi as a mere "arbitration", was not the

²⁸⁵ *NFPM*, 16.12, p.2; 17.12, p.3; 19.12.1916, p.2; *NB*, K11, p.11; *Ausgleich*, p.59.

²⁸⁶ *NFPM*, 21.12, p.2; *PTA*, 22.12.1916, p.2. Clam kept the ministry of agriculture for himself, apparently in order to vacate it for a Czech feudal after the proclamation of the octroi.

²⁸⁷ *Ausgleich*, pp.61-62; *SM*, p.157. Tisza had begun to renege on the long-term basis for the economic *Ausgleich*, but relented when told by Spitzmüller that he was now minister of finance.

²⁸⁸ "Handel", pp.101-103.

²⁸⁹ *NFPM*, 21.12, pp.2-3; *NFPA*, 21.12.1916, p.2.

²⁹⁰ *RT*, II, 21.12.1916, pp.248-249.

²⁹¹ *NB*, K7, 24.12; K11, pp.12-15; *RT*, II, 20.12, p.247; *NFPM*, 21.12, p.2; *NFPA*, 22.12, p.2; *RPM*, 21.12, p.3; 22.12.1916, p.3. On the evening of 20.12, Prince Alois Liechtenstein, the chairman of the Christian Social Party, asked him on behalf of Groß, Weiskirchner and himself to enter the government, whereupon he agreed.

dispassionate expert he claimed to be.²⁹² He too had been struck by the prevailing fever, and his diaries regularly vituperated against endemic Russophilia in the Bohemian lands and Czech disloyalty on the battlefield.²⁹³ Redlich remarked in January 1916: “He is now more anti-Czech than ever”.²⁹⁴ Urban, meanwhile, had developed radical views on constitutional reform and had even travelled to Berlin – with Tschirschky’s word of recommendation – to present these to the foreign office.²⁹⁵ Both Baernreither and Urban had been actively involved in wartime nationalist conciliabules – they now had the opportunity to turn their plans into reality.

Karl accepted Clam’s cabinet on 20 December,²⁹⁶ and the news was announced the following day, justified publicly “in light of the general political situation”.²⁹⁷ Unusually, the government simultaneously announced the outlines of its programme. Drafted by Baernreither,²⁹⁸ it proclaimed its chief aim to be “the establishment of full constitutional conditions, the creation of the necessary preconditions therefor, and the smoothing of the path to parliament”.²⁹⁹ These “preconditions” were, of course, a euphemism for the octroi. Consequently, the oath to the constitution was mentioned only evasively. Other political goals were expressed more explicitly: the conclusion of the *Ausgleich* renewal, the initiation of closer economic ties with Germany (though both conditional upon parliamentary approval),³⁰⁰ and the execution of Galician autonomy according to the handwritten letter of 4 November, “the guiding line of [the government’s] action”.³⁰¹ The concluding words promised to respect the equality of all nations, and appealed for the understanding and cooperation “of all those who have the future of Austria at heart”.³⁰²

Baernreither claimed that the manifesto made a good impression because it promised action. Also according to him, the new cabinet was well received and

²⁹² *NB*, K7, 6.2.1917; K11, pp.13, 47.

²⁹³ *NB*, K6, 30.8.1914; 25.12.1914; 26.12.1914; 13.3.1915; 8.5.1915. In August 1914, he wrote in his diary that “the Russian myth [had] has passed into the blood of today’s Czech”.

²⁹⁴ *RT*, II, [13.1.1916], p.133.

²⁹⁵ *RT*, II, 6.5.1915, p.46; *Ö101*, 38, Tschirschky-AA, 23.1.1916.

²⁹⁶ *MRP*, K290, 6561 in 5801, Karl-Clam, 20.12.1916.

²⁹⁷ *NFPM*, 21.12.1916, p.1.

²⁹⁸ *NB*, K7, 24.12.1916; K11, p.15. Only a few minor changes were subsequently made.

²⁹⁹ *WZ*, 21.12.1916, p.6.

³⁰⁰ *NFPM*, 21.12.1916, p.3.

³⁰¹ *NB*, K7, 24.12.1916; K11, p.15. The passage on Galicia was added at the insistence of Bobrzyński.

³⁰² *WZ*, 21.12.1916, p.6.

predicted a long life.³⁰³ Certainly, German nationalist publications such as the *Ostdeutsche Rundschau* expressed their satisfaction.³⁰⁴ The *Prager Tagblatt* beamingly reported Clam's promise to Groß, Geßmann and Weiskirchner that his government would follow an "outspokenly pro-German course" and would resolve the Bohemian question by January, through a patent.³⁰⁵ (This had apparently secured Urban's participation in the cabinet.) Yet much of the Viennese press exercised restraint, save for the interested *Fremden-Blatt* and *Neues Wiener Journal*.³⁰⁶ *Die Zeit* was particularly cautious, and the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* sanctimoniously negative.³⁰⁷ The *Neue Freie Presse*, after an initially frosty assessment, appeared pleased with the government's manifesto.³⁰⁸ Meanwhile, the Christian Socials were quick to point out in the *Reichspost* that Baernreither and Urban were not their representatives (contrary to claims in the liberal press),³⁰⁹ that they, as a party, were not tied in any way to the government and that they would judge it on its actions.³¹⁰

The Czech press had almost contained its consternation upon learning of Clam's appointment, but the announcement of his programme proved too much to swallow. The *Národní listy* complained that Clam had violated convention by consulting only the Germans and the Poles and ignoring the Czechs and the South Slavs. It insisted that Trnka was no counterweight to Urban and Baernreither, and warned against underestimating the power of the Czech Union. *Národní politika* reminded Clam that the Austrian state idea required the equal treatment of all nations. *Právo Lidu* condemned Clam's one-sided cabinet-formation which, it asserted, "cannot and will not make a good impression on the Czechs". It thought his attitude unforgivable in light of Czech Union's avowed desire for conciliation.³¹¹ Indeed, Clam's manifesto was a bitter blow for the union which, for weeks, had stressed its loyalty and willingness to cooperate, admittedly from a position of weakness and uncertainty. On 10 December, in *Venkov*, the Agrarian Udržal had vaunted the Austria state idea and pleaded: "Let us work with increased intensity towards maintaining and extending the independence and power of the state in which we live, and towards

³⁰³ *NB*, K11, pp.15, 17. Although he later claimed that he had entered the cabinet with no illusions.

³⁰⁴ *RPN*, 22.12.1916, p.1.

³⁰⁵ *PTA*, 22.12.1916, p.2.

³⁰⁶ *RPN*, 22.12.1916, p.1.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; *NFPM*, 21.12.1916, p.1.

³⁰⁹ *NFPM*, 21.12.1916, p.2.

³¹⁰ *RPM*, 22.12.1916, p.3.

³¹¹ *PTA*, 22.12.1916, p.2.

strengthening this state to which firm historical ties bind us”.³¹² During a speech in Brno, the Social Democrat Tusar had called for an end to national radicalism and for conciliation between Czechs and Germans. Opposing the octroi, he declared: “We Czech Social Democrats, together with the other Czech parties, will not deny the state our help in these critical times, but we demand that issues as drastic as the special status of Galicia and [...] the language question be sorted out in parliament”. He insisted that the Czechs were no doctrinaires in linguistic matters.³¹³ In April 1915, Clam had stressed the importance of convincing the Czech public that it had no reason to fear anti-Czech government rule after the war.³¹⁴ In fact, it now had good cause to fear it *during* the war. This, in turn, strengthened Czech political unity, and the *Český svaz* closed ranks.

Shrewdly, Austrian propaganda abroad described Clam (and Czernin) as Czechs, and used their appointment to prove Austria’s independence from Germany, the equality between her constituent nations, and Karl’s determination to initiate a new foreign and domestic course. Beneš admitted that, as a result, the *émigrés* experienced a difficult time, marked by fear and more feverish work.³¹⁵ There were no such illusions at home, however. When he heard of the composition of the new government, Tobolka wrote in his diary: “Baron Trnka is the only Czech [...] Does Clam-Martinic [...] count in the Czech tally? Come off it!”³¹⁶

Czernin and Hohenlohe

Personally, Karl felt no animosity towards the Czechs. He had once told Polzer that Bohemia still felt the terrible consequences of the Battle of the White Mountain.³¹⁷ He also complained to Baernreither about the Germans’ failure to learn Czech.³¹⁸ And apparently, his best years had been those spent in Prague and Brandeis/Brandýs.³¹⁹ In that time, however, he did not develop any great understanding of, or sympathy for,

³¹² *PTM*, 11.12.1916, p.2.

³¹³ *NFPM*, 20.12, p.4; *TD*, 19.12.1916, p.236. The *Neue Freie Presse* asked for an abstract.

³¹⁴ BC, Clam to Conservative Landowners, 2.4.1915.

³¹⁵ Beneš, I, p.188, 247-248.

³¹⁶ *TD*, 20.12.1916, p.236.

³¹⁷ Polzer, pp.43-46.

³¹⁸ *NB*, K7, 6.2.1917.

³¹⁹ *RT*, II, 29.12.1916, p.253.

Bohemian state rights.³²⁰ He thought that a few sops would suffice to placate the Czechs. His annoyance at the interminable Czech-German conflict³²¹ was not dissimilar to his uncle's. Save for Koerber, none of the people Karl conferred with during his first month on the throne would have disagreed with this sentiment. Since the prospect of a Czech-German *Ausgleich* seemed extinct, Karl followed their counsel. In the end, there was not even any sign of the Bohemian ministry which Karl had suggested in late 1914 and had openly advocated to Wallis as recently as 25 November 1916.³²² The Czechs could, however, console themselves with the fact that, in mid-December, Karl commuted Kramář and Rašín's death sentences to fifteen and ten years in prison respectively.³²³ (The men's appeal had been rejected on the eve of Karl's accession.)³²⁴ The news was published in early January alongside the reasons for their original condemnation.³²⁵

Of the many voices which had urged Karl on the path of the octroi, Czernin's was one of the most persuasive. However, neither his views on domestic reform nor his former closeness to Franz Ferdinand had originally brought him to Karl's attention.³²⁶ Indeed, it was his desire for a rapid conclusion of peace which had singled him out in Karl's eyes.³²⁷ In August 1916, the then heir had received a memorandum written by Czernin entitled "Thoughts on Ending the War", which predicted the eventual defeat of the Central Powers, and urged considerable sacrifices to be made in order to extract Austria-Hungary from the conflict unscathed.³²⁸ Karl, who, by then, shared this viewpoint, was obviously impressed.³²⁹ Praised (at times)

³²⁰ *ÖIZ*, p.23; Margutti, p.84; *PQ*, Karl; Wingfield, *Flag*, pp.120-134. According to Wallis, during Karl's second year of study in Prague, he had entered into closer contact with the outside world, given audiences and visited societies. Margutti, however, claimed that Karl had preferred the company of his garrison comrades to that of learned men. In any case, he left Prague before the Czech-German troubles which plagued the city and disrupted Franz Joseph's jubilee celebrations in late 1908.

³²¹ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, pp.76-77.

³²² *Ibid.*, p.80; Polzer, p.118; *TD*, 20.12.1916, p.236.

³²³ *TD*, 16.12.1916, pp.226-227; *RT*, II, 22.12.1916, p.250. Redlich commented presciently: "Will he even serve fifteen months?" Meanwhile, Červinka and Zamazal received six years.

³²⁴ *NFPM*, 21.11.1916, p.2.

³²⁵ *NFPM*, 5.1.1917, pp.2-3.

³²⁶ Czernin, p.114. Czernin himself denied that his appointment had anything to do with Franz Ferdinand. His claim that it came as a "complete surprise" is, however, untruthful.

³²⁷ Polzer, p.124.

³²⁸ *PA*, I, K497, Czernin-Burián, 6.7.1916, "Gedanken über die Beendigung des Krieges"; *NBT*, K7, Czernin-Berchtold, 6.8.1916. Specifically, he advocated the renunciation of territorial increases and reparations, save for Belgium, which was to be compensated by all belligerents.

³²⁹ *NBT*, K7, Berchtold-Czernin, 2.9.1916. Berchtold thanked Czernin warmly on Karl's behalf.

for his diplomatic activity while ambassador to Romania,³³⁰ and recommended by Hohenlohe as “one of the few men equal to the situation”, Czernin had been quickly sought by Karl, once on the throne.³³¹ However, he had at first angled for the post of prime minister, though chiefly in order to gain influence on foreign policy.³³² As he had explained to Clam in late November, domestic affairs were irrelevant under the circumstances: “We must first save our life and only then can we discuss how we should live.”³³³ Yet Karl obviously wanted him at the *Ballhausplatz* to replace Burián, whom he considered “a pedantic and excessively boring doctrinaire” with whom nothing could be done.³³⁴ As Karl later recalled, “I sacked the rather fossilized Burián and took on Czernin because, like me, he had the most immediate conclusion of peace as his driving political aim.”³³⁵ Czernin readily accepted a post on which he had set his sights even before the war.³³⁶ Unfortunately for Karl, Czernin, despite his dash and his brilliance, was a difficult, slippery, unstable character. His own brother-in-law, Montenuovo, called him an “unpredictable neurasthenic”,³³⁷ an “impulsive, nervous” man who “simply gives up on an important matter if it is not sorted quickly”.³³⁸ Karl himself recounted in amusement that Franz Joseph had told Montenuovo: “A very nice man, your brother-in-law, but a very bad diplomat”.³³⁹ Many described him as dilettantish.³⁴⁰ Baernreither once called him a charlatan, but more often appeared impressed, as did many others.³⁴¹ Indeed, Czernin could dazzle. To Plener, he was “brilliantly superficial, spirited, nervous, arrogant”; Friedrich von Wieser, while he agreed with this assessment, thought “ignorant” more appropriate than “superficial”.³⁴² Czernin certainly did not doubt his own ability – in Polzer’s

³³⁰ Erwin Matsch (ed.), *November 1918 auf dem Ballhausplatz, Erinnerungen Ludwigs Freiherrn von Flotow des letzten Chefs des österreichisch-ungarischen auswärtigen Dienstes 1895-1920* (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1982), p.319-320. Although he had once allowed the secret diplomatic codes to be stolen by the Romanians in rocambolesque circumstances.

³³¹ Polzer, pp.123-124.

³³² Polzer, pp.125-126; *NB*, K11, pp.10-11.

³³³ *BC*, Czernin-Clam, 24.11.1916.

³³⁴ *W20G*, 5, conversation with Wilhelm, 9.10.1916.

³³⁵ *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.607.

³³⁶ Werkmann, p.93; Czernin, p.77; *NB*, K7, XVII, 20.1.1918; *NB*, K11, p.12; Hantsch, II, p.495.

³³⁷ *FSS*, HR-HDA-1773-3, 25.12.1916.

³³⁸ *FJ*, II, pp.426-427.

³³⁹ Seeckt, pp.447-448.

³⁴⁰ *HHStA*, *Nachlass Mensdorff*, K4, Diary, 23.12.1916; Polzer, pp.52, 139. Count Albert von Mensdorff-Pouilly-Dietrichstein – who called his appointment an “experiment” – and Polzer (though he had welcomed his appointment at first) among others.

³⁴¹ *NB*, K7, 20.1; 12.3.1917, Vienna; *NW*, K1, 10.5.1918; *Arz*, p.126; *FSS*, HR-HDA-1773-3, 25.12.1916. *Arz* and Sarkotić, for instance.

³⁴² *NW*, K1, 2.5.1918.

words, “he recognized no one as superior to himself, *ni Dieu ni maître*.”³⁴³ Spitzmüller, still marked by his experience when trying to form a cabinet, thought Czernin clever but unscrupulous, and warned Karl against his “violent methods”.³⁴⁴

For all his drawbacks, Czernin was not an unreasonable choice of foreign minister. His assessments were realistic, his views prescient and insightful, and his plans in accordance with Karl’s. His thoughts on domestic policy were, however, absolutist, reckless and ruthless, not to say ferocious. The numerous plans for constitutional reform which he sketched for Franz Ferdinand in the years before the war revealed an extraordinary degree of violence, cynicism, misanthropy and hubris.³⁴⁵ He consistently advocated a *coup d’état*, backed by force, in both Bohemia and in Hungary. His methods, as summarized by Robert A. Kann, were: “the jail, the bayonet, the intrigue, the lie, the *putsch*”.³⁴⁶ But Czernin had eventually fallen out of favour with Franz Ferdinand,³⁴⁷ and had turned to Tisza, becoming an outspoken champion of dualism.³⁴⁸ Tisza, in turn, backed Czernin energetically.³⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, therefore, in his inaugural speech as foreign minister on 23 December, Czernin announced that he stood “entirely on the basis of the 1867 *Ausgleich*”.³⁵⁰ Despite his new post, Czernin continued to meddle in internal affairs, supervising the execution of his preferred course, while ensuring that it did not harm his foreign policy.

The real *spiritus rector* was, however, Konrad Hohenlohe.³⁵¹ He had also been close to Franz Ferdinand, and had befriended Karl at Miramare castle.³⁵² He was, in Polzer’s words, “one of the few people who had been intimate with the emperor from his early days”.³⁵³ Later, during Karl’s heirship, he was the only minister who

³⁴³ Polzer, p.128.

³⁴⁴ *SM*, pp.155, 157.

³⁴⁵ Robert A. Kann, “Count Ottokar Czernin and Archduke Francis Ferdinand”, *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XVI: 2 (Boulder, 1956), p.119.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.130-131, 144. Kann called him “a man who gauged the mental level of the people from the vantage of his own arrogance”. He described a letter from Czernin to Hoyos, written in November 1913, which expounded on his views of Austria, as a “Wagnerian death raving, intoned by an emotionally overcharged, political Don Quixote”.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Czernin-Franz Ferdinand, 27.1.1913, p.139.

³⁴⁸ *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.426. According to Koerber, Czernin had given Tisza a written guarantee that he supported dualism and Hungarian state autonomy.

³⁴⁹ *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.426.

³⁵⁰ *NFPM*, 23.12, p.1; *NFPA*, 23.12.1916, p.1. He had been appointed on 22.12.

³⁵¹ *RT*, II, 21.12; 22.12.1916, p.249.

³⁵² Polzer, pp.116-117; *RT*, II, 26.11.1916, p.233.

³⁵³ Polzer, p.117.

regularly visited him during his training at the *Hofburg*.³⁵⁴ And, as soon as Karl ascended the throne, he was again a most frequent visitor.³⁵⁵ Hohenlohe, who was known as the “Red Prince” for his alleged progressiveness,³⁵⁶ had been considered for the posts of prime minister and lord chamberlain by Franz Ferdinand.³⁵⁷ But for all his charm and empathy,³⁵⁸ he was not held in high intellectual esteem. Koerber and Redlich both found him “muddleheaded”, and the former claimed that his stupidity was famed.³⁵⁹ Indeed, Stürgkh had said that every time he opened his mouth in the ministerial council, he worried that another idiotic comment would spurt out.³⁶⁰ Baernreither thought him “inept”, and his quadralist plans for the Monarchy so stupid that he had at first suspected a joke.³⁶¹ He and Tschirschky both found him dilettantish,³⁶² while Geßmann thought him “incapable”.³⁶³ Paul Thun, meanwhile, felt that he had no real knowledge of state affairs and that he looked down on commoners.³⁶⁴ According to Sieghart, “the only person of whom he had a markedly good opinion was himself”; he was “so utterly self-involved that he could not imagine himself anywhere but in the centre of the cosmos”.³⁶⁵ Karl was oblivious to these foibles and esteemed him highly.³⁶⁶ He therefore wanted him in his entourage, and earmarked him for a non-political post (although Hohenlohe was said to prefer backroom string-pulling to official responsibility).³⁶⁷ He stood down as joint finance minister on 22 December (to make way for a Hungarian: Burián),³⁶⁸ and was eventually appointed lord chamberlain in February.³⁶⁹ Hohenlohe’s views, though less extreme than Czernin’s, were resolutely pro-German, both in foreign and domestic

³⁵⁴ *NBT*, K5, 22.1.1916.

³⁵⁵ *FJ*, II, 16.12.1916, 5.2.1917, pp.419, 425; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 1.12.1916.

³⁵⁶ Polzer, p.117; Sieghart, p.90. He had acquired the nickname after permitting a performance of Gerhart Hauptmann’s *Die Weber*, which had been banned in Austria due to its socialist tendencies.

³⁵⁷ Polzer, p.117; *RT*, I, 29.4.1914, p.598.

³⁵⁸ Polzer, pp.121-122; Sieghart, p.90; *Ausgleich*, p.57; *NB*, K6, 6.1.1916. Polzer called him “genial, gay, full of spirit and wit”, adding that it was impossible to be bored in his company or resist his charm. He also noted his sympathy for, and understanding of, men.

³⁵⁹ *RT*, II, 3.12.1915, 28.4.1916, pp.120, 161.

³⁶⁰ *RT*, II, 20.9.1916, p.208.

³⁶¹ *RT*, II, [13.1.1916], p.133; *NB*, K6, 6.1.1916.

³⁶² *NB*, K6, 6.1.1916; *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Tschirschky-Jagow, 16.10.1915.

³⁶³ *RT*, II, 20.12.1915, p.128.

³⁶⁴ *RT*, II, 29.12.1916, p.252.

³⁶⁵ Sieghart, p.91.

³⁶⁶ *Ö86Nr.2*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 5.12.1916; *FJ*, II, 5.2.1917, p.426.

³⁶⁷ *RT*, II, 21.12.1916, p.249.

³⁶⁸ *NFPM*, 23.12.1916, p.1.

³⁶⁹ *NFPM*, 10.2.1916, p.2.

affairs.³⁷⁰ And his planned restructuring of the Monarchy aimed, in part, to “trap Bohemia”.³⁷¹

Of course, it was no coincidence that Karl had immediately sought out men who had been close to his uncle. Their proximity to the late archduke inspired confidence. But Karl was certainly not the “blind executor of Franz Ferdinand’s political testament”, as Biliński, among others, claimed.³⁷² Czernin, despite his later boasts,³⁷³ was not on Franz Ferdinand’s list of candidates for foreign minister, or indeed for any post of importance.³⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Clam had never exerted any political influence on the former heir. Furthermore, Hohenlohe was a personal friend and adviser of Karl’s in his own right. Spitzmüller, for his part, was chosen as the leading Austrian expert on the *Ausgleich*. Even Sieghart, whose brutal sacking by Karl was seen by most as Franz Ferdinand’s posthumous revenge,³⁷⁵ denied that he had fallen prey to a provision of his testament.³⁷⁶ Had there been such a testament, and had Karl seen it and followed it, he would have sacked Tisza,³⁷⁷ delayed the coronation in Budapest, and refused to take the oath on the Austrian constitution. Yet Karl did none of this. As it happened, Franz Ferdinand’s archive was hidden away after his death, and Karl never gained – or, indeed, sought – access to it before coming to power.³⁷⁸

Contrary to Koerber’s repeated allegations, Spitzmüller had claimed that Karl had expressed serious reservations concerning the octroi.³⁷⁹ Unfortunately for him, if such was his aversion, he had surrounded himself with men of a contrary disposition, including – in Czernin – one of the plan’s most ardent and abiding champions. The boisterous and impatient mood among German bourgeois parties, the violence of the Radicals’ attacks on Koerber, and the meekness of the Czechs, further forced Karl’s hand. He later admitted that political pressure from the German camp had indeed been

³⁷⁰ Ö88, 7, Tschirschky-Bethmann, 30.11.1915.

³⁷¹ NB, K6, 6.1.1916.

³⁷² Biliński, II, p.76, 242; RT, II, 29.12.1916, p.253; Polzer, p.145. Paul Thun, for instance.

³⁷³ Czernin, p.114.

³⁷⁴ Kann, “Czernin and Ferdinand”, p.141; Polzer, p.131.

³⁷⁵ RT, II, 27.12.1916, pp.250-251; Funder, pp.583-584.

³⁷⁶ Sieghart, p.180; UR, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.608. Karl himself recalled: “I also removed a nasty specimen of the old Austria”, who had risen “from little Jewish trainee in the finance ministry”.

³⁷⁷ RT, II, 15.10.1915, pp.92-93.

³⁷⁸ RT, II, 15.10.1915, p.92; Polzer, p.56; Chlumecky, p.53. Although Milan Hodža claimed that the archduke’s papers had been saved by Bardolff, Chlumecky reported that Franz Joseph had ordered the entire archive of Franz Ferdinand’s military chancellery to be locked away for fifty years. Polzer too claimed it had been sealed and hidden. The papers which Karl discovered in May 1917 were only Brosch’s, who had left the chancellery several years before.

³⁷⁹ SM, pp.152-153.

a factor in his acceptance.³⁸⁰ Thus whatever his doubts about the octroi – which obviously did not weigh too heavily on him – Karl was either persuaded, coaxed or cowed into acquiescence.

Karl's preoccupations

Karl's chaotic and haphazard first month in power revealed that he had not organized his accession, and that he had no ready plans for constitutional reform, nor designated candidates to head his governments. A lack of both preparedness and awareness led him to agree to take the vow on the Austrian constitution and to be crowned in Budapest.³⁸¹ Admittedly, the circumstances were very different from the ones Franz Ferdinand had imagined when drawing up his plans to delay both commitments and reorganize the Monarchy. December 1916 was perhaps not a time for experiments. Yet, apparently, Karl had grand designs. The former Austrian prime minister Count Erich von Kielmansegg had heard "from a very authoritative party" that the emperor was determined to carry out big changes after his coronation.³⁸² Karl had also suggested to Spitzmüller that a new constitution would be promulgated in the near future.³⁸³ Karl certainly had room for manoeuvre and faced little opposition. Thanks in large part to Stürgkh's skill and tenacity, Austria had avoided becoming a military dictatorship,³⁸⁴ or being saddled with irrevocable, damaging constitutional changes. Moreover, the meddling of the high command in policy-making was at its lowest since the beginning of the war. In fact, by the summer of 1916, the military had all but abandoned attempts to gain acceptance for its projects. When Karl assumed the supreme command of the armed forces on 2 December,³⁸⁵ he effectively ended the army's political ambitions by removing Friedrich (and therefore Conrad's influence) and ordering all important domestic matters to be submitted to him.³⁸⁶ On 9 January,

³⁸⁰ *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.610.

³⁸¹ *SM*, p.149; *NPH*, p.53; *UR*, I, p.98. Kovács offers a charitable interpretation of Karl's decision to be crowned in Budapest. According to her, he did so to stress the independence of the state against Germany, drive a wedge between Hungary and Germany, and strengthen the bond to the Pope.

³⁸² *RT*, II, 3.12.1916, p.236.

³⁸³ *SM*, p.152.

³⁸⁴ Führ, pp.181-182; Mark Cornwall, "Disintegration and defeat: The Austro-Hungarian Revolution", in: Cornwall (ed.), p.181. Führ rightly objects to the term. Cornwall uses the more accurate "bureaucratic-military dictatorship".

³⁸⁵ *NFPN*, 4.12, p.1.

³⁸⁶ *MKSM*, K1250, 68-8/8-2, supreme order to the *AOK*, 4.12.1916.

he signed an imperial decree rescinding the civilian powers which the military had been granted in a large part of the hinterland.³⁸⁷

Karl had easily done away with military encroachment in political affairs, but failed to exploit the free hand he had gained. He did not resuscitate his uncle's ideas for constitutional reform, or even try to enforce his own – testament, perhaps, to their virtual non-existence. Nor did he consult specialists on the question, or set up a dedicated commission. Instead, after a few hesitant weeks, he plumped for a narrow, one-sided, unimaginative German course which, despite years of prior development, still needed writing from scratch. Karl's thoughts were obviously elsewhere.

Since his accession to the throne, his overwhelming priority had undoubtedly been the conclusion of peace.³⁸⁸ According to Polzer, “he was engrossed from the very first days of his reign in the endeavour to end the war as soon as possible.”³⁸⁹ When Wilhelm met him in late November, he found him not only “in low spirits” and burdened by “the heaviness of the responsibility that weighs on him”, but also very voluble on the need to obtain peace, especially in light of Austria's food shortages. Karl therefore set great store by the Central Powers' planned peace note.³⁹⁰ Shortly after, he sought to pressurize the Germans into issuing it as soon as possible, but encountered opposition from Hindenburg and Ludendorff. From Teschen, he telegraphed Burián despondently: “My impression: foreign office completely shut out. Pure military dictatorship.”³⁹¹ The German military finally relented after the occupation of Bucharest, and the note to the neutral powers suggesting immediate peace negotiations finally went out on 12 December. But, to Karl's great disappointment, it was supercilious and defiant in tone, and failed to specify any conditions;³⁹² unsurprisingly, the Allies rejected it.³⁹³ Karl obviously doubted Berlin's commitment to peace, and had already investigated other possible channels. Most notably, he had beseeched his mother-in-law, the Duchess of Parma, to make contact

³⁸⁷ *RGBl.* 1917, Nr.118, 9.1.1917, p.41.

³⁸⁸ *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.605.

³⁸⁹ Polzer, p.224.

³⁹⁰ *Ö86Nr.IG*, 4, Grünau to Bethmann, 29.11.1916.

³⁹¹ *NFPN*, 4.12, p.8; *NFPM*, 7.12, p.2; *NFPA*, 7.12, p.2; *NBG*, 4, Four telegrams from Karl, undated; Karl-Burián, Teschen 6.12. Karl arrived in Teschen on 2.12, visited Wilhelm at German headquarters on 5.12, and returned to Schönbrunn on 7.12.1916.

³⁹² *NFPA*, 12.12, pp.1-2.

³⁹³ Burián, p.211; Beneš, I, pp.243-244; Masaryk, p.126.

with her sons Sixtus and Xavier in Belgium; she consequently wrote two letters, on 5 and 14 December 1916, begging to see them again.³⁹⁴

Karl's other paramount concern was his army. Appalled and embittered by his experience of the country's military leadership, he made drastic changes after taking over the supreme command, moving the headquarters from Teschen to Baden, outside Vienna, imposing a new code of conduct, and ultimately, in late February, sacking Conrad and replacing him with the conciliatory and non-political Arz von Straußenburg.³⁹⁵ These were not simply symbolic gestures: Karl was a soldier and determined to command.³⁹⁶ His preoccupation with war and peace therefore left little time for domestic political considerations. When, in late November, Redlich asked Koerber whether Karl was aware of "the gravity of the problems of the Empire, the danger of the general situation and the great unsolved difficulties in Austro-Hungarian relations", the prime minister shook his head, admitting that Karl saw himself mainly as commander-in-chief.³⁹⁷

On 30 December, in tremendous – and, in light of the circumstances, somewhat incongruous – pomp, Karl was crowned King of Hungary in Budapest. Effectively, this was the end of any possibility of reform involving Transleithania. But, astonishingly, Karl also managed to upset the Magyars in the process. Indeed, he hurried away from the Hungarian capital very shortly after the ceremony, leaving empty the specially prepared royal suite in Buda castle, and thereby provoking the considerable dismay and resentment of his hosts.³⁹⁸ Some months later, Karl conceded that he had committed a great blunder.³⁹⁹ Unfortunately for him, it was one of several.

³⁹⁴ Sixte, pp.38, 43. Sixtus claimed that the first letter was Karl's initiative alone, as was his choice of mediator.

³⁹⁵ *NFPM*, 28.11.1916, p.3; Conrad, IV, p.232; Arz, pp.123-124, 137.

³⁹⁶ Arz, p.132.

³⁹⁷ *RT*, II, 26.11.1916, p.232.

³⁹⁸ Michael Károlyi, *Faith without Illusion* (Oxford, 1956), p.75; *NFPM*, 31.12.1916, p.7; 14.4.1917, p.3. Karl left Budapest at 18.00 for Schönbrunn. Deputies in the Lower House were still complaining about this in April.

³⁹⁹ Polzer, p.75, footnote 1. He told Polzer that he should have stayed a few weeks but that, at the time, he had thought it impossible to remain away from the supreme command of the army for so long.

CHAPTER V

THE GERMAN COURSE: HALF-STEAM AHEAD

Although Clam's government had promised to go about its task without delay and to use the material already at its disposal,¹ the octroi project immediately stuttered. Upon asking Clam about Handel's work, Baernreither had been told: "I myself do not yet know the drafts, act as if they did not exist, I am completely free in the matter and in the form, and only one thing is sure: certain questions must be dealt with outside parliament."² But as he quickly realized, the renewing of the *Ausgleich* and the food crisis were higher priorities.³ This was not his only frustration. When he first asked to see Handel's papers on 20 December, Clam had promised to hand them over once he had read them.⁴ Having heard nothing by early January, Baernreither reiterated his demand, only to receive the same answer.⁵ By then, he admitted to Redlich that the government would not succeed in decreeing much by octroi.⁶ It was soon rumoured that Clam would resign, leaving Hohenlohe and Czernin to press on with the policy.⁷ Still, Baernreither persevered, and on 15 January, accompanied by Urban, he paid Clam another visit to request the documents urgently; snowed under, the prime minister had still not examined them in full, and again asked for a few more days.⁸ The two ministers were not alone in their annoyance.⁹ The *Nationalverband*, though pacified by its first meeting with the prime minister earlier in the month,¹⁰ was increasingly restless and suspicious of the government's intentions. At a meeting on 17 January, Groß informed its members that Clam had refused to set a date for the proclamation of the octroi.¹¹ As a result, Baernreither suggested to Clam that a plan be promptly drawn up for the execution of the proposals, and handed him a

¹ WZ, 21.12.1916, p.6.

² NB, K7, 24.12.1916; K11, pp.13-14.

³ NB, K7, 2.1; 7.1; 15.1.1917; K11, pp.16-17.

⁴ NB, K11, p.25.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ RT, II, 3.1.1917, p.254.

⁷ RT, II, 14.1.1917, p.258.

⁸ NB, K11, p.25.

⁹ NB, K7, 16.1.1917.

¹⁰ RT, II, 14.1 p.258; NB, K7, 2.1.1917; NB, K11, p.25. Nevertheless, two of the main German newspapers in Prague, *Bohemia* and *Prager Tagblatt*, reported that the board had been very displeased by Clam, though Groß denied this.

¹¹ RT, II, 17.1.1917, p.260.

memorandum on the subject. Clam promised to discuss it with the emperor, but Baernreither heard nothing back.¹² Though he readily admitted that Clam was industrious, level-headed and calm, and desirous of “accommodating all known wishes of the Germans in Bohemia as far as possible”,¹³ he became increasingly aware of his shortcomings. He complained about his lack of organization, his hesitancy and his underestimation of the amount of work ahead.¹⁴ Overloaded by everyday business, he appeared unable to address the bigger political questions.¹⁵ Baernreither also bemoaned the fact that his partner Urban was entirely engrossed in his own ministry.¹⁶ At the end of January, he was forced to observe: “Our horizon is darkening.” Complaints that the government was “just as inactive as Stürgkh” and that “nobody knew where they stood” flooded from all sides. The German nationalists of both Houses were especially fretful. Nevertheless, Clam could not be persuaded to speak out publicly on the matter and clarify his position. Finally, almost six weeks after entering office, Baernreither obtained the language proposals for study; the remainder then arrived piecemeal.¹⁷

However, he was bewildered by Handel’s efforts on the Bohemian question, describing them as “radical, but without any knowledge of [local] conditions”.¹⁸ After two days of racking his brains over them, he proclaimed them to be “blooming nonsense”. When he showed them to two specialists in the Bohemian governor’s office, one of them burst out laughing.¹⁹ New drafts therefore had to be produced. (Baernreither was equally unimpressed by Handel’s other proposed decrees – for Galician autonomy *inter alia* – and dismissed his colleague as a “constitutional trapeze artist”. When Handel read them out, Baernreither remarked that this was *va banque*, to which the former responded: “Yes it is, but there is no other way.”)²⁰

Only in early February, therefore, did work on the Bohemian octroi start in earnest. Consultations began in a small group composed of Clam, Handel, Coudenhove, Baernreither and two councillors; later, Urban also became a regular

¹² NB, K7, 20.1.1917; K11, p.26.

¹³ NB, K7, 2.2.1917.

¹⁴ Ibid., 21.1; 30.1.1917; K11, p.20.

¹⁵ NB, K11, pp.21-24. Baernreither ascribed this to the hypertrophic and bureaucratic nature of the position of the Austrian prime minister.

¹⁶ NB, K7, 30.1.1917.

¹⁷ Ibid.; NB, K11, pp.26-27.

¹⁸ NB, K7, 30.1.1917.

¹⁹ Ibid.; 2.2.1917.

²⁰ Ibid.; NB, K11, pp.41-46. What is more, these were Handel’s watered-down drafts.

participant. However, their progress was soon halted when Clam developed influenza on 10 February and was incapacitated for the rest of the month.²¹ When he returned, still suffering relapses, and further overwhelmed by unattended commitments, the momentum was lost. Thereafter, work advanced slowly, lacking drive and concision, mired in detail, and overshadowed by more pressing issues. Though Baernreither believed that the public's perception of the government was still positive, he acknowledged its desire for concrete action. Despite his insistence, Clam still refused to make any announcement.²² In contrast, Baernreither claimed that he took pains to update the expectant political world, not simply the *Nationalverband*, but also the Christian Socials, Czechs and Slovenes.²³ This was insufficient to alleviate their respective concerns. Even the nationalists, whose project he was executing, were distrustful. Thanks to their contacts in the interior ministry, they were informed whenever he amended the proposals and more than once confronted him to ask whether he was changing them in favour of the Czechs. Though Baernreither each time explained his position, he did not always gain the impression that he had convinced them.²⁴ Furthermore, Clam failed to make contact with the Poles,²⁵ who expected the quick realization of Galician autonomy and had speedily set up four subcommittees to draw up their demands.²⁶

The Czechs, meanwhile, were rightly anxious. When Clam received the presidium of the Czech Union on 12 January (for just thirty minutes),²⁷ he was cold and brusque to the point of hostility.²⁸ On the eve of the meeting, rumours were still coursing according to which the octroi would only be decreed after a parliamentary deadlock, and that the Galician question would be postponed until after the war; but Clam's pronouncements confirmed the Czechs' worst fears. Although repeatedly asserting his desire to work with parliament, he made thoroughly clear that he intended to decree the octroi and the autonomy of Galicia. He explained that his government had "a great plan for the sanitizing of conditions in Austria". When Šmeral asked for details, he

²¹ *RT*, II, 2.3, p.279; *NB*, K7, 23.2.1917; K11, p.27. On 2.3, Redlich reported that Clam was still suffering, speculating that it was due to typhus contracted on the battlefield.

²² *NB*, K11, pp.25, 27.

²³ *NB*, K7, 30.1; 7.3.1917; K11, pp.27-28.

²⁴ *NB*, K11, p.28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²⁶ *NFPM*, 17.12, p.3; *NFPA*, 19.12, p.3; 30.12.1916, p.5.

²⁷ *TD*, 15.2.1917, p.284.

²⁸ *FŠ*, K18, S141/1, 12.1.1917.

responded tersely: “I do not want to take the discussion further, what I have said must be enough for you”. In addition, he brushed off their request for an audience with the emperor, arguing that there was no time for the individual reception of each nation, which would anyway lead to competition.²⁹ In their immediate *post-mortem*, the Czechs agreed that Clam had been particularly abrupt and noted that he had not once sought their support for his obviously drastic – and, to them, unpleasant – reforms. The Agrarian Karel Prášek admitted that the Union had few assets to scupper his plans, but argued that its loyalty to the state meant it was not entirely powerless. He recommended establishing contact with the aristocrats of the Conservative Landowners’ Party, in the hope that they would join the Union and the National Committee. (These did subsequently send Clam a strongly worded memorandum protesting against his planned *coup*.)³⁰ Maštálka, who knew Clam personally, had stayed alone with the prime minister after the conference; his report was equally bleak. When he pleaded with him not to oppose an audience with Karl, since the Czechs intended to use the occasion to ask for an amnesty for Kramář, Clam snapped: “How can you have a traitor as your friend? If my brother were a traitor, he would cease to exist for me.” When Clam escorted him to the door, he said: “Mr Maštálka, I will tell you one thing: I am convinced you will not be pleased with me and we will often scuffle.”³¹

Although it was not mentioned at the audience, Clam was perhaps aware of – and therefore influenced by – the essence of the Entente’s response to Woodrow Wilson’s request for a statement of war aims.³² A summary of these was published in the Vienna evening press on 12 January,³³ although the full version, including the passage on “the liberation of Italians, Slavs, Romanians and Czechoslovaks from foreign rule”,³⁴ only appeared the following morning, misquoted. Indeed, newspapers mentioned “Czechs and Slovaks” rather than “Czechoslovaks”.³⁵ The *Prager Tagblatt*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *RT*, II, 9.3.1917, p.283.

³¹ *Ibid.* He added unconvincingly: “You must nevertheless be certain that [...], in the end, I will always work to make sure that the interests of the [Czech] nation are protected.”

³² *TD*, 15.2.1917, p.279.

³³ *NFPA*, 12.1, pp.1-2; *RPN*, 12.1, p.1; *FBA*, 12.1, p.1.

³⁴ Beneš, I, pp.246-247, 261-266; Masaryk, pp.126-127. The “Czechoslovaks” had been included chiefly as a result of Beneš’s lobbying. Since the South Slavs could not be mentioned specifically due to Italian opposition, this left the curious juxtaposition of “Slavs” and “Czechoslovaks”.

³⁵ *NFPM*, p.2; *RPM*, p.3; *FBM*, p.3; *AZM*, p.1; *PLLM*, p.3.

even wrote “Czechs and Slovenes”.³⁶ The Czech Union, of course, could but disavow the Allies. At the same time, this seemed a good opportunity to gain favour with the government.³⁷ After consultations of the presidium on 22 and 23 January, an address penned by Stránský was adopted and transmitted to Clam and to Czernin.³⁸ Although irreproachably – almost fawningly – monarchist, its unfavourable comparisons between Czech and Hungarian behaviour in both 1849 and 1866, and its mention of the war with Prussia, made it inflammatory. Further, it asked to be received by the emperor in order to “respond emphatically and solemnly to the uninvited intervention of the enemy”. This was certainly not what Czernin had in mind – he wanted a simple, sharp rebuke.³⁹ When he met Staněk, Maštálka and Šmeral on 30 January, he presented them with his own version, asking them for their signature and permission to publish it. The men acquiesced.⁴⁰ On Šmeral’s suggestion, the address was finalized in the form of a letter to the foreign minister, explicitly allowing him to make use of it and renewing “the expression of [the Union’s] deepest respect” towards him.⁴¹ The wording was certainly much terser than in Stránský’s version, merely rejecting an “insinuation based on wholly false assumptions”, and declaring that the Czech people would continue, as they always had, to envisage their future only under the Habsburg sceptre.⁴² As a result of its submissive and obsequious tone, the publication of the note on 1 February⁴³ outraged all Czech parties, as well as the Czech public,⁴⁴ and was later held up as the most infamous example of complicity with the imperial government.⁴⁵ It also damaged the *émigrés*’ cause. Beneš admitted: “It hit me and Masaryk hard. It was a solemn disavowal, without reservation, decisive – a severe blow.”⁴⁶ Yet, as Masaryk pointed out, the omission of his name and the lack of international notoriety of the signatories weakened its impact.⁴⁷

³⁶ *PTM*, 13.1.1917, p.1.

³⁷ *FŠ*, K18, S133/1, 15.1.1917. Tusar and Trnka discussed this.

³⁸ *MRP*, K297, 626, Staněk to Clam, 24.1; address signed by Staněk, Maštálka and Šmeral, Vienna, 24.1.1917.

³⁹ *NB*, K7, 30.1.1917.

⁴⁰ *TD*, 30.1.1917, p.265.

⁴¹ *TD*, 31.1.1917, pp.265-266; *MRP*, K297, 626, Staněk to Clam, 31.1; address signed by Staněk, Maštálka and Šmeral, Vienna, 31.1.1917.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *NFPM*, 1.2.1917, p.9.

⁴⁴ *TD*, 31.1.1917, p.266.

⁴⁵ Exemplified in the war of words between Stránský’s son Jaroslav and Tobolka: Jaroslav Stránský, “K historii dopisu Českého Svazu hr. Czerninovi 30. ledna 1917”, in: *NS*, II, pp.252-260; Zdeněk Tobolka, “K historii dopisu Českého Svazu hr. Czerninovi 30. ledna 1917”, in: *NS*, III, pp.169-183.

⁴⁶ Beneš, I, p.471.

⁴⁷ Masaryk, p.130.

(Paradoxically, both the exiles and the Clam government shared the desire to discredit any evidence of Czech loyalty.)⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the Czech Union earned nothing for its toils (nor did the other nationalities who had hurried to denounce the Entente's presumption).⁴⁹ On top of its repudiation of the Allied note, it could now point to its repeated declarations of loyalty, its oft-stated willingness to cooperate in the interest of the state, its attendance at Franz Joseph's funeral⁵⁰ and – most exactingly – Karl's coronation in Budapest.⁵¹ (All of this in spite of the ongoing political trials and disbanding of allegedly nationalist organizations in the Bohemian lands.)⁵² Yet Clam was unmoved, and continued to ignore them.⁵³ Baernreither at least recognized that, since they “had to swallow a lot”, the government had to make the octroi palatable.⁵⁴ This was an impossible task, as it fulfilled almost all the German nationalists' desires: the imposition of German as official internal language⁵⁵ with the establishment of three linguistic areas – German, Czech and mixed;⁵⁶ the creation of administratively, politically and legislatively powerful circles, demarcated as strictly as possible according to nationality, since, in Baernreither's words, “considering the existing mood of the population, only a separation could lead to both peoples tolerating living next to each other”;⁵⁷ the emasculation of the diet in Prague; and new standing orders for the *Reichsrat*, making obstruction near impossible.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, contact between the Czechs and Karl remained almost non-existent. Admittedly, when seeking to encourage the Czech Union to follow Czernin's instructions regarding the disavowal, Karl had asked minister Trnka to pass on the following message: “I want to be a just and benevolent ruler and [...] I like the Czech

⁴⁸ Jan Galandauer, “Der misslungene Kampf des letzten Königs von Böhmen um die Rettung seines Thrones”, in: Gottsmann (ed.), p.151.

⁴⁹ *MRP*, K297, 626.

⁵⁰ *TD*, 30.11.1916, p.224.

⁵¹ *TD*, 30.12.1916, p.241.

⁵² *Ö101*, 39, Gebstattel-Bethmann, Prague, 5.12.1916; 14.3; Gebstattel-Bethmann, 31.3.1917. Notably, on 12.2, several directors of the *Živnotenská Banka* were arrested and charged by a military court for discouraging its clients from signing up to the war loans and for apparently buying roubles at the beginning of the war, in the expectancy of a Russian victory.

⁵³ *NB*, K7, 30.1.1917.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.2; *FŠ*, K18, S133/1, 31.1.1917.

⁵⁵ “*Allgemeine staatliche Verkehrssprache*”.

⁵⁶ “Handel”, pp.104-105. In the purely German areas, the Czechs were granted certain minimal rights, but Handel doubted whether this concession would “soothe the Czech lion”.

⁵⁷ *NB*, K11, p.57.

⁵⁸ *NB*, K11, pp.48-67; “Handel”, pp.103-108.

nation”.⁵⁹ But without any corresponding action, this was no consolation. Unbeknown to the Czechs, Karl was at the time envisaging his coronation as King of Bohemia – which he thought the “greatest wish of the Czechs”,⁶⁰ and which Franz Joseph had never carried out – but Clam buried the idea.⁶¹ It would, in any case, have provided a curious contrast to the carving up of Bohemia through the octroi.

On 15 February, the parliamentary commission of the Czech Union met, and issued a stern – if desperate – repudiation of Clam’s policies. It denounced his cabinet formation, and demanded the recall of parliament, arguing that this was the worst possible time to settle disputed national questions and urging the continuation of the – already evaporated – political *Burgfrieden*.⁶² But the Czechs’ greatest hope resided in Clam’s ineffectiveness. By early March, after over two months in office, his government had achieved little, save for an agreement with Hungary on the renewal of the economic *Ausgleich* (which still had to be approved by parliament).⁶³ Czernin, Hohenlohe and the prime minister himself were now firmly in the line of fire, and serious divisions had appeared within the cabinet. Its disarray was widely known in political circles.⁶⁴ Redlich, who scoffed at this “government of aristocratic and bourgeois amateurs”, believed its break-up imminent.⁶⁵ Although this was not the case, several of its members were considerably disaffected. Clam’s leadership infuriated all, but octroi supporters particularly resented the sluggish progress of their plans,⁶⁶ while more circumspect ministers questioned the very course of this domestic policy.⁶⁷ Karl, too, was now increasingly doubtful.

On 6 February, during a long conversation with Baernreither, he expressed distinct reservations. When his minister explained that many years of preparatory work had paved the way for the measure, Karl urged caution and stressed again and

⁵⁹ *FŠ*, K18, S133/1, 31.1.1917.

⁶⁰ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, p.80.

⁶¹ Richard Kralik, *Geschichte des Völkerkrieges 1914-1918* (Graz, 1923), p.373. The writer Richard von Kralik met Zita on 19.2 to report on the matter. Both she and Karl were keen to be crowned in Prague. Kralik then suggested this to Clam, who was “entirely” against the idea.

⁶² *FŠ*, K18, S134, 15.2; *NFPM*, 17.2.1917, p.9. Simultaneously, it set up five working committees to address all issues at hand.

⁶³ *NFPM*, 25.2.1917, pp.1-2.

⁶⁴ *RT*, II, 2.3.1917, pp.279-280.

⁶⁵ *RT*, II, 2.3; 4.3.1917, pp.279-280, 282.

⁶⁶ *NB*, K7, 7.3.1917.

⁶⁷ *SM*, p.162.

again: “All peoples must feel happy and at home in Austria.”⁶⁸ In fact, Baernreither and Urban noticed that the emperor always evaded the Bohemian question with such platitudes.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, he did not openly oppose the plan, and conceded that the matter could not afford to be postponed too long. As a result, Baernreither retained the impression that there would be no trouble in obtaining his approval.⁷⁰ Manifestly, the chief patrons of the octroi did not perceive Karl’s discernable want of enthusiasm as a serious obstacle. There existed a certain condescension towards the inexperienced young emperor and a belief in his malleability, but this attitude was also the consequence of his own failure to articulate his misgivings plainly and to offer a credible alternative. Indeed, Karl seemed scarcely more enamoured of the idea of acceding to the wishes of the nationalities. Baernreither noted that he was “very biased against the Poles and their efforts for autonomy”, as he feared the Czechs could follow suit.⁷¹

But Karl need not have felt alone in his scepticism towards the octroi. The Christian Socials, weary of Clam’s inaction,⁷² were alarmed by some of the government’s plans – on education, for instance – which appeared to threaten their much-cherished local autonomy.⁷³ In late January, they were able to produce an updated version of their joint guidelines with the *Nationalverband*, although, again, these were subject to the “preservation of their party principles”.⁷⁴ Further, they made even clearer than before that measures designed for Bohemia would not affect other crownlands. When the Christian Socials spoke out in their name alone, they demanded simply the decreeing of new standing orders and the rapid recall of parliament, patently ignoring national *desiderata*.⁷⁵

Support for the octroi was not unanimous in high places either. Czernin, of course, remained a bullish proponent of the plan, and stressed its urgency.⁷⁶ Speaking to Baernreither on 19 January, he declared bluntly: “The Poles somehow must leave the House. Austria must have a German orientation; the government must rely on the

⁶⁸ *NB*, K7, 6.2.1917.

⁶⁹ *NB*, K7, 10.3.1917.

⁷⁰ *NB*, K11, p.28.

⁷¹ *NB*, K7, 10.3.1917.

⁷² *RPM*, 21.2.1917, p.5.

⁷³ *NB*, K11, pp.72-74.

⁷⁴ *RPM*, 17.2.1917, p.2.

⁷⁵ *RPM*, 21.2.1917, p.5.

⁷⁶ *NB*, K7, 16.1.1917.

Germans”.⁷⁷ Five days later, he was equally uncompromising during a conversation with Redlich. He was adamant that the octroi – which he had recommended for fifteen years – had to be, and indeed would be, carried out.⁷⁸ But the cabinet itself was largely unenthusiastic. Baernreither complained that “the old Stürgkh ministers, incidentally very poorly informed by Clam, sat back and watched our policies indifferently.”⁷⁹ Indeed, much of the old guard favoured the stability of the Stürgkh system and was reluctant to endorse a radical measure which threatened to rock an already unsteady boat. Baernreither lamented: “With every day that went by, it became clearer to me that Clam had put together his cabinet very unfortunately.”⁸⁰ In fact, two ministers were overtly hostile to the measure: Spitzmüller and Trnka. The former, already known for his opposition to the octroi, had “only entered the government with the reservation of a free choice on the subject”, and duly opposed the plan at every opportunity. Therefore, by his own admission, he was not brought into any further contact with the drafts.⁸¹ Trnka, of course, shared his misgivings. After the war, he claimed that he had “in fact functioned as a Czech national minister” and “had repeatedly declared that [he] would never sign the proposals [...] because [he] considered this policy to be utterly mistaken.” As a result, he apparently threatened to resign on seven occasions: three times to Stürgkh and four to Clam, “though quietly and without fuss”.⁸² But neither Trnka nor Spitzmüller had any political leverage. In fact, their continued presence in office throughout Clam’s tenure suggests that their opposition was not particularly militant. In any case, the matter was never concretely discussed in the council of ministers.⁸³ For its supporters, the octroi was not up for debate. Closer to Karl, Polzer – appointed to head his private office in early February – also categorically dismissed a solution by octroi to the Bohemian question,⁸⁴ but he too had little influence on the policy-makers who, in any case,

⁷⁷ NB, K11, p.25.

⁷⁸ RT, II, 24.1.1917, p.268.

⁷⁹ NB, K11, p.31.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ SM, pp.162-163.

⁸² Molisch, *Vom Kampf der Tschechen um ihren Staat* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1929), Trnka-Czedik, 2.6.1919. p.120. In this letter, written shortly before his accidental death, Trnka made much of his role as a pro-Czech voice within the Clam cabinet. He claimed to have “wholly fulfilled [his] duty towards the Czech people, as far as was in [his] power.” As a former imperial minister writing in the new Czechoslovakia, his keenness to underscore this point was unsurprising.

⁸³ SM, p.162.

⁸⁴ Polzer, p.124. He believed in the necessity of using the octroi for a wholesale constitutional and administrative reform but thought that confining such a measure to the fulfilment of German nationalist demands was “sheer madness.”

viewed him with suspicion and worked to curtail his influence on the emperor. Though Karl was aware of existing opposition, of the apathy of several cabinet members and of the lack of popular support for the measure outside the Bohemian lands, it did not encourage him sufficiently to act. Although he had settled in his role⁸⁵ – he had even begun to show distinctly autocratic tendencies⁸⁶ – and had removed much of the old guard in favour of men of his own choice,⁸⁷ he still lacked the confidence to intervene in domestic politics. He had neither the conviction nor the knowledge to scotch the octroi and to put forward another scheme. He also remained fearful of the German reaction to its abandonment. More importantly, domestic policy was not foremost in his mind.

Karl's most urgent preoccupation was the conclusion of peace, and he made no secret of this. In January, for instance, he told Joseph Pomiankowski, his military plenipotentiary in the Ottoman Empire, that, as soon as the nations of the Monarchy ceased to be in a position to bear the burdens of war – this would occur soon, he thought – he would conclude peace, regardless of his allies.⁸⁸ He was less forthright – and more honest – when briefing Musulin, the new ambassador to Switzerland, explaining that Austria-Hungary's aim was to bring about a compromise between Germany and the West.⁸⁹ Yet despite this design and his own displeasure with the content of the Central Powers' peace offer, Karl had little choice but to follow Wilhelm in issuing a defiant response to the Entente's rejection. In his Army and Navy Order of 5 January, he demanded more sacrifices and further endurance from his forces, and condemned the Allies: "They are rebuffing, without even knowing our conditions, the hand we held out to them. [...]. Blame lies only with our enemies. God is my witness."⁹⁰ His hopes of mediating a general peace were then dealt a crushing blow by Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February. Though he strongly opposed this policy, he had been presented with a *fait accompli* by his ally. He could but comply, and the matter was agreed upon at a crown council

⁸⁵ *RT*, II, 3.12, 29.12.1916, pp.236, 252. Paul Thun compared him to Joseph II.

⁸⁶ *RT*, II, 16.12.1916, p.245.

⁸⁷ Polzer, p.121.

⁸⁸ Joseph Pomiankowski, *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches: Erinnerungen an die Türkei aus der Zeit des Weltkrieges* (Vienna, 1928), p.343.

⁸⁹ Musulin, pp.290-291.

⁹⁰ *NFPM*, 7.1.1917, p.1.

on 24 January.⁹¹ Although Washington swiftly broke off diplomatic relations with Berlin, the American ambassador assured Karl that his country would not do so with Vienna.⁹² This was some consolation for Karl, whose efforts towards peace via his brother-in-law were in full swing.

Indeed, when the Duchess of Parma finally met her sons Sixtus and Xavier undercover in Switzerland on 29 January, she brought news that Karl wished to meet them as soon as possible. She also carried a letter from Zita urging her brothers to help her husband in his quest for peace. Sixtus stated the four fundamental conditions he personally believed necessary for peace with the Entente: the return of Alsace-Lorraine without colonial compensations, the restoration of Belgium, the restoration of Serbia enlarged with Albania and the surrender of Constantinople to Russia. Buoyed by encouragement in Paris, the siblings returned to Switzerland to meet the Austro-Hungarian agent appointed by Karl.⁹³ On 13 February in Neuchâtel the brothers met the envoy in question, Count Tamás Erdödy, a childhood friend of Karl's, who apparently informed them that Karl had accepted three of Sixtus' four points as a provisional basis for negotiations. Indeed, he rejected only the restoration of Serbia (which was the only issue of direct concern to Austria-Hungary), while acquiescing in the remaining points at the expense of his German and Turkish allies.⁹⁴ Sixtus, however, relayed the intractability of the Entente on the Serbian question and encouraged Austria-Hungary to go ahead and present Germany with a *fait accompli*, since no diplomatic peace was possible.⁹⁵ On 16 February, Erdödy reported to Karl in Baden. The following day, Czernin was informed of the identity of the mediator and gave his support to his continued efforts, pressing the empress to summon her brother to her.⁹⁶ On 19 February, he gave Erdödy instructions for his next journey to Switzerland, along with written guidelines. To Karl, these seemed an insufficient starting point for negotiations and he supplemented them with his own notes, unbeknown to his minister.⁹⁷ Whereas Czernin merely indicated that Austria would

⁹¹ Musulin, p.291; Burián, p.234.

⁹² *NB*, K7, 6.2.1917. He did not, however, think much of the American ambassador's intellectual ability and therefore doubted his reliability.

⁹³ Sixte, p.41.

⁹⁴ Sixte, pp.40-41, 55. Instead, he planned an autonomous South Slav kingdom integrated to the Monarchy, comprising Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro. (His previous plan had also included the Banat, Croatia, Slavonia, and only sections of Albania.)

⁹⁵ Sixte, pp.41, 55-56.

⁹⁶ Polzer, p.228; Sixte, pp.41-42.

⁹⁷ Sixte, pp.59-61.

not object to a voluntary cession of Alsace-Lorraine, Karl promised to support France in her claim and to put pressure on Germany with all means in his power. And while Czernin declared categorically in his first point: "The alliance between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey and Bulgaria is absolutely indissoluble. A separate peace of one of these states is for ever excluded", Karl was not so blunt, though he too intended to involve Germany in future peace negotiations. And though both the emperor and his foreign minister keenly stressed that Austria was not in German vassalage, divergences between them were already in evidence.⁹⁸ On 21 February, in Neuchâtel, both documents, as well as two letters from Zita urging him to come to Vienna, were handed to Sixtus, who promptly returned to Paris to inform the French government of Karl's enterprise.⁹⁹ For a month, Karl heard nothing more of his venture.

⁹⁸ Sixte, pp.59-61. These missives were in any case less radical than Karl's first message to Sixtus in which he unreservedly conceded three of the four points.

⁹⁹ Sixte, pp.42, 62, 64.

CHAPTER VI

VOLTE-FACE

Revolution in Russia

Buoyed by his promising dealings with Sixtus, Karl must have realized that the pursuit of a pro-German course by imperial decree could only damage any future negotiations with the Entente. Not only was the programme unconstitutional, undemocratic and anti-Slav, it also suggested blind subjugation to Germany. But whatever the causes or extent of his doubts concerning the octroi previously, Karl had taken no action against it and had thereby allowed the German nationalists to forge ahead unhindered during the winter, confident of his blessing and of the realization of their plans.¹ Now that such a course potentially threatened his pursuit of peace, his stance firmed somewhat. Even so, he was unlikely to act drastically and unilaterally without political support or, at the very least, the acquiescence of his close advisers. Thus he cannot have been indifferent to Hohenlohe's apparent loss of faith in the project. In mid-March, Redlich wrote in his diary: "Hohenlohe is supposed to have already given up on the octroi idea, Czernin not."² The lord chamberlain's early disenchantment with the plan might have emboldened Karl in his opposition, but it was not enough for him to disavow it openly. Clam still toed the line, albeit listlessly and half-heartedly,³ and Czernin remained committed to the project, although he sensed that time was running out. On 6 March, he told Baernreither that matters of foreign policy – which he did not specify – might temporarily put the whole project on hold.⁴ Nevertheless, he insisted strongly on its necessity and urgency, and complained that time was being wasted, which it was.⁵ He taunted a frustrated Baernreither: "I bet that you will not manage the octroi."⁶ The details of the drafts

¹ *NB*, K7, 7.3.1917. In March, Baernreither wrote: "everything will be fine in the end; only for the Galician question is there no solution yet."

² *RT*, II, 15.3.1917, p.284.

³ *NB*, K11, p.29.

⁴ *NB*, K11, p.29; Czernin, pp.279-288. Czernin could have been referring to the note he had written to the American government the previous day refusing to clarify Vienna's position on submarine warfare, or to Russia, where trouble was brewing. He might also have had the Sixtus mission in mind.

⁵ *NB*, K7, 7.3.1917; K11, p.29.

⁶ *NB*, K11, p.29.

were wholly unimportant to Czernin, he simply wanted them finished; his refrain was: “The Czechs will scream regardless, so it hardly matters what is done to them.”⁷ To him, the proclamation of the octroi was imperative and ultimately inevitable; he was wary only of its timing.

Meanwhile, Karl’s faith in its wisdom continued to wane. Concerned by the foreign implications of the octroi, Karl knew that the domestic situation was no more propitious to the plan. In late February and early March, tensions were on the rise in the Bohemian lands. The report of the Prague military command revealed that the lack of food, heating materials and tobacco was having an extremely serious effect on the mood of the people, who were further exasperated by the perceived incompetence of the authorities.⁸ A subsequent dispatch added that the workers and the population everywhere were complaining about the insufficient supplies.⁹ As a result, the area was already awash with popular protests, irrespective of nationality. Riots and demonstrations occurred daily in all Czech-speaking parts of Bohemia,¹⁰ as well as in the overwhelmingly German-speaking industrial regions of the north and north-west (where a Czech minority also worked).¹¹ Failure to satisfy the malcontents inevitably led to the repetition and escalation of these displays; in Warnsdorf for example, demonstrators protesting against the lack of food numbered 50 on 26 February, 500 on 3 March and 5,000 two days later.¹² The situation was most explosive in the working-class districts of Prague, where such gatherings often led to violence and plunder.¹³ At the same time, strikes took place in several factories and mines. In certain pits, the authorities admitted that conditions were already untenable – and worsening – but sympathized with the workers and commended their general behaviour.¹⁴ Indeed, despite the considerable levels of disgruntlement and the large numbers of demonstrators, the peace was rarely breached, calm was always restored with relative ease and military assistance called upon only infrequently¹⁵ (and even then, rarely used). Moreover, the motives of the protestors were only social and economic, devoid of political, national or revolutionary overtones. The handful of

⁷ *NB*, K7, 7.31917.

⁸ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-5, 1.3.1917.

⁹ *MRP*, K303, 2113, 14.3.1917.

¹⁰ *SH*, 1643, 1655, 1656, pp.204, 206.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1625, 1628, 1648, 1651, 1659, 1661, p.202, 205-206; *MRP*, K299, 1223.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1639, 1640, 1662, pp.204, 207.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1641, 1650, pp.204-205.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1649, 1655, pp.205-206; *MRP*, K300, 1353, 1391.

¹⁵ *SH*, 1645, p.204.

political protests was the result of individual, isolated actions.¹⁶ The government, despite its efforts,¹⁷ had no means of attenuating the crisis. Consequently, disturbances were destined to continue and to intensify, and ongoing events in Russia indicated, ominously, how these might evolve.

On 7 March, the daily report of the foreign ministry relayed to Karl the fears of the King of Sweden concerning the revolutionary climate in Russia. Letters Gustav had received thence described the gloomiest of situations. With the tsar and his family the focus of popular wrath, he believed that the worst was to be expected.¹⁸ That evening Karl left for Budapest,¹⁹ aware of the gravity of the situation in Saint Petersburg (by now Petrograd) and inevitably concerned by its implications for his country. The following morning, the *Reichspost* echoed the information of the Swedish monarch: turmoil was increasing by the day, as was hatred for the imperial family and the government; plots and plans for assassination were openly mooted; the republican current was gaining in strength.²⁰ And although Austria-Hungary might have gained consolation from the potential collapse of an enemy, the recent exposure of the Zimmermann²¹ Telegram threatened to provide a new one in the form of the United States. Particularly unsettled by this, Karl cancelled his planned trip to Transylvania and hastily returned to Baden on 9 March, fuelling “all kinds of conjectures and rumours” in the process.²²

These foreign political developments and their possible domestic repercussions must have been foremost in his thoughts, for immediately he got back, he received both Czernin and Clam and, for the first time, gave the distinct impression that he was against the octroi.²³ Karl knew that dramatic developments in Russia could fan the flames of domestic disquiet. In the Bohemian lands, the additional imposition of the octroi might prove too much for the beleaguered Slav population. At the very least, it would betoken significant governmental hostility. Moreover, it risked straining

¹⁶ *PMV/R*, K190, 4764.

¹⁷ *MRP*, K299, 1323.

¹⁸ *PA*, XL, 57, 7.3.1917.

¹⁹ *RPM*, 8.3.1917, p.6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3.

²¹ Arthur Zimmermann had replaced Jagow as German secretary of state in November 1916.

²² *Ö86 Nr.1*, 21, Wedel-AA, 10.3; *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/28; *NFPM*, 16.3, p.1; *NM*, 9.3. In his diary, Marterer revealed: “Yesterday in Budapest, surprising order to return to Baden. His Majesty told me that unfavourable news from America had arrived.”

²³ *NB*, K11, pp.29-30.

relations with America further, boosting the cause of anti-Habsburg *émigrés*, as well as endangering existing peace overtures in the west and future ones in the east. Karl had long thought the octroi questionable; now it was potentially dangerous. Increasing rumblings against it can only have confirmed him in his opinion. Baernreither and Clam suspected that Czech influences were at work on him, the former singling out Trnka and Lobkowitz.²⁴ He noted in his diary: “A certain fear of an octroi, especially of a radical one, seems to reveal itself in Karl.”²⁵ Indeed the emperor had begun to display a degree of reluctance, though he was neither outspoken nor categorical.

It was now clear that Karl could not be won over to the original plans, though Czernin and Clam gathered from their conversation with him that he would accept a watered-down version.²⁶ Rather than contest, Clam decided to amend the project without delay. For some time, he too had secretly questioned its timeliness and feared its consequences. He met Baernreither the same evening and suggested that the octroi programme be limited to its basic elements, thus restricting it to the standing orders, to the establishment of German as official internal language, and to the delimitation of the circles and their governments, with the possible inclusion of the modification of the competence of the *Reichsrat* and the teaching proposals.²⁷ The plans pertaining to Bohemian autonomy, such as the reform of the Bohemian constitution, representation for the circles and the electoral laws, would, however, be abandoned. Clam’s prime concern was now to ensure a parliamentary majority sympathetic to his government, and he therefore wished to retain the proposals excluding Polish deputies from the Lower House. Failing that, he envisaged the formation of a coalition between Poles, Christian Socials and German nationalists. Baernreither was indignant; he made explicitly clear that such a pruning of the octroi would cause the most tremendous disappointment among German Bohemians and exhorted the prime minister not to commit to this plan without informing them. Even so, he gave no guarantees that they would accept, or indeed that they would offer the government parliamentary support. He also dismissed Clam’s placatory proposal to carry out the octroi in two stages by claiming that Czech protestations after the first phase would inhibit the emperor from

²⁴ *NB*, K7, 10.3; 11.3.1917; K11, p.29. Baernreither believed that Trnka, having visited Karl more frequently of late due to the question of coal supplies, had spoken to him “in his submissive, yet very resolute, Czech manner”. He also blamed Lobkowitz. Clam agreed that Czech influences were exerting themselves on the emperor.

²⁵ *NB*, K7, 10.3.1917.

²⁶ *Ibid.* On the way to Baden, Czernin had sketched such a draft, which was briefly discussed.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

further action. In his diary, he blamed Clam for the whole situation and accused him of having wasted three months.²⁸ Nevertheless, he remained hopeful of swaying him, though he admitted that the matter had become much trickier.²⁹

By the time they met again two days later, revolution in Russia was imminent.³⁰ Clam was no less chary of imposing the octroi on the Czechs. As Baernreither urged the vacillating prime minister not to abandon the plan, the latter responded mournfully that he would not be able to live out his days in Smečno, his Bohemian estate.³¹ His resolve appeared to dwindle and the inherent contradiction of his position seemed to weigh ever more heavily on him. Indeed, in spite of his spearheading the Germanic cause, his roots and his past haunted his conscience and had begun to restrain his pursuit of an aggressively anti-Czech course, even though he continued to believe that many Czechs wished for an enemy victory.³² As Baernreither wrote: “He is very loyal, truthful and earnest, but several ghosts inhabit his heart”, later adding: “it is hard to judge what remnants of his belonging to the Czech nation continued to have an effect on his unconscious.”³³ These doubts had been present early in his tenure but he had not acted upon them, although his apathy was certainly testament to their existence. His own dichotomy was clear: his traditional outlook and political background pointed to a federal solution to the nationality problem, but he now believed that satisfying the Germans through greater centralization was the only way to preserve the authority of the government and the unity of the Empire. But this about-face had come at a heavy personal price. According to his chief of section, Robert Ehrhart, it was a sacrifice he had made without hesitation, but for which he had suffered greatly, and in silence.³⁴ Clam remained a proponent of the octroi, but with a heavy heart. Furthermore, acquainted as he was with the Czechs, he must have realized that the octroi was most unlikely to achieve pacification and stability. As a result, his involvement was dithering and spineless. As Baernreither explained, “these undercurrents did not shake his convictions but inhibited his actions.”³⁵ He therefore reacted meekly to Karl’s change

²⁸ *NB*, K7, 10.3.1917. Specifically, he blamed him for not knowing the drafts, for failing to consult him, to decree the drafts immediately, to win over the emperor and to eliminate other influences.

²⁹ *Ibid.*; *NB*, K11, p.30.

³⁰ *RPM*, 10.3.1917, p.1.

³¹ *NB*, K7, 11.3.1917

³² *Ibid.*, 10.3.1917

³³ *Ibid.*; *NB*, K11, pp.19-20.

³⁴ Robert Ehrhart, *Im Dienste des alten Österreich* (Vienna, 1958), p.382.

³⁵ *NB*, K11, p.20.

of attitude and quickly proposed to abandon a significant chunk of the programme. Clam simply did not have the courage of his convictions.

By now, Karl and Hohenlohe, as well as Spitzmüller, Trnka and Polzer, all opposed the octroi, while Baernreither, Urban, Handel, Hussarek,³⁶ Bobrzyński and Czernin still supported it, backed – at least tacitly – by Berlin;³⁷ torn and forlorn, Clam lay in the middle. Confusion reigned in political circles, increasingly sceptical about the strategy, ability and staying power of the government. On 13 March, Redlich noted: “The most conflicting rumours are heard concerning domestic policy: most likely, the government itself does not know what to do.” Two days later, he added: “The government is completely divided.”³⁸ In the hot seat, Clam still proved incapable of leadership, as exemplified by his lack of authority in the ministerial council.³⁹ His departure was widely anticipated. In his diary, Hans Schlitter, the director of the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*,⁴⁰ wrote: “New cabinet crisis: Clam is afraid to decree the state language law by octroi and is therefore likely to go, replaced by Czernin who in turn would be replaced by Burián.”⁴¹ The prime minister had in effect disavowed his chief policy, and no longer had credibility or political support. Yet Karl retained his services. Schlitter remarked: “Clam is still wobbling like a bad tooth that should be pulled out but, in this case, the dentist dares not.”⁴² His failure to remove him must have appeared all the more surprising, for Karl was not usually shy of dismissing his staff. In early March, Redlich had already commented: “For the young ruler, the whole activity of government had dissolved into nothing more than personal questions. Every day brings new dismissals and appointments.”⁴³ A joke on the subject was already doing the rounds in January: “Hello, Emperor Karl here [on the telephone]. I appoint you minister. Who is speaking?”⁴⁴ Yet Karl felt a degree of

³⁶ Redlich, p.139. According to Redlich, although Hussarek’s Catholicism prevented him from taking a nationalist point of view, “his authoritarian outlook [...] caused him to agree more often than not with a policy of rigid German hegemony”.

³⁷ *RT*, II, 15.3.1917, p.284; Czernin, p.169. Redlich heard that Bethmann was to intervene in support of the plan during his forthcoming visit to Vienna, but there is no evidence it was discussed. Though the Germans supported it, Czernin insisted to Tisza that they “did not seek the slightest meddling with the octroi”. Moreover, Bethmann had just announced democratic constitutional reforms in Prussia.

³⁸ *RT*, II, 13.3, 15.3.1917, pp.283-284.

³⁹ *SM*, p.162.

⁴⁰ Which was part of the foreign ministry.

⁴¹ *NS*, K6, 9.3.1917.

⁴² *NS*, K6, 12.3.1917.

⁴³ *RT*, II, 2.3.1917, p.279.

⁴⁴ *NS*, K6, 20.1.1917. This also poked fun at Karl’s predilection for the telephone.

loyalty towards Clam, and in any case saw no obvious candidate to replace him for this mission. Nevertheless, the emperor was frustrated with the performance of his ministers. As a result, he urged them to entertain closer contact with him, and officially ordered them thenceforth to report to him immediately and in person on all important subject matters.⁴⁵ They, in turn, can only have taken umbrage at his lack of faith in them. Koerber, still embittered by Karl's treatment of him, quipped to Redlich, "No minister will be able to work for any length of time with an emperor who treats his ministers as subordinate officers", adding that conditions in the court and in government had become untenable.⁴⁶ Certainly, disunity reigned at the top while the official course had ground to a standstill. Amidst the indecision and lethargy, only Czernin had the strength of character and clout to act, but at the time he was in two minds about the octroi: his faith in the legitimacy and necessity of the measure was unshaken, but he realized that foreign affairs required precedence and compromised its implementation, temporarily at least. Brewing unrest in Russia, the Sixtus mission and his own pet project in Switzerland⁴⁷ all threatened to break the deadlock. Should opportunities for peace subsequently arise in the east or the west, a pro-German octroi would help neither at the negotiating table.

On 16 March, news arrived that Tsar Nicholas had abdicated and that his brother, the Grand Duke Michael, had taken over as regent;⁴⁸ on that day, however, the latter surrendered power to the new provisional government under Prince Lvov.⁴⁹ Though welcomed by the public as a step towards peace, these events sent shockwaves through the Viennese corridors of power.⁵⁰ Indeed, though they held out the prospect of Russia leaving the war, they also revealed what might result from escalating social protests by an impoverished, war-weary and hungry lower class. Moreover, the promotion of the right to self-determination of nations which soon emerged from Russia threatened to undermine the foundations of the Dual Monarchy. Wedel

⁴⁵ *MRP*, K300, 1426, Polzer-Clam, 13.3, passed on to all ministers on 16.3.1917.

⁴⁶ *RT*, II, 15.3, p.284.

⁴⁷ *PA*, I, K957, Musulin-Czernin, 10.3; Czernin to Musulin and Hohenlohe, 12.3; Mérey-Czernin, 14.3; Czernin-Musulin, 18.3.1917. From Bern, Musulin sent a telegram on 10.3 revealing that the French had put out feelers towards Austria. Czernin swiftly sent Mérey to Berlin to inform Bethmann and Zimmermann, who, though sceptical, agreed in principle. Czernin was most eager since, contrary to the Sixtus negotiations, the overtures in Bern appeared to be for a general peace, with Austria as mediator; moreover, these manoeuvres were under his command.

⁴⁸ *NFPA*, 16.3.1917, p.1. This had occurred the previous day.

⁴⁹ *NFPN*, 19.3.1917, p.2.

⁵⁰ *Arz*, p.151; *NB*, K11, p.28; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.4; *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.3.1917.

summarized the mood in Vienna: “On the one hand there is the conviction that it will have a crippling effect on Russia’s energy for war and will thus benefit the Central Powers; on the other hand there is the fear of infection.”⁵¹ Quickly, anxiety set in. The German parties in particular were gravely concerned.⁵² Karl, who, like many, initially thought Britain responsible for the *putsch*,⁵³ was aghast to see ostensibly the most powerful monarch in the world toppled without a hand being raised. Scared and hesitant, he asked: “Is such a thing possible here?”⁵⁴ The intense and ubiquitous popular discontent suggested it was.

Polzer, swamped with daily complaints, petitions and memoranda, believed these were “the heralds of the revolution which was yeasting up”, while Ferdinand von Marterer, the new head of Karl’s military chancellery and another recipient of these communications, saw them as a sign of the Monarchy’s increasingly hopeless situation.⁵⁵ The Vienna police department explained that the poorer middle classes and the lower classes were now so wrapped up in the question of food that preoccupation with military events had vanished into the background. It also noted expressions of class hatred, of anti-Semitism and of bitterness against the Hungarians, still accused of hoarding their supplies.⁵⁶ (There was consolation in the observation that patriotic feelings remained unspoilt and that the population did not oppose the continuation of the war *per se*, but merely bemoaned the unfair repartition of hardships.) District commissioners in Lower Austria witnessed a similarly despondent and irritable mood, while the general pessimism seemed to grip even the higher social classes. In addition, the more level-headed elements among the workers admitted that they no longer had the power to calm the masses, and the governor warned that a trifling reason would suffice to cause an explosion.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, his counterpart in Bohemia testified to the abundance of ill feeling expressed by the local population in numerous demonstrations, gatherings, riots and threats. However, food was still the overwhelming concern of the protesters, regardless of nationality.⁵⁸ Emboldened by events in Russia, better attended – for instance, 3000 women demonstrated in Pilsen⁵⁹

⁵¹ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 23.3.1917.

⁵² Redlich, p.147.

⁵³ *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 18.3.1917.

⁵⁴ *NB*, K11, p.28.

⁵⁵ Polzer, p.236.

⁵⁶ *MI*, K2067, 5181, 18.3.1917.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *SH*, 1664, 1668, 1684, 1686, 1687, pp.207-208, 210.

⁵⁹ *SH*, 1687, p.211.

– and better organized,⁶⁰ they still exclusively demanded more sustenance and higher wages. The demonstrations in Bohemia occasionally overflowed into brutality⁶¹ and looting,⁶² but were not revolutionary in spirit. The police department in Prague reported that, to the starving masses, events in Russia had brought simply the hope of a quick end to the war.⁶³ Serious disturbances were again in evidence in the city, though, as elsewhere, the authorities succeeded in containing them.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the food shortages persisted in the province as, in consequence, did the strikes,⁶⁵ to great official concern.⁶⁶ The local authorities were still largely sympathetic, and sometimes conceded that reluctance to work was in fact an inability to do so due to malnourishment.⁶⁷ In reporting the case of the worst-affected mine in the region, the Bohemian governorate praised the irreproachable attitude of the workers and requested the urgent fulfilment of their demands (which it considered wholly justified), warning that otherwise a terrible catastrophe could arise.⁶⁸ Karl was equally understanding and told Tucher that he was devoting his full attention to the alleviation of the food problem.⁶⁹

Although the intensity and frequency of unrest among German Bohemians was substantial, Czech expressions of ire were inevitably more troublesome to the authorities. Not only were the Czechs considered less reliable, but the overwhelmingly Czech cities of Prague and Pilsen were the most likely epicentres of any mass revolt. The military commander in the capital put the turmoil down either to the revolutionary wave sweeping across Europe or to a swelling of pan-Slav and Russophile emotions.⁷⁰ While the Germans could be suspected only of the former, the Czechs potentially threatened both social and national revolution. Under such explosive circumstances, the timing of the octroi policy seemed especially unwise.

Karl himself was increasingly exasperated by its pursuit, though apparently less because of its intrinsic iniquity than because it would fuel enemy propaganda,

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1680, pp.209-210; *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/28; *MRP*, K304, 2307; K305, 2483. Some demonstrations seemed to have been planned methodically.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1666, 1689, pp.207, 211.

⁶² Ibid., 1663, p.207.

⁶³ *MRP*, K305, 2865, 31.3.1917.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1677, 1678, 1679, 1694, 1695, 1696, 1697, pp.209, 211-212.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1682, 1683, p.210; *MRP*, K302, 1898.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1672, 1690, pp.208, 211; *MRP*, K302, 1900; K304, 2307.

⁶⁷ *MRP*, K301, 1707.

⁶⁸ *MRP*, K300, 1401, 11.3.1917.

⁶⁹ *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 18.3.1917.

⁷⁰ *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/28.

thwart his quest for peace, aggravate domestic discontent, and therefore threaten to topple him. Unable or unwilling to act, he could but bemoan the inaction of his government; on the evening of 17 March, he asked Polzer despondently: “Will none of my ministers understand that we must take the wind out of our enemies’ sails?”⁷¹

But Czernin – who was effectively in charge of government and whose continued support for the octroi alone ensured its survival – stuck to his guns. Though shaken by events in Saint Petersburg, he realized that they represented the best chance for peace in the east since the outbreak of the war, and therefore a decisive boost for the remaining fronts.⁷² Besides, a Russian withdrawal would potentially end Austria’s reliance on German military assistance. Czernin hoped that the revolution would bring peace without spreading; in this case, the domestic course need not be affected. The situation was at any rate too nebulous to take precipitate action at home, especially since he espied the possibility of ending hostilities with Russia. Admittedly, the provisional government showed no inclination to lay down arms, and its foreign minister Milyukov had announced in stridently anti-German terms that Russia fully intended to fulfil her treaty obligations, and to fight the common enemy alongside her allies, unremittingly and unwaveringly.⁷³ However, aware of the revolution’s disunity, Czernin had sent telegrams to his ambassadors immediately upon the tsar’s abdication asking for information on the leaders of the “opposition government” in Saint Petersburg who wished to pursue peace.⁷⁴ The socialists, represented most prominently by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, certainly evinced such intentions.⁷⁵ Very soon, Vienna sensed that the pacifists were indeed gaining ground.⁷⁶ Equally rapidly, in anticipation of future negotiations with the Russian socialists and in the hope of containing revolutionary sentiments at home, Czernin enlisted the assistance of the Austrian Social Democrats, for whom he otherwise had little affection. For example, he spoke with Friedrich Austerlitz, the editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, leading to speculation that he thereby hoped to

⁷¹ Polzer, p.277.

⁷² *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.3.1917. He told Tucher he now expected a rapid end to the war.

⁷³ *NFPN*, 19.3, p.2; *NFPM*, 20.3, p.3, Milyukov circular, 17.3.1917.

⁷⁴ *PA*, I, K832. Hadik-Czernin, Stockholm, 15.3; Széchényi-Czernin, Copenhagen, 16.3; Czernin to Hadik, Széchényi, Hoyos in Kristiania, Ludwig Széchényi in The Hague, Musulin in Bern, Prince Fürstenberg in Madrid, 16.3.1917.

⁷⁵ *KM, PB*, K2124, 56-2/9.

⁷⁶ *NM*, 21.3; *PA*, I, K832, foreign ministry attaché at the AOK-Czernin, 23.3.1917; Sixte, p.84. Karl followed the matter with great interest, convinced the current government could not last.

encourage or arrange contact between local and Russian socialists.⁷⁷ Domestically, the Social Democratic leaders were in any case inclined to caution, to the dismay of many workers, and of a minority within the party who demanded radical action.⁷⁸ The internal conflict between the moderation of the party's leadership and its revolutionary principles was evident.⁷⁹ Yet it quickly resolved to nail its *schwarzgelb* colours to the mast, suggesting it had reached an understanding with the government. When Victor Adler spoke in front of 1,300 people in Vienna on 27 March on "The Russian Revolution and its significance", he dismissed and ridiculed the idea of threatening the government with revolution. In the events of Saint Petersburg he saw solely the possibility of obtaining peace, and in this respect commented hopefully on Czernin's discussions with Berlin. At any rate, he urged patience.⁸⁰ Czernin too could but wait and see, and in the meantime, he turned his attention to the conclusion of peace in the west.

To this end, he had already received Bethmann Hollweg in Vienna on 16 March. Underlining Austria-Hungary's critical lack of food, raw materials and manpower, he told the chancellor unequivocally that his country could not continue the war beyond autumn and would have to seize any opportunity for peace.⁸¹ Czernin had one such opportunity in mind: the recent feelers put out by the French in Bern. Having already gained German approval for their pursuit, Czernin now asked Bethmann directly for Berlin's peace conditions towards Paris in order to transmit them to his chosen envoy, Count Albert von Mensdorff. The chancellor was inflexible: the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine was out of the question and only the cession of parts of Alsace or of Lorraine in exchange for the mining region of Briey-Longwy might be considered.⁸² Dispirited by his intransigence, the Austrians – and indeed the emperor himself, who, contrary to Czernin, placed his hopes in the Sixtus mission – repeated the following day that they would not fight another winter and that Germany should make peace and give up part of Alsace.⁸³ That evening, the German

⁷⁷ *NB*, K7, 28.3; 31.3.1917.

⁷⁸ *MI*, K2067, 5165.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5175.

⁸¹ *PA*, I, K504, 3-18, notes on the 16.3.1917 talks.

⁸² *PA*, I, K504; K957, Mérey-Czernin, 14.3.1917. Two days earlier, Bethmann and Zimmermann had spoken to Mérey about "the cession of a very small piece of Lorraine against a part of Briey-Longwy". Now, the maximum peace condition was the outright acquisition of Briey-Longwy.

⁸³ *NM*, 17.3.1917.

chancellor broke down in tears at Czernin's.⁸⁴ As he floundered, the Austrians hoped he would yield. However, despite their unrelenting pressure and the profound effect made by Czernin's dismal report, as well as his own pessimism concerning events in Russia, Bethmann could not envisage any compromise peace at this time.⁸⁵ Though he was seemingly prone to vacillation, his military command remained steadfast and was in no mood for conciliation.⁸⁶ Moreover, the only concession towards France to which he would accede (as a minimum peace condition, in any case) was in fact an exchange favourable to Germany. Yet in a memorandum he wrote on 20 March and submitted to Karl, Czernin revealed that Bethmann had promised him in strictest confidence to give back "France and Belgium, and *something else in addition*".⁸⁷ Czernin and Karl must have believed that this something related to Alsace-Lorraine. But deliberately or not, Czernin had almost certainly misconstrued Bethmann's words. Nevertheless, his interpretation enabled him to present an attractive plan to the crown council two days later: Austria-Hungary would give up Congress Poland to Germany as an incentive for concessions in Alsace-Lorraine, and receive substantial compensation in the Balkans and in Romania.⁸⁸ (Indeed, Czernin had obtained from Bethmann an agreement, in principle, on the proportionality of war gains.)⁸⁹ At a stroke, the Monarchy would obtain both peace and large territorial acquisitions. The attendees of the council – Karl, Tisza, Clam, Burián, Krobatin, Arz and Marterer – approved his scheme.⁹⁰ In his desperation for peace, Karl himself saw neither the dubiousness of Czernin's claim, nor the fanciful nature of his proposals, and gave his eager support to the plan.⁹¹

The emperor was by now in an anxious hurry, aware that his brothers-in-law Sixtus and Xavier were on their way to Vienna *incognito*. On 23 March, he received them in Laxenburg, appearing graver than usual, somewhat sad, and grey at the temples.⁹² Almost straight away, he declared: "Il faut absolument faire la paix, je le

⁸⁴ *NM*, 18.3.

⁸⁵ *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 16.3; K7, 16.3.1917. When speaking to him, Baernreither noted his tremendous confidence and his lack of belief in a rapid end to the conflict.

⁸⁶ *PA*, I, K504. As Stumm had explained at the meeting on 16.3, the German military expected to defeat England swiftly, and therefore any moderation was excluded.

⁸⁷ *PA*, I, K524, "Kriegsziele und die polnische Frage", 20.3.1917.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *PA*, I, K504.

⁹⁰ *PA*, I, K524.

⁹¹ *NM*, 18.3.1917; Komjáthy, 24, 22.3.1917, pp.483, 490.

⁹² Sixtus' poetic licence notwithstanding, the strain on Karl must have been evident. Moreover, they had not seen him since August 1914.

veux à tout prix.”⁹³ This was possibly an exaggeration in Sixtus’ account, for Karl was certainly not willing to obtain peace at *all* costs, even though at the time the price might not have been excessive. (Three days later, in Berlin, Czernin assured the Germans that Karl had once declared that he “would rather die than cede even a square metre of the Monarchy’s soil to Italy”.)⁹⁴ In light of the tumult in Russia, the idea of a separate peace with Vienna had gained wider currency in Paris and London. The withdrawal of Austria-Hungary would compensate for Russian impotence and leave Germany isolated and weakened. And indeed, the brothers bore encouraging news: Poincaré had seen promise in Karl’s addendum to Czernin’s note and, having shared it with Briand, he had vowed to pass it on to the British.⁹⁵ The French agreed that if Austria pledged to respect the four aforementioned points, negotiations could go ahead.⁹⁶ Thus notwithstanding Italian pretensions, which required substantial fulfilment but which even France thought exaggerated,⁹⁷ Austria-Hungary could probably expect favourable terms. But, as Sixtus made abundantly clear to Karl, she would necessarily have to abandon her implacable German ally, for the Entente had no interest in negotiating with Berlin.⁹⁸ Though the emperor eluded the Italian and Romanian questions, he assured Sixtus that he would pursue a separate peace if Germany could not be brought to reason. He confessed to the Princes that the unshakeable dogma of a victorious peace pervaded the entire German leadership, but he thought it his duty to “try the impossible” before breaking away.⁹⁹ Bethmann’s visit had probably convinced him that it was not impossible after all. Later, Czernin joined the discussion, during which his aloofness, vagueness, continual bluffing and reticence dismayed Sixtus.¹⁰⁰ Wary of an enterprise which was not under his aegis and which excluded a general peace, the foreign minister was more interested in his manoeuvres via Mensdorff, who had left for Switzerland two days earlier.¹⁰¹ However, according to Sixtus, Czernin eventually concurred that Austria would

⁹³ Sixte, pp.83-84.

⁹⁴ *Wk15 G*, 2, summary of the Berlin Conference, 26.3.1917.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.65-66. On the other hand, he considered Czernin’s note wholly unacceptable.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.69-70.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.66-68; Kann, *Sixtus*, p.33.

⁹⁸ Sixte, pp.68, 75, 84-85.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.85. Karl apparently told Sixtus that he could not sacrifice the Monarchy to the madness of its neighbour. He added that he wanted to find an agreement with the Entente so that if Germany still refused peace, he could say: “Nous ne pouvons continuer à nous battre pour le roi de Prusse, nous faisons les sacrifices nécessaires et signons la paix immédiatement.”

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.89-90.

¹⁰¹ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-Musulini, 21.3.1917.

divorce Germany if she stood in the way of a reasonable peace, which she did due to her stubbornness over Alsace-Lorraine.¹⁰² He apparently repeated this the following morning when visiting him at Erdödy's,¹⁰³ where, as maintained by Xavier, he gave his agreement to everything that had been discussed the previous day, though not without anxiety.¹⁰⁴ If Czernin did indeed acquiesce, he did so informally, possibly to placate the Princes or to avoid thwarting his master, for these alleged declarations did not reflect his views, and he would not have put his name to them. Karl, however, had no such reservations and, on the evening of 24 March, he gave Sixtus the infamous handwritten letter for Poincaré which essentially agreed to the proposed basis for negotiation and which promised to use all means and all his influence to impress upon Germany France's "just claims" to Alsace-Lorraine.¹⁰⁵ Although the exact authorship of the letter subsequently became controversial, Karl undoubtedly wrote it, though he likely got help from his brother-in-law, and possibly from Zita.¹⁰⁶ However, despite the Bourbon-Parma claims that Czernin also took part in its elaboration,¹⁰⁷ the foreign minister cannot have seen or approved the wording of the final draft, especially on the question of Alsace-Lorraine, even though his sentiments on the matter were similar to Karl's.¹⁰⁸ For neither the first nor the last time, Karl had gone over his minister's head. That same night, armed with the letter, the Princes left Austria and returned to Paris.¹⁰⁹

Though the emperor was confident of having taken a significant step towards peace, considerable obstacles remained. Firstly, he and Czernin still hoped to negotiate a general peace and to act as mediators between Germany and the Entente, whereas Sixtus believed he was helping orchestrate a separate peace for Austria-

¹⁰² Sixte, p.90.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Memoir of Prince Xavier given to Brook-Shepherd, pp.70-71.

¹⁰⁵ Sixte, pp.94, 97. "[...] j'appuierai, par tous les moyens et en usant de toute mon influence personnelle, auprès de mes alliés, les justes revendications françaises, relatives à l'Alsace-Lorraine."

¹⁰⁶ Brook-Shepherd, p.71; *NB*, K7, 16.4.1918; Polzer, p.234. Zita asserted that Karl had spent almost the whole of 24.3 writing the letter in French, which she claimed he wrote perfectly. Polzer, however, later told Baernreither that Karl could not write French. Moreover, he considered it impossible for him to be the sole author, as it did not match his natural style. He concluded that it was a joint effort with Sixtus, possibly with some input from Zita.

¹⁰⁷ Brook-Shepherd, p.71; Sixte, pp.94-95. Zita claimed that on certain technical points and diplomatic phrases, Karl consulted Czernin via his direct private telephone line to him. Sixtus himself wrote that the letter was produced in agreement "with the responsible minister" after his final meeting with him.

¹⁰⁸ Kann, *Sixtus*, pp.31-32; *WI5G*, 2, Stumm-Grünau, 2.4.1917. While in Bucharest, Czernin had told German diplomats that due to Germany's conquest of Alsace-Lorraine in 1870, she was responsible for the war and had to make sacrifices.

¹⁰⁹ Sixte, p.94.

Hungary. Moreover, the emperor and his minister were unwilling to make concessions to Italy¹¹⁰ or to separate from Germany, although these were *sine qua non* conditions for the Entente. By assuring Sixtus that Austria-Hungary would leave Germany if she impeded peace and by sidestepping the issue of Italy, Karl and Czernin had kept the mission alive; forthrightness would have ended it. However, the conciliatory tones of the French overtures in Bern had perhaps convinced the Austrians that the abandonment of Germany was not imperative. Still, even a general peace necessitated a degree of German moderation and as Czernin quickly discovered, it was not forthcoming. On 25 March, he travelled to Berlin in order to pursue with the German chancellor the discussions begun in Vienna. Again he stressed that Austria-Hungary could fight on only six more months, and therefore had to make peace.¹¹¹ He prepared the ground for his plan by announcing the Monarchy's willingness to make concessions to Serbia and to renounce Congress Poland in exchange for Walachia. He then suggested corresponding German sacrifices in the west. But whatever Bethmann had promised him in Vienna, there was now no question of German conciliation over France or Belgium.¹¹² Unmoved by his contacts in Switzerland and by his apocalyptic depiction of the Monarchy's condition,¹¹³ the Germans were also furious that he should ask them to cede parts of Alsace-Lorraine while refusing to relinquish any territory to Italy, and that he should stress Austria-Hungary's desperate need for peace while simultaneously trying to secure generous terms for her.¹¹⁴ Czernin did not insist, and instead worked to obtain recognition of his Romanian scheme. In the end, only a vague – and ultimately meaningless – programme of war aims could be agreed upon.¹¹⁵ Czernin knew that as long as he failed to wring concessions from Germany in the west, any plans for a general settlement were blocked.

¹¹⁰ Sixte, pp.88, 93. Karl hoped that once a deal had been struck with France, Britain and Russia, they would not let Italian demands stand in the way of peace.

¹¹¹ *W15G*, 2, Berlin conference, 26.3.1917.

¹¹² *Ibid.* There was only talk of a "possible border rectification in Alsace in favour of France against the cession of the ore basin of Briey". Moreover, Belgium was now to be annexed economically.

¹¹³ *W2G*, 30, Wedel-Stumm, 18.3.1917. Wedel had warned: "They have painted everything too black here in order to impress us."

¹¹⁴ *W15G*, 2, 26.3; Stumm-Grünau, 2.4.1917. Bethmann exclaimed: "Count Czernin has just declared that he could not surrender one square metre to Italy but we are supposed to give the French a part of the Empire". Stumm called Czernin's proposal "grotesque".

¹¹⁵ *W15G*, 2, 26.3.1917; Ludendorff, II, p.440. The so-called "Vienna Document", signed on 27.3, agreed to guarantee the territorial integrity of both countries. In case of a favourable outcome, Germany would get the east and the Monarchy Romania, with gains corollary to war effort. This was purely academic, as the German high command only got wind of the agreement in early 1918.

Abroad, peace was no nearer; at home, it appeared increasingly threatened. Domestic unrest continued to cause ceaseless anxiety in Vienna. Wedel reported to Bethmann: “The spectre of revolution has appeared in the east and has shattered the none-too-strong nerves of the leading men here.” He explained that although Czernin had kept his composure like Clam and Tisza, he was nevertheless influenced by the mood of apprehension around him. The foreign minister confided to him that the news from the industrial regions of Bohemia and Silesia was “alarming” and that a trivial incident could unleash a storm. He also worried that the new Russian government might succeed in satisfying the starving masses and thus set an ominous precedent for Austria.¹¹⁶ Wedel recognized, like his Bavarian counterpart,¹¹⁷ the gravity of the food situation, but believed the fear of revolution to be exaggerated as it “did not fit the character of the Habsburg peoples”;¹¹⁸ thus to Czernin’s anxiety, he responded that victory was near and enjoined him tartly to keep his nerve and to hold out a little longer.¹¹⁹

Not for the first time, the Germans took Austrian catastrophism with a pinch of salt. This was not wholly unwarranted, for Czernin – though he was genuinely, and justifiably, concerned – never hesitated to overplay this danger in order to bring pressure to bear on Berlin. Yet undeniably, the situation had deteriorated considerably since February.¹²⁰ Throughout the Empire, the lack of food and items of basic necessity (particularly potatoes, bread, flour, milk, fat and coal)¹²¹ affected all but the most privileged classes and those fortunate enough to be self-sufficient. The working class suffered most, but civil servants and the middle class were rapidly becoming proletarianized.¹²² Intercepted correspondence revealed universal gloom, war-weariness, indifference to outside events and to the cause of the Central Powers, a boundless yearning for peace and a lack of desire to hold out, alongside endless complaints about starvation, child malnutrition, illness, price increases, the moneyed classes, requisitions, and the incessant military inspections and drafts. Some simply wished for death. Even the stalwart Germans of Bohemia and Moravia, though they

¹¹⁶ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 23.3.1917.

¹¹⁷ *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 31.3.1917.

¹¹⁸ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 23.3.1917.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *KM, KÜA*, K186, 101692, report of the censor’s office in Vienna for March. It noted that the economic situation appeared much more hopeless than before.

¹²¹ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 62/T.R.

¹²² *KM, KÜA*, K186, 101692.

still managed a few patriotic declarations and displays of confidence, seemed thoroughly depressed.¹²³

Unsurprisingly, the food shortages had provoked numerous rowdy demonstrations in virtually every province of Austria. However, the authorities had always restored calm and order, and military assistance had been used only very scarcely.¹²⁴ In several factories and mines of Bohemia, hunger had led to multiple interruptions of work but although these were still rife at the end of the month,¹²⁵ the peace was never breached. In the crownland, the protests had been, and indeed continued to be, especially intense,¹²⁶ and the situation in Prague was yet more acute.¹²⁷ But apart from the incidents related to the provision of food, few matters relevant to the state police were noted in the aforementioned report. True, of all the incidents in the Austrian half of the Empire, two-thirds concerned Bohemia and Moravia; but these were the actions of disgruntled or incautious isolated individuals.¹²⁸ The police department in Prague confirmed that there was “no shortage of covert subversive activity”, but it considered this to be independent of the Russian revolution and a natural corollary of war. It was satisfied that until now there had been “no detection of a methodical organization of a revolt”, and dismissed the possibility of the Czechs following the Russian example due to the level-headed attitude of the Social Democrats and to the well-established presence of the authorities.¹²⁹ Likewise, the March report of the minister of the interior for Cisleithania noted no political or ideological element in the incidents recorded.¹³⁰ In addition, the near half-million pieces of correspondences processed by the Vienna censorship office were almost entirely devoid of political content, which, according to the censors, was due to the fact that “all letter writers, whichever crownland they live in, are governed by one concern [...], their daily bread”.¹³¹ Quite a few revealed “a nigh rebellious mood” but, despite the ubiquitous misery and unrest, most authorities recognized that revolution was not imminent in the Monarchy. Even when striving to emphasize the direness of

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 62/T.R.

¹²⁵ *SH*, 1698, 1703, 1717, 1729, pp.212, 214-215; *MRP*, K303, 2006.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1700, 1702, 1710, 1711, 1713, 1715, 1716, 1742, pp.212-214, 217. In the last days of March, there were incidents throughout the province.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1692, 1693, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, pp.214-215.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1699, 1720, pp.212, 214; *KBA*, 37b, K37, 62/T.R.

¹²⁹ *MRP*, K305, 2865, 31.3.1917.

¹³⁰ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 62/T.R.

¹³¹ *KM*, *KÜA*, K186, 101692.

the situation to the German ambassador, Clam had to concede that there were no signs of revolutionary intent.¹³² At the end of March, Kestřánek observed: “The [...] lack of food in the lower social classes, particularly in the working class, gives the basic colour of the mood, or rather of the ill feeling of the population.” He stressed the need for the whole administration to cooperate in order to resolve the issue and prevent agitators from exploiting the masses, whom he considered mainly “politically and nationally indifferent”.¹³³

Nevertheless, many perceived the riots as the forerunners of revolution and, although these were still devoid of ideological undertones, they sufficed to unsettle the leading men in Vienna. On 6 April, Wedel reported that the previous eight days had brought about a sudden anxiety among them and had given a foretaste of the ease with which the government might lose its head. The ambassador bemoaned its unwarranted weakness and vacillation, but singled out Czernin for “abruptly [losing] his nerve in a way that set his own men thinking.”¹³⁴ Two days later, he delivered a blistering assessment of the Viennese hierarchy: “Clam moans that Austria is starving, Konrad Hohenlohe is known always to throw in the towel when things get too heated, General Arz is spineless and Czernin has become anxious.” He added that since these men repeatedly warned Karl of the danger of revolution, it was small wonder that the latter, weak by nature and under daily female pressure, had also become restless.¹³⁵

Panicked by internal tensions and fettered by expectations abroad, the government was paralyzed. Indecision and inaction prevailed.¹³⁶ Domestic policy had come to a standstill, impinging even upon the octroi. It seemed nobody, not even in the cabinet, knew in what form – if any – the measure would be carried out. Amidst the daily glut of contradictory bulletins, Redlich heard that it would apply only to the standing orders, to the language law and to the circle governments.¹³⁷ In the Bohemian press, where the subject was animatedly discussed, the view still predominated that the internal language of state and the administrative division of the crownland would indeed be promulgated by decree.¹³⁸ Tucher complained that due to the government’s

¹³² *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-AA, 31.3.1917.

¹³³ *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/28.

¹³⁴ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.4.1917.

¹³⁵ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Zimmermann, 8.4.1917.

¹³⁶ *RT*, II, 22.3.1917, p.285.

¹³⁷ *RT*, II, 25.3.1917, pp.285-286.

¹³⁸ *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/28. Particular significance had been attached to Trnka’s visit to Prague.

exclusive preoccupation with hunger and revolution, “months and weeks are passing by without the much-discussed and oft-announced octroi coming”.¹³⁹ Yet Wedel indicated to Bethmann in early April that Clam was sticking to the plan – “a somewhat risky experiment”, the ambassador thought.¹⁴⁰ At any rate, the nationalists pressed on doggedly, believing that the full realization of their project was forthcoming – after all, it remained official policy. Rattled by events in Saint Petersburg, the *Nationalverband* had immediately reaffirmed its steadfast and unanimous commitment to the implementation of the octroi, while denouncing Slav protestations.¹⁴¹ At a joint committee meeting with the Christian Socials on 22 March, Baernreither and Urban had announced that most of the drafts were ready and would be issued “in a few days”.¹⁴² A week later, the former sent Clam his proposals for the new standing orders, which were almost complete and which he hoped to finalize very shortly.¹⁴³ These, however, were increasingly isolated voices, whose clamour failed to disguise the languid state of the policy. Much delayed and increasingly questioned, the octroi project had in fact already lost considerable support and momentum. In particular, the Russian Revolution had eroded the consensus between the German bourgeois parties, leaving the *Nationalverband* alone in its stubborn pursuit. Under the influence of its radical Bohemian elements, most members still insisted on the wholesale enforcement of the octroi,¹⁴⁴ and the measure still enjoyed political support among the German minorities in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.¹⁴⁵ However, the Christian Socials (and indeed a minority of nationalists) now believed the reform of the standing orders to be a sufficient precondition to the recall of parliament. To the Christian Socials, the latter was imperative in order to prevent the politicization of the masses, who – though principally concerned with the scarcity of food – were embittered by their lack of representation and susceptible to revolutionary agitation.¹⁴⁶ Though the official *communiqué* from the common meeting still insisted eagerly on the unity of both parties, the ambiguous words of Christian Social chairman Johann Hauser hinted at his exasperation with the relentless pleading for the octroi.¹⁴⁷ As a

¹³⁹ *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 31.3.1917.

¹⁴⁰ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.4.1917.

¹⁴¹ *NFPM*, 18.3, p.7, resolutions of the board, 17.3.1917.

¹⁴² Vogelsang-Institut, *Parteiarchiv, Parlamentsklub*, K19, 22.3.1917.

¹⁴³ *BC*, Baernreither-Clam, 29.3.1917.

¹⁴⁴ *MI*, K2067, 5165, *PDW*, 23.3.1917.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5164, 5662.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5165.

¹⁴⁷ *RPM*, 23.3, p.6; *RPN*, 23.3.1917, p.2.

result, the liberal pro-octroi press in Vienna and in Bohemia rancorously assailed the party for its supposed betrayal of the alliance.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the traditional opponents of the policy seized the opportunity to raise their own voices. At this time, the Czechs still feared an imminent proclamation by decree but, inspired by events in Russia and by German disunity, they denounced the measure with increased vigour. In a sitting of the National Committee on 15 March and in the first plenary session of the Czech Union two days later, they resolved to resist the octroi by all means possible.¹⁴⁹ Certain radical deputies suggested the full boycott of a future parliament,¹⁵⁰ but the moderates prevailed and the resolution of the Union merely demanded that their dispute with the Germans be solved through negotiations and mutual agreement.¹⁵¹ Moreover, the Czechs offered their “full and sincere” cooperation towards solving existing economic issues, if parliament were reconvened immediately and without prerequisites.¹⁵²

In addition, the Austrian Social Democrats, long in the doldrums, now denounced the octroi with renewed vehemence.¹⁵³ Liberated by the collapse of tsarism – their only reason for having backed the war – and riding the socialist and pacifist waves, they sought to capitalize on the increasing disgruntlement and restlessness of the workers in Austria. Accordingly, the party swiftly expressed its unconditional support for the revolution and for the Russian socialists, and urged the Central Powers to act upon their oft-stated readiness for peace.¹⁵⁴ This declaration was suppressed by the authorities for almost a month,¹⁵⁵ but the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* nevertheless ran several leading articles demanding an end to the war and to the plight of the starving, indigent masses, the suspension of rule by decree, the recall of parliament and fundamental democratic reforms; it continually chastised Clam.¹⁵⁶ Attributing the revolution to the war-weariness and hunger of the population, it warned of possible emulation in Austria, sometimes appearing to favour this outcome.¹⁵⁷ The party also became increasingly active on the ground. On 25 March, it launched a series of propagandistic

¹⁴⁸ *RPN*, 17.4.1917, p.2.

¹⁴⁹ *MI*, K2067, 5165; *NFPM*, 18.3.1917, p.7.

¹⁵⁰ *MI*, K2067, 5165.

¹⁵¹ *NFPM*, 18.3.1917, p.7.

¹⁵² *MI*, K2067, 5165.

¹⁵³ *NB*, K11, p.32.

¹⁵⁴ *KÚA*, K191, 104.774, 22.3.1917.

¹⁵⁵ *AZM*, 17.4.1917, p.2.

¹⁵⁶ *MI*, K2067, 5165; *AZM*, 15.3, p.1, 27.3, pp.1-2, 1.4, p.1; 8.4, pp.1-2, 11.4.1917, p.1.

¹⁵⁷ *MI*, K2067, 5165.

assemblies under the title: “Social Democracy, the bourgeois parties and parliament”.¹⁵⁸ These congregations, which, tellingly, encountered no opposition from the authorities,¹⁵⁹ emphatically requested the reconvening of the *Reichsrat*. Speakers repeatedly highlighted the fact that Austria remained the only major nation without a parliament and dismissed any preconditions to its reopening. In particular, there was vigorous opposition to the application of the octroi for the Galician question and the standing orders.¹⁶⁰ (However, as mentioned before, the Social Democrats had not always been adamant opponents of rule by decree.) Still under the effect of the events in Saint Petersburg, the government lent an attentive ear. For instance, in late March, Clam invited the Social Democrats Adler, Seitz and Pernerstorfer to discuss political issues.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, Czernin, who had likely initiated this *rapprochement*, continued to liaise with them,¹⁶² aware of the potential rewards for cultivating their goodwill: abroad, they might facilitate negotiations with Russia, and at home, they could appease the disgruntled working class.¹⁶³ He also wished thereby to exert pressure on the Germans, who were increasingly disquieted by this strategy. Tucher, dismayed by the recent “anti-capitalist” decrees and declarations of the government, reported bitterly: “This behaviour [...] is dictated by dread of revolution and of hunger revolts, and it is plain to see that since the outbreak of the Russian Revolution the government is seeking contact with the masses more than ever and is displaying increased consideration for the desires of the Socialist Party”.¹⁶⁴ Irritation grew in conservative circles in Austria.¹⁶⁵ Baernreither later complained that the Socialists were coming and going from Czernin’s office and asked him if his ballyhooing of their mission was really necessary.¹⁶⁶ And even the liberal-minded Redlich quipped: “we are becoming Social Democrats through pure fear”.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, this pragmatic cooperation bore fruit in the restraint of the party (which was in any case the preferred strategy of its leadership) and appeared to culminate on 7 April when the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* officially

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 5404 in 5887, *PDW*, 30.3.1917.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 5887.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ *VGA, PA*, M2, meeting of the party executive, 31.3.1917.

¹⁶² *NB*, K11, p.32.

¹⁶³ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 28.4.1917.

¹⁶⁴ *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 31.3.1917.

¹⁶⁵ *NS*, 10.5; *NB*, K7, 29.4; 5.5; 25.5.1917.

¹⁶⁶ *NB*, K7, 5.5; 25.5.1917.

¹⁶⁷ *RT*, II, 16.4.1917, p.288.

urged the working masses once again not to cease work or to demonstrate on the coming May Day.¹⁶⁸

Aside from its rising unpopularity, the octroi's intrinsic structural flaws finally brought matters to a head. The Polish question, which was inextricably linked to the fulfilment of German demands, had reached an insoluble deadlock. The removal of Polish deputies from the *Reichsrat* by means of granting Galicia sub-dualistic autonomy within Austria was a cornerstone of the nationalist plan, but the promise of an independent Poland in the Two Emperors' Manifesto had raised the expectations of the Poles, just as Vienna's heavy-handed wartime administration of their homeland had eroded their loyalty.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, no attempt was made to remove the Polish question from the programme, as this would have signified the renunciation of parliamentary dominance and its assorted standing orders.¹⁷⁰ And by the time Clam began earnestly to address the issue in February, Polish intransigence was entrenched.¹⁷¹ Then came the Russian Revolution. Seeking to garner Polish support, the provisional government denounced the Central Powers' Polish policy as a deceit and, in turn, announced the future creation of a Polish state from all territories with a majority Polish population.¹⁷² This radicalized the Poles further and bolstered their dreams of an independent Greater Poland. Thereafter, Baernreither wrote that "the Austrian unitary state completely disappeared from their minds".¹⁷³ The more ebullient Poles, skilfully led by Biliński, demanded a status at least equal to Hungary's.¹⁷⁴ Despite numerous ministerial consultations and Bobrzyński's repeated attempts at mediation between the government and his compatriots, no compromise could be found.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the German nationalists were themselves divided on the issue: whereas many insisted on Polish withdrawal from parliament at all costs, others were reluctant to relinquish control of an area which abounded in mineral riches and had seen increasing investment in the years preceding the war.¹⁷⁶ In any case, the

¹⁶⁸ *MI*, K2067, 6051.

¹⁶⁹ *NB*, K11, pp.75-76.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.31, 83. Baernreither later censored Clam for failing to assess whether anything could be achieved with the Poles in the first weeks of government in order to take such an action if required.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.76.

¹⁷² *KM, PB*, K2124, 56-2/16. An echo of Grand Duke Nicholas' proclamation earlier in the war.

¹⁷³ *NB*, K11, pp.77-78.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.80.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.78.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; Czedik, IV, p.530.

future status of Galicia chiefly depended on the designs and actions of Russia and Germany.¹⁷⁷ The Polish conundrum could not, therefore, be resolved before a settlement in the east, and the government failed to find even a temporary answer.¹⁷⁸ This issue precluded the full realization of the plan, and brought the cabinet up short. Baernreither admitted: “Our failure in the Polish question was catastrophic for the cabinet because it prevented us from finishing our work earlier and was thus one of the main causes of the non-completion of the octroi”,¹⁷⁹ and later concluded that “the Polish question was the millstone that hung around the government’s neck and dragged it to the bottom”.¹⁸⁰ As things stood, a proclamation of the octroi would leave a Slav majority in the *Reichsrat* (including the freshly uncooperative Poles) and nullify the new standing orders. Thus in addition to losing significant advocates and attracting increased hostility, the octroi faced an inescapable technical impasse.

Czernin, though he still favoured the measure *per se*, knew that an immediate proclamation would be ill-timed and ill-starred. On 30 March, he met Baernreither and explained that the events in Russia, the enduring want of the population, the consequent strengthening of the Social Democrats and the immoderation of the Poles made its proclamation harder than even two weeks prior.¹⁸¹ He conceded that the Russian Revolution had bolstered all opponents of the octroi in Austria.¹⁸² Baernreither, already under considerable strain,¹⁸³ refused any responsibility for the delay and instead censured Clam for his wavering and his apathy.¹⁸⁴ He stressed the necessity and urgency of explaining the entire matter to the emperor in order to obtain not just his general consent but his approval of individual proposals. Czernin agreed, adding: “The longer we hesitate, the more the emperor will be persuaded by opposing influences.” Regardless of its veracity, their belief that Karl could be still won over to their cause betrayed their limited esteem for his independence of judgement and strength of character. In any case, the octroi was already on hold in Czernin’s mind. When Baernreither asked him to exert pressure so as to accelerate the process,

¹⁷⁷ *NB*, K11, p.33. Czernin told Baernreither that the cession of eastern Galicia could not be a hindrance to peace with Russia.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.83.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.31.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.31-32.

¹⁸² *NB*, K7, 31.3.1917.

¹⁸³ *RT*, II, 30.3.1917, p.286.

¹⁸⁴ *NB*, K11, p.32.

Czernin replied that he did not wish to get involved. No doubt he hoped to keep the octroi in abeyance whilst he achieved peace, and to revive it thereafter. Accordingly, he urged Baernreither to finalize the drafts so they would be ready when the opportune moment arose.¹⁸⁵ For the time being, peace was his sole concern and he would engage in nothing which might jeopardize it. Baernreither observed that a yearning for peace imbued Czernin's every word and that everything subordinated him to that idea.¹⁸⁶ The situation in Russia, though unclear, had developed less explosively than anticipated. Milyukov had raised the stakes by announcing that Russia desired "the liberation of the oppressed nationalities of Austria-Hungary" and "the creation of a solidly organized South Slavdom" – in effect the dismemberment of the Habsburg Monarchy – while continuing to call for the pursuit of final victory against German imperialism;¹⁸⁷ yet Czernin believed that men of the left such as Kerensky were amenable to a separate peace.¹⁸⁸ Certainly, the pacifists had stepped up their campaign for the country to leave the war, with support from the masses, and a clash with those in power loomed.¹⁸⁹ Austro-Hungarian intelligence thought the government's situation untenable.¹⁹⁰ Encouraged by the momentum of the anti-war forces in Russia and convinced that Austria-Hungary could not fight on much longer, Czernin was now willing to risk all in order to bring everybody to the negotiating table. He thought it possible that rival parties might be sitting together within a few weeks.¹⁹¹ But whereas peace in the east seemed a realistic prospect, in the west it was still dependent on German compromises. Here, Czernin was most pessimistic.¹⁹²

Nevertheless, the Austrians launched their most ambitious – and desperate – plan yet to coax concessions out of the Germans. Upon Czernin's empty-handed return from Berlin, Karl had cancelled a planned trip to Transylvania and, on 28 March, had instructed Cramon to inform Wilhelm that he wished to visit him six days later.¹⁹³ On 3 April, a vast delegation including Karl, Zita, Czernin, Arz and Polzer duly arrived at

¹⁸⁵ *NB*, K11, pp.32-33.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.31, 34.

¹⁸⁷ *NFPM*, 28.3, p.1.

¹⁸⁸ *PA*, I, K956, Czernin-Musulini and Otto Czernin, 7.4.1917.

¹⁸⁹ *KM, PB*, K2124, 56-2/9; 56-2/12; 56-2/13. The Petrograd Soviet had appealed to the workers of world – particularly the German and Austrian proletariat – to take the matter into their own hands, topple their rulers and end the war.

¹⁹⁰ *KM, PB*, K2124, 56-2/13, 31.3.1917, summary of the situation by the *AOK*'s Intelligence Service.

¹⁹¹ *NB*, K11, p.32.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.32, 34.

¹⁹³ *NM*, 28.3; Werkmann, pp.221-222; *Ö86 Nr.1*, 21, Wedel-AA, 29.3.1917.

German headquarters in Homburg.¹⁹⁴ Czernin was especially resolute: though he had previously tiptoed around the issue, he now adhered to Musulin's recent report from Switzerland according to which "the question of peace now really [was] a question of Alsace-Lorraine".¹⁹⁵ Determined to obtain the necessary allowances from Germany, he had prepared the terrain with his habitual tactic. Several days before, he had instructed Gottfried Hohenlohe to pass on Musulin's message to the Germans and to notify Bethmann that the atmosphere in all parts of the Monarchy was ever worsening.¹⁹⁶ He and Clam also warned Wedel that as a result of the food crisis, the country could not possibly hold out more than six weeks – only recently, he had spoken of six months – and thus needed to conclude peace immediately, adding that the mood in the poorest classes and Slav inclinations towards liberal Russia threatened a catastrophe.¹⁹⁷ The ambassador believed this to be an exaggeration and informed his foreign office accordingly.¹⁹⁸ The Germans were therefore unmoved, and increasingly irritated by Austrian hypocrisy.¹⁹⁹ Undeterred, Czernin gave an interview to the *Fremden-Blatt* on 31 March, urging a peace conference of all belligerent states, proclaiming that Austria-Hungary was fighting a defensive war and only desired guarantees for her continued existence, and assuring Russia and the Entente that they could conclude an honourable peace with the Central Powers at any time.²⁰⁰ He added that the great masses "disinherited by fate" deserved the greatest merit in the war, and promised they would be rewarded for their heroism. As he intended, this pleased the Social Democrats and irked the Germans.²⁰¹

Karl, buoyed by a secret – though dubious – Italian peace offer,²⁰² and still hopeful of German moderation,²⁰³ placed great hope on this meeting. Conscious of the

¹⁹⁴ Polzer, p.241.

¹⁹⁵ PA, I, K957, Musulin-Czernin, 26.3.1917.

¹⁹⁶ PA, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 28.3; 29.3.1917.

¹⁹⁷ PA, I, K524, G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 1.4; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-AA, 31.3; W2G, 31, Wedel-AA, 1.4.1917.

¹⁹⁸ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-AA, 31.3.1917.

¹⁹⁹ PA, I, K524, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 31.3; G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 1.4; W15G, 2, Wedel-AA, 2.4.1917. The Germans could not reconcile Czernin's refusal to make territorial concessions to Italy with his pleas for an immediate peace.

²⁰⁰ FBM, 31.3.1917, p.1.

²⁰¹ PA, I, K957, Hohenlohe-Czernin, 1.4; MA, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 31.3.1917; NB, K.11, p.34.

²⁰² Sixte, pp.160, 166, 181; Polzer, pp.240-241; PA, I, K511, Czernin-von Storck, 2.4.1917; NFPM, 13.1.1920, p.2. Shown to Karl by Czernin on 2.4, it was made via the German embassy in Bern by an Italian military emissary allegedly sent by Cadorna and the king (behind Sonnino's back). The Italians demanded only the cession of the Trentino as a condition of peace. Karl rejected the offer out of hand, chiefly in order not to obstruct Sixtus' mission, though he also feared an Italian trap. Nevertheless, he believed it was a sign that the proponents of peace were gaining the upper hand in Entente countries. Czernin later denied have ever seen an Italian peace offer.

²⁰³ W15G, 2, Wedel-AA, Vienna, 2.4.1917.

stakes, he instructed his men during the journey to Homburg to paint the situation as black as possible to the Germans.²⁰⁴ His foreign minister readily obliged and, by his side, applied his usual refrain before Wilhelm, Bethmann and Zimmermann: the Monarchy could not fight beyond 1917 and any opportunity for a quick and honourable peace had to be seized, even if it entailed considerable sacrifices. He warned against overblown annexationist ambitions and dangled the spectres of a revolution and a socialist peace.²⁰⁵ As he told Admiral Müller, the head of the Wilhelm's Naval Cabinet: "Unless the war ends within three months the people will end it without their governments."²⁰⁶ However, the Germans remained impassive. Czernin's propensity to dramatize was known to all, and he exasperated more than he convinced.²⁰⁷ What is more, his own countrymen failed him. Arz for instance refused to comply and moderated his dismal predictions,²⁰⁸ while Karl himself, contradicting his own directives and gravely undermining his minister, also played down Czernin's declarations. When asked by Wilhelm if his minister's portrayal was not too gloomy, he replied: "Count Czernin always exaggerates."²⁰⁹ At any rate, the Austrian cause was hopeless irrespective of this indiscretion. During a discussion with Arz, Bethmann, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the foreign minister had suggested relinquishing without compensation – he did not mention Romania – both Congress Poland and Galicia to Germany in exchange for her surrendering the whole of Alsace-Lorraine to France.²¹⁰ Though the meeting was broken off after ten minutes when Czernin and Bethmann were summoned to the emperors, the Germans were dismayed by the proposal, which they considered valueless and unacceptable.²¹¹ In a *tête-à-tête* with Czernin, Ludendorff made no secret of his indignation, tearing the plan apart and declaring that every German party would fight to the death for Alsace-Lorraine. To the foreign minister's bleak depiction of Austria-Hungary's internal conditions, he snapped: "You ought to lead the peoples of the Monarchy with a firmer hand." Czernin responded dolefully that this was impossible.²¹² Firmly rebuffed, the foreign

²⁰⁴ Arz, p.281; Cramon, p.111. Arz and Czernin received such directives.

²⁰⁵ PA, I, K504, Czernin's summary of the meeting; Werkmann, p.222.

²⁰⁶ MD, 3.4.1917, p.252.

²⁰⁷ Cramon, p.112.

²⁰⁸ Cramon, p.111; Arz, pp.156, 281; Ludendorff, II, p.441.

²⁰⁹ Cramon, p.112.

²¹⁰ Ludendorff, II, p.441; Polzer, p.243; Werkmann, p.222; Arz, p.156.

²¹¹ Ludendorff, II, p.441; Bethmann, II, p.202; Fester, p.274; Zimmermann underlined this "self-evidence" in a letter to Wedel on 6.4, while Bethmann recorded his consternation in his memoirs.

²¹² Ludendorff, II, pp.441-442

minister was again unable to count on the support of his master. Indeed, although Werkmann claimed that, during the emperors' conference, Karl had sought to convince the Kaiser of the necessity of sacrificing Alsace-Lorraine,²¹³ Zimmermann later recalled a remark by Wilhelm according to which Karl had only spoken out in favour of the Austro-Polish solution.²¹⁴ Thus Karl, perhaps because he had never truly given up on this option, but most likely as a result of the day's events and of his own unwillingness to confront the German high command and to ruffle Wilhelm, dared not press the issue of Alsace-Lorraine, even though he had promised to do so in his letter to Sixtus. Instead, he readily accepted the Kaiser's support for the candidacy of Archduke Karl Stephan to the Polish throne.²¹⁵ In the end, the Austrians, who had previously obtained from Germany a vague agreement for the proportionality of war gains, obtained a vague agreement for the proportionality of war losses.²¹⁶ These were pitiful consolations, and Karl and his retinue left Homburg dejected.²¹⁷ Czernin, however, gave Wedel the impression that he had returned to Vienna more serene and more confident, and wrote up a positive report on the meeting.²¹⁸

The American declaration of war

Whether or not he had been genuinely comforted by his dealings with Wilhelm and Bethmann, and by the aforementioned covenant, Czernin's nerves were in any case shattered shortly after, on 6 April, when America finally declared war on Germany. Three days later, Vienna had to announce the severing of its diplomatic relations with Washington.²¹⁹ This was a portentous development for Austria-Hungary, since in beseeching approval from Congress, Wilson had announced that the United States would "fight [...] for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations".²²⁰ Thus aside from its substantial military implications, the American intervention appeared to

²¹³ Werkmann, p.222.

²¹⁴ Fester, p.274.

²¹⁵ Polzer, p.244; *PA*, I, K504.

²¹⁶ *PA*, I, K504.

²¹⁷ Polzer, p.243; Brook-Shepherd, p.75; Werkmann, p.222. Karl apparently told Zita: "There are frightful difficulties with the Germans [...]. In the end, we may have to go our own way, even at the risk of being swallowed up by them. But before that we must try everything."

²¹⁸ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.4; Wedel-Zimmermann, 8.4.1917; *PA*, I, K504.

²¹⁹ *FBA*, 10.4.1917, p.1.

²²⁰ *NFPA*, 7.4.1917, pp.1-3.

threaten the very existence of the Dual Monarchy. Additionally, Milyukov endorsed Wilson's war aims and demanded the reorganization of Austria-Hungary from scratch – its destruction, in fact – with the creation of a Czechoslovak state as a barrier against German designs over Slav lands, the unification of all Serb areas, and the containment of German Austria and Hungary within their ethnographic borders.²²¹ To compound Czernin's woes, his peace moves in Switzerland finally fizzled out, and on 7 April, he recalled Mensdorff.²²² Bolstered by the American resolution²²³ and led by a new, less conciliatory government, the French had lost interest in the Bern negotiations. More than ever convinced that a strengthened Entente could hold out longer than the Central Powers, Czernin urged the Germans to buy peace in the west through far-reaching concessions while they still could. Again, he emphasized the Monarchy's abysmal internal situation and its consequent inability to fight for more than a few months.²²⁴ His entreaties were by now almost perfunctory; he knew that prospects for peace in the west were firmly blocked.

Accordingly, he redoubled his efforts for its attainment in the east.²²⁵ If Russia left the war before American involvement could take effect, the Entente might still negotiate. Moreover, Austria-Hungary could hardly proclaim her longing for peace and independence from Berlin if she toed the German line and fought on against Russia. The government, aided by the monarch, therefore continued to cultivate Social Democratic support at home. On 7 April, on the pretext of discussing food supplies to munitions factories, Karl received Renner to "talk politics".²²⁶ The emperor requested that his guest tell his party executive that he was striving for the conclusion of peace on the basis of the *status quo ante* (with the creation of an independent Poland).²²⁷ He also assured him that he wished to devote the greatest attention to workers' conditions and that a completely new system would emerge in the future.²²⁸ Meanwhile, Czernin clutched at every Russian straw²²⁹ until, on 10 April, buoyed by the declarations of the Petrograd Soviet and frustrated by the lack of progress made by the Central Powers on the subject, he instructed Gottfried

²²¹ *NFPN*, 10.4.1917, p.3.

²²² *PA*, I, K957, Mensdorff-Czernin, 31.3; 4.4 (272; 273); Czernin-Mensdorff, 7.4.1917.

²²³ *Ibid.*, Musulin-Czernin, 13.4.1917.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 7.4.1917.

²²⁵ *W2G*, 32, Wedel-Zimmermann, 11.4.1917.

²²⁶ *FŠ*, K18, S136, 11.4.1917.

²²⁷ Renner entitled Šmeral to inform his own executive committee.

²²⁸ *FŠ*, K18, S136, 11.4.1917.

²²⁹ *PA*, I, K956, Czernin-Musulin, 6.4.1917.

Hohenlohe to suggest to Berlin a new and swift peace move towards Russia.²³⁰ Arguing that the situation remained too unclear, the Germans refused.²³¹ When news then arrived on 11 April that Prince Lvov had ostensibly adopted the Soviet line by announcing a war-aims manifesto in the name of the provisional government which, despite upholding Russia's obligations towards her allies, sought peace without further conquests or annexations (on the basis of the self-determination of nations),²³² Czernin requested a joint German and Austrian declaration solemnly renouncing these; again, the Germans resisted and again, Czernin yielded.²³³ Instead, two similar but separate statements, conciliatory but non-committal, were published.²³⁴ As in the west, the German desire for a victorious peace thwarted Austria-Hungary's hope for rapid end to hostilities.

As Vienna's diplomacy hit the wall, so did its domestic policy. The octroi was in its death throes, even though the government continued to endorse it (officially, at least) and die-hard German nationalists to champion it. Not only would it now represent a serious liability in light of America's announcement of war aims and of potential negotiations with Russia, it would also jeopardize Social Democratic cooperation and goodwill. Indeed, at the above-mentioned audience, Renner had made categorically clear to Karl that an octroi was impossible after the Russian Revolution.²³⁵ Karl listened to Renner's explanation but said nothing concerning the measure itself, merely expressing the need for parliament and for order. He confessed: "I have had a predominantly military education, I must first train myself in these questions."²³⁶ Yet little training was needed to realize how inauspicious the domestic climate was for the octroi. Any such open gesture of ill will risked lighting the Czech powder keg. What is more, in the first half of April, with insufficient food supplies reaching the population, the situation deteriorated considerably. And although violence, unrest and work stoppages occurred throughout Austria (in Vienna, Tyrol and Styria, for instance),²³⁷ the Bohemian lands again witnessed the most serious agitation,²³⁸ strikes

²³⁰ *PA*, I, K504; K956, Széchenyi-Czernin, 9.4; Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 10.4.1917.

²³¹ *PA*, I, K956, Hohenlohe-Czernin, 11.4.1917.

²³² *Ibid.*, 9.4.1917.

²³³ *Ibid.*, Hohenlohe-Czernin, 13.4.1917.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vienna, 14.4; Berlin, 15.4.1917.

²³⁵ *FŠ*, K18, S136, 11.4.1917.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 59/T.R.; *MRP*, K302, 1905.

²³⁸ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 58/T.R.; *SH*, 1735, 1740, 1743, 1750, 1760, pp.216-219.

and protests.²³⁹ In the Moravian-Silesian industrial region, which produced coal and coke vital to the war effort, the movement gathered pace when the promised potato deliveries did not appear.²⁴⁰ For several weeks, the Ostrau-Karwin coal-mining area and the Witkowitz²⁴¹ ironworks – whose workers and dependants numbered 183,000 – had experienced unrest and intermittent interruptions.²⁴² By 14 April, over 6,000 workers from fourteen mines were on strike, prompting several interventions from the police and the military;²⁴³ it took the authorities ten days to appease the workers and return them all to work.²⁴⁴ What is more, they had noted that demonstrations had also occurred on days when food was plentiful, and admitted that the movement had “sailed into national waters”, for which they blamed outside influences, particularly the Russian Revolution and its coverage in the press.²⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the situation throughout the pits of northern and north-western Bohemia was also critical, and likewise led to many strike actions.²⁴⁶

Worst of all was Prague, where industrial workers, now also taking action in their thousands, downed tools and demanded better supplies and higher wages. Three interruptions were successfully settled before Easter,²⁴⁷ yet the military leader in Vysočany-Libeň remarked portentously: “The representatives of the workers have their comrades completely under their thumb, which is something I had not previously detected.” Noting that the strikes had seemed well planned and had proceeded with “strange calm”, he instinctively came to suspect the agency of a controlling central body.²⁴⁸ The military command agreed, warning on 12 April that the movement was gathering momentum hour by hour²⁴⁹ and that small concessions would no longer suffice.²⁵⁰ It urged a radical improvement in the supply of food and immediate price cuts for items of basic necessity in order to relieve the population, in particular the working class. But no sooner had these pleas reached Vienna than the situation exploded. The movement took hold in almost all factories of the war industry, and in

²³⁹ *SH*, 1744, 1745, 1751, 1755, 1756, 1759, 1764, 1772, pp.216-221.

²⁴⁰ *MRP*, K303, 2024, 2078, 2095.

²⁴¹ In Czech Ostrava-Karviná and Vítkovice respectively.

²⁴² *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/29-2.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*; 93-2/29-3; *MRP*, K304, 2267.

²⁴⁴ *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/29-5, 24.4.1917.

²⁴⁵ *KM, Abteilung 10*, K1804, 105101, 12.4.1917.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, K302, 1901, 1946; K303, 2006; *SH*, 1732, 1733, 1734, 1746, pp.216-217.

²⁴⁷ *PMV/R*, K191, 6500.

²⁴⁸ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10, Shejwal-Kestřanek, 10.4.1917.

²⁴⁹ *PMV/R*, K191, 6500.

²⁵⁰ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10, Zanantoni (Kestřanek’s deputy), 12.4.1917

every case bar one, was followed by the entire workforce, despite being under military jurisdiction.²⁵¹ It then spread to the railway workshops,²⁵² bringing the total number of strikers to over 10,000.²⁵³

The crisis was so serious than Kestřanek personally travelled to Vienna, where he was received in audience by Karl.²⁵⁴ He also handed Marterer a survey of the situation, compiled from the testimonies of the military leaders in the Prague area, who oversaw 79 factories employing 26,200 workers, themselves providing for 75,000 relatives.²⁵⁵ The document made for bleak reading: one supervisor explained that to feed around 7,000 workers and dependants, there was one pig, a wagon of potatoes and a wagon of peas; another pointed out that to buy food a worker needed four times as much as he earned; a third noted: “No nasty tendencies. One finds crying men, who complain about their distress and that of their family.”

The manner of the strike action reinforced the impression amongst local military authorities that the workers were following precise instructions from an increasingly influential organization.²⁵⁶ The police likewise believed that the disruption had been plotted, and pointed to the simultaneity of the stoppages, to the last-minute changes in the workers’ demands, and to the replacement in many companies of the old workers’ committees by more radical elements.²⁵⁷ It was even rumoured that some of the agitators had come from Vienna.²⁵⁸ At any rate, this wave of strikes revealed for the first time a degree of large-scale coordination, which the authorities believed had been agreed upon during the Easter break.²⁵⁹

Gravely concerned, Kunz, the head of the police, called in the Social Democratic party and trade-union representatives, including Šmeral, Soukup and Němec, to discuss the matter on 14 April.²⁶⁰ The Socialists had already denied knowledge of any outside influence or preparation,²⁶¹ and now stressed that their organizations had no connection with a general strike allegedly planned for 16

²⁵¹ *PMV/R*, K191, 6500; *SH*, 1767, p.220.

²⁵² *PMV/R*, K191, 6446 in 6500. On 13-14.4.1917.

²⁵³ *PMV/R*, K191, 6500.

²⁵⁴ *NFPN*, 16.4.1917, p.5. On 15.4.1917.

²⁵⁵ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10, 14.4.1917.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *PMV/R*, K191, 6028; 6446 in 6500.

²⁵⁸ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10, 14.4.1917.

²⁵⁹ *PMV/R*, K191, 6446 in 6500, *PDP*, 14.4.1917.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6205 in 6500.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 6446 in 6500.

April.²⁶² In fact they vigorously condemned such actions for political reasons, as they feared that concurrent unrest in Prague and calm in Vienna would serve the opponents of the Czechs and lead to a national disaster under current political circumstances.²⁶³ As a result, they vowed to exert a calming influence on the workers, and, accordingly, issued a message on 15 April in *Právo lidu*.²⁶⁴ Yet the authorities correctly suspected that the masses were increasingly dissatisfied with their traditional leadership and that the latter's influence was thus slipping away.²⁶⁵ Soukup himself implied this to Kunz.²⁶⁶

Ultimately, the predicted general strike did not occur, chiefly because the workers' delegations had agreed on a wage increase with their employers two days beforehand. Instead, work resumed without trouble.²⁶⁷ This settlement and its publication in *Právo lidu*'s appeal, along with the large mobilization of armed forces,²⁶⁸ had likely played a greater role in ending the movement than the Socialists' entreaties. For his part, Kestřánek believed that his journey to Vienna had had a cooling effect on the workers,²⁶⁹ while the governor thought that the declaration of the government concerning peace aims with Russia had contributed to appeasing them and to returning them to work.²⁷⁰ Thereupon, Karl intervened personally and gave orders for food supplies from the military storeroom in Prague to be distributed to the workers.²⁷¹ Kunz and Kestřánek both reported glowingly on the impact of this order, which, aside from improving the situation, "made an excellent impression" and left the workforce "very satisfied and happy".²⁷² Thus calm returned after only infrequent breaches of the peace,²⁷³ and Karl's prestige was boosted. Nevertheless, the lack of a solution to the food problem signified that this could be but a temporary reprieve, as the police conceded.²⁷⁴

Moreover, these strikes – more frequent, better attended and better prepared – had assumed a new dimension. Most significantly, they had occurred without the

²⁶² Ibid., 6205 in 6500.

²⁶³ Ibid., 6205, 6446 in 6500.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 6205 in 6500.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 6446 in 6500; 6028.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 6028.

²⁶⁷ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-2, 17.4.1917; *PMV/R*, K191, 6704.

²⁶⁸ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 11am.

²⁶⁹ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-2.

²⁷⁰ *PMV/R*, K191, 6446 in 6500, 15.4.1917.

²⁷¹ *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/31-2, 16.4.1917.

²⁷² *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-2; 28-2/10-3; 16, 17, 30.4.1917.

²⁷³ *SH*, 1767, p.221.

²⁷⁴ *PMV/R*, K191, 6704.

knowledge or support of the Socialist organizations. And although the police in Prague stressed emphatically that political tendencies were “non-existent” in the movement,²⁷⁵ these had undeniably played a part in both starting and ending it. Further signs of their existence were in evidence throughout Bohemia, even though hunger and money were the overwhelming factors in the exacerbation of unrest.²⁷⁶ In Žižkov, notices sprang up in several public places with the inscription: “The Czechs were forced to fight for the Germans even though their sympathies had long been with the Entente states. The Germans and nobody else are our fiercest enemies. They are the thieves of our language, the murderers of thousands of Czech people who have to bleed on the battlefield for them. [...] These scoundrels, starting with their emperor, want to Germanize us, they steal our last piece of bread just to pad their stomachs. Shame on all of you who deal with the Germans, you wretched servants of a suffering nation, you alone are the real traitors. Justice and fairness will prevail. The Entente states are still here, the powerful defenders of the small states and in particular of the Czech nation. They will inflict defeat on the German dogs, liberate the Bohemian lands, and create an independent country out of them.” They urged soldiers to surrender and ended with the exhortations: “Our future depends on the victory of the Entente, let us help them to victory. [...] Not a heller for the war loans! Down with Austria! Everything for the Czech state!”²⁷⁷ In addition, there were rumours of the existence in Bohemia of an organization with connections to Russia and Switzerland committed to freeing the Czechs from the Austrian yoke.²⁷⁸ Meanwhile, a military leader in Kladno reported that “Slavophile rabble-rousers” were active, in the form of female factory workers allegedly announcing the advent of a “large Slav state in which everything will be better”.²⁷⁹ In addition, minor provocations continued, such as the inscription in Dvůr Králové declaring: “Down with Karl, long live the Austro-Hungarian Republic!”²⁸⁰ However, these were still isolated incidents, and very few cases of a political nature went before the military courts.²⁸¹ The only charges brought

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6446 in 6500, 14.4.1917.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 6500; 6205 in 6500.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 6887, 9.4.1917.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7590.

²⁷⁹ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1747, 1775, p.217, p.222.

²⁸¹ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10; 28-2/10-3.

against the Prague strikers – three men from a phosphate plant in Bubeneč – were eventually dropped.²⁸²

In explaining the popular outburst, reports from the Bohemian governorate explicitly blamed the influence of the Russian Revolution and of the recent workers' movement in Germany.²⁸³ The events in Saint Petersburg had certainly roused the Czech masses, who had followed their development attentively, and especially their implications for peace. (The military command in Prague complained that the local civilian population was more quickly *au fait* with events on the front than official circles.)²⁸⁴ Indeed, the authorities believed that the movement had deliberately sought to support efforts to end the war.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, they rightly persisted in believing that the ripples from Russia were insufficient to trigger emulation.²⁸⁶ In fact, they harboured “justified hope” that the workers would show consideration for the current situation and for the needs of the state.²⁸⁷ Moreover, despite the rising tension in the crownland and the latent hostility between Czechs and Germans, there were no reports of clashes between them. Rather, there was a surge of anti-Semitism throughout all classes of the population, irrespective of nationality, as Jews were accused of shirking and profiteering.²⁸⁸ And despite the escalation and extent of the troubles, the authorities reacted cautiously and collectedly (if only out of fear), and bloodshed was avoided. Wary of radicalizing the masses further, they adopted a relatively mild attitude in response to the Russian Revolution; for example, in issuing guidelines for its public discussion, the ministry of the interior allowed it to be welcomed as a liberation and a step towards peace, and did not oppose declarations of sympathy for the proletariat.²⁸⁹ Since little could be done to improve the lot of the masses, this strategy at least avoided aggravating a situation which, though critical, remained under control. (Many workers saw this benevolent attitude as a sign of weakness.)²⁹⁰ Nevertheless, under such circumstances, proclaiming the octroi would be foolhardy, if not fatal.

²⁸² *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-3, 30.4; 28-2/10-4, 15.5.1917.

²⁸³ *PMV/R*, K191, 6589; *SH*, 1728, 1754, pp.215, 218.

²⁸⁴ *MRP*, K303, 2113, 14.3.1917.

²⁸⁵ *PMV/R*, K191, 6028 in 6500.

²⁸⁶ *MRP*, K305, 2720, *PDP*, 14.4.1917.

²⁸⁷ *PMV/R*, K191, 6446 in 6500, 15.4.1917.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *MI*, K2067, 5175, Handel to all provincial leaders, 12.4.1917.

²⁹⁰ *PMV/R*, K191, 7097, *PDP*, 22.4.1917.

Having now expected it apprehensively and increasingly defiantly for over three months, the Czechs had had time to prepare themselves and to organize resistance. Wedel informed Bethmann that they had forewarned of a general strike among miners and munitions workers if the octroi was proclaimed, while several newspapers in Prague hinted at the possibility of Czech and South Slav deputies reacting by relinquishing their mandates.²⁹¹ Meanwhile, the censor complained about polemic articles in the Czech press which discussed the octroi and the possibilities of a coalition cabinet.²⁹² Most significantly, during a plenary session amidst the troubles on 13 and 14 April, the Czech Union had been emboldened to pass a resolution urging action in the “Austrian confederation of states”, demanding at once democracy, parliamentary rule and constitutional changes according to the self-determination of nations.²⁹³ In his report to Coudenhove, Kunz stressed that the choice of the word “self-determination” (*sebeurčení*) instead of the technical term “autonomy” was not a case of linguistic purism but an emulation of the last announcement of the Russian Social Democrats; he added: “according to the Czechs [it] translates state-rights views and their practical execution within the framework of Austria – federalism – better than any other word.”²⁹⁴ He could have added that this also mirrored Wilsonian terminology. Although the use of the expression suggested an attempt to court the masses with the slogan of the day or to intimidate the government rather than a clearly defined political programme, it confirmed the budding radicalization of the Czech Union and demonstrated its increasing capacity for unity and adaptation. The exiles took heart from this statement, seeing it as the Union’s first manifesto to be “a little bit firm”.²⁹⁵ In any case, the opportune moment for the octroi had evidently passed. As Wedel pointed out, “if one has to and wants to strike somebody a blow, this is best done without delay. However, it is an unfortunate policy to announce the blow and then let the victims wait for it for a few months”.²⁹⁶

Nevertheless, Baernreither had travelled to Prague on 8 April, and despite observing the pervasive tension, had somehow gained the impression that an octroi was still

²⁹¹ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4.1917; *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/28.

²⁹² *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10.

²⁹³ *NFPM*, 15.4.1917, p.6.

²⁹⁴ *PMV/R*, K191, 7097, 22.4; *NFPM*, 15.4.1917, p.6.

²⁹⁵ Beneš, I, p.473.

²⁹⁶ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4.1917.

possible “within reasonable limits.”²⁹⁷ He informed Clam but conceded that this was already the eleventh hour. To most, however, the deadline for action had passed. Redlich, for instance, divulged to his friend Hermann Bahr that parliament was likely to reopen, as the government had all but failed to carry out the octroi.²⁹⁸ Still, the despondent prime minister kept up the pretence and dutifully submitted various finished drafts to Polzer to present to the emperor. On 11 April, the head of the private office went to Maribor to meet Karl, and, during the train journey back to Vienna, presented him with the proposals concerning the use of German as the internal language of administration and government, and concerning the division of Bohemia into administrative districts. He explained the measures to Karl paragraph by paragraph but, before he could finish his report, the emperor interrupted him and expressed his adamant refusal to breach the constitution.²⁹⁹ But since he had not sworn an oath to it – and indeed never would – he could not credibly use the pretext of constitutionality. Rather, this spurious legalistic argument provided Karl with the appearance of high-mindedness and a convenient justification to renege on a project which he distrusted and feared. Karl then set forth his opposition to abuses of Paragraph Fourteen. He added that he favoured removing the provision altogether as its existence and exploitation fatally undermined the constitution. As the journey continued, Karl asked Polzer for his views on the political situation; the latter expounded at length on the necessity for the government to abandon the octroi and to provide instead a clear and definite programme for the rehabilitation of Austria. Polzer indicated that: “He had more than once heard the emperor express his dislike for imperial ordinances in favour of one single nation.” Moreover, in preparation for coming peace negotiations, the government had all to gain by depriving the Entente of its propagandistic trump card, the championing of the minorities.³⁰⁰ Thus for reasons of domestic and foreign policy, the government needed to promise national autonomy within the framework of the state and to entrust parliament with the corresponding constitutional and administrative reforms. However, Polzer warned that the announcement of a detailed programme would inflame the national parties, and therefore suggested merely a broad and succinct outline. If the *Reichsrat* disagreed, Polzer proposed to make the prolonging of parliamentary mandates conditional upon

²⁹⁷ *NB*, K.11, p.34.

²⁹⁸ *RB*, Redlich-Bahr, 11.4.1917, p.220.

²⁹⁹ Polzer, pp.280-281.

³⁰⁰ Polzer, pp.281-282.

its cooperation and, failing that, to introduce proportional representation in order to bring the bourgeois parties to heel. Moreover, he wished to extend the abolition of historical state rights to Hungary and genuinely believed it could be achieved.³⁰¹ Karl apparently listened to Polzer “with breathless attention” and asked him to submit a draft manifesto summarizing his project, declaring: “The programme you have evolved is your programme, it is entirely in harmony with my intentions and no one has hitherto spoken to me on those lines.” Thereupon he ordered Polzer to go to Clam and instruct him to halt the octroi and to recall parliament.³⁰²

Karl’s deathly fear of revolution had convinced him of the absolute urgency of ending the war and of the need to abandon the octroi and to recall parliament in order to present a democratic veneer to the Allies before and during peace negotiations. Domestic developments since the fall of the tsar appeared to offer no alternative. Indeed, the food situation and associated unrest had worsened steadily and had spread far and wide in Austria. In fact, they had reached Karl’s doorstep. On 10 April, whilst away on his trip, sixty women had marched to Laxenburg to complain to him personally about the lack of potatoes, flour, bread, fat, milk, sugar and petrol, and to request his help.³⁰³ Two of them were received by the police representative but, meanwhile, several other groups from the outlying areas, comprising between fifty and two hundred women, also tried to make their way to the palace. They were talked out of it by the gendarmerie but they, too, were permitted to send small deputations. (Another group repeated this attempt the following day, as did 600 women on 17 April; on both occasions they were thwarted but small delegations were allowed in.)³⁰⁴ It is highly likely that Karl knew about the first incidents when he ordered Polzer to terminate the octroi,³⁰⁵ and such an occurrence would certainly have exacerbated his concerns and comforted him in his views.

However, the sudden confidence and resolve he displayed can only have occurred with Czernin’s explicit support or at his express instigation. Up to this point, despite his qualms and anxieties, the emperor had merely signified his circumspection without issuing consequent instructions. But by now, as his foreign minister had decided on the discontinuance of the programme, Karl was able to confirm its

³⁰¹ Polzer, pp.282-283.

³⁰² Polzer, pp.283-284.

³⁰³ *MI*, K2131, 5995.

³⁰⁴ *MI*, K2131, 5995.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.* On 10.4, the policeman on duty had reported the first day’s incidents directly to the emperor’s private office.

suspension. Arguments against it were compelling and manifold. Firstly, the Russian Revolution had emboldened the Slavs and stirred the increasingly war-weary, hungry and volatile masses; as Czernin realized even before troubles peaked in mid-April, the octroi would assuredly inflame the situation further. Meanwhile, political enthusiasm for the measure had waned; several non-Bohemian *Nationalverband* members and virtually all Christian Socials no longer considered it a necessary prerequisite, and the Poles now refused to play their part. In any case, the octroi as coveted by the nationalists was unfeasible due to the insolubility of the Galician question. Furthermore, after the fall of tsarism, and at a time when even Germany was announcing democratic reforms,³⁰⁶ the arbitrary promulgation of an uncompromisingly pro-German decree would seem untimely and incongruous.³⁰⁷ Indeed, Czernin did not fail to point out to Wedel that these developments in Germany, which had shocked many German Austrians, were the favoured argument of the octroi's opponents; Tucher concurred, adding that this had made the hesitant government even more pensive.³⁰⁸ Crucially, the octroi intimated subservience to Berlin and stood in complete contradiction to the slogans of self-determination bellowed by Russian revolutionaries and by Wilson. Only Baernreither could believe that his octroi would pass "without international indignation".³⁰⁹ Rather, it would threaten any peace negotiations with the enemy and potentially condemn the Empire in the event of defeat, which Czernin believed inevitable unless the war ended swiftly. To this end, the Social Democrats, on whom he counted to appease the workers and to bait the Russians, represented his greatest hope. Accordingly, when Renner, Adler and Seitz told him on 11 April that the party opposed the octroi due to the circumstances arising from the Russian Revolution, he assured them that it would not see the light of day as long as he stayed in office.³¹⁰ In his desperation for peace,³¹¹ he had sacrificed the project.

Despite repeated setbacks and his resultant gloom, Czernin had not yet despaired of achieving his chief aim. Firstly, on 10 April, he had allowed Social

³⁰⁶ *NFPM*, 15.3, pp.2-3; 8.4, pp.6-7. After Bethmann's announcement of constitutional reform on 14.3, Wilhelm, in his "Easter Message" of 7.4, promised substantial constitutional changes after the war, notably the abrogation of the three-class franchise system in the Prussian Diet.

³⁰⁷ Polzer, p.279.

³⁰⁸ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4; *MA*, 2481/5, Tucher-Ludwig, 31.3.1917.

³⁰⁹ *NB*, K11, p.38.

³¹⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S136, 11.4.1917.

³¹¹ *RT*, II, 16.4.1917, p.288.

Democratic leaders to travel to Berlin to confer with their German counterparts in order to encourage the renunciation of annexations, though he almost certainly expected them to work beyond socialist circles and informed Gottfried Hohenlohe that, although the men were travelling in their own names, they had his full approval and were therefore to be assisted in every respect.³¹² From there, he expected them to head to Stockholm for an International Socialist Conference, where he hoped they would broker peace with the Russian delegation, although, in the end, the gathering was postponed.³¹³ Secondly, he still entertained the possibility of dealing with Paris;³¹⁴ Sixtus remained his only channel after the failure of the Mensdorff initiative but, as far as he knew, the Prince's mission was ongoing and promising. However, for either matter to come to fruition, German concessions were required. In a renewed attempt to obtain these, Czernin presented Karl with a bleak and foreboding memorandum on 12 April, and requested he pass it on to Wilhelm. His tone was glummer than ever. Austria's military strength was coming to an end due to the increasing lack of raw materials for the production of munitions and the exhaustion of manpower, but even more significant was "the dull despair that pervades all classes owing to under-nourishment and renders impossible any further endurance of the sufferings from the war." He thought Germany no better off, and prophesied: "If the monarchs of the Central Powers are not able to conclude peace within the next few months, it will be done for them by their people, and the tide of revolution will sweep away all that for which our brothers and sons are still fighting and dying." Come autumn, the war would have to be ended at all costs; thereafter, Germany could no longer count on her ally. (Though this resembled a threat to conclude a separate peace, Czernin stressed that Austria-Hungary had already refused several such offers.) Calling attention to the inconclusiveness of the *U-Boot* campaign, he urged the initiation of peace negotiations before the Entente recognized the Central Powers' dire situation and benefited decisively from American intervention. Nevertheless, he expected that great sacrifices would be required.³¹⁵ And for once, Czernin underscored Austria-Hungary's desperate straits without attempting to secure generous terms in case of victory. In his accompanying letter to Wilhelm, Karl fully endorsed the view of his minister: famine was breeding an international revolution –

³¹² *PA*, I, K956, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe and Széchényi, 11.4.1917.

³¹³ *HL*, p.834, Schoen-Hertling, 11.4.1917.

³¹⁴ Czernin, p.150.

³¹⁵ Czernin, pp.146-150.

an enemy more dangerous than the Entente – and only a rapid, if painful, peace could avert this.³¹⁶

This was an especially candid admission of weakness, which disconcerted even Austro-Hungarian statesmen.³¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Germans once again proved unreceptive to Austrian pleas and believed that Czernin had “completely lost his nerve” and that it would require “a good and proper injection of camphor to get him going again”.³¹⁸ They refused to believe that a revolution could take place in the Habsburg Empire, as Zimmermann made clear: “I consider it impossible that in archducal Austria, in Tyrol, Carinthia, Styria and in Hungary there is any thought of removing the monarchy.”³¹⁹ Even Clam confided to Wedel his certainty that Czernin’s fears were exaggerated and that he had gone too far in his desperation for peace. The ambassador did not need convincing; he had long seen through Czernin’s strategy, and once again reported to Berlin that, despite undeniable local disgruntlement, there were no revolutionary movements in Austria and that the foreign minister was merely trying to intimidate Germany into making sacrifices in Alsace-Lorraine.³²⁰ Thus, despite the palpable distress and urgency of the memorandum, Bethmann took almost a month to respond. His answer, and Wilhelm’s appended note, dismissed Austrian fears and firmly reiterated the German belief in a final triumph.³²¹ Czernin and Karl’s strivings for peace and Berlin’s war aims remained irreconcilable. However, although the Germans were no more inclined to heed the concerns of their ally, they did begin seriously to doubt its reliability; as Wedel wrote to Bethmann: “I have often heard it said in Germany that Austria was completely dependent on us, that whether she wanted to or not, she had to follow and obey us. That was once correct. But whoever thinks that this still applies today misjudges the situation.”³²²

The repealing of the octroi was a sign that Vienna, however reluctantly, was loosening its bond with Germany and its own German nationalist elements in order to save the Monarchy. Accordingly, the liquidation of the measure was afoot. As soon as

³¹⁶ Reproduced in: Ludendorff, *Urkunden der Obersten Heeresleitung über ihre Tätigkeit 1916-1918* (Berlin, 1920) pp.374-375.

³¹⁷ Czernin, p.154. Tisza, for instance.

³¹⁸ W2G, 33, Zimmermann-Wedel, 17.4.1917; Polzer, p.245; Bethmann, II, p.202.

³¹⁹ W2G, 33, Zimmermann-Wedel, 17.4.1917.

³²⁰ W2G, 33, Wedel to Bethmann, 18.4.1917.

³²¹ Czernin, p.150; Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, pp.378-383. The answer, written on 4.5, arrived a week later.

³²² Ö95, 22, Wedel-Bethmann, 15.4.1917.

he arrived in Vienna, Polzer called on the prime minister as instructed, and informed him of the emperor's decision.³²³ Clam was apparently unsurprised and unmoved. He had known for over a month that Karl distrusted the project and that Czernin, too, had cooled on the issue since the Russian Revolution. In any case, Clam himself had never been an independent driving force behind the octroi and, according to Polzer, he agreed plainly that it should not be carried out. The head of the private office then outlined in general terms his thoughts on the internal reorganization of the Monarchy. Polzer claimed that Clam believed the idea to be objectively right, despite concerns about its impact in Hungary.³²⁴ Nevertheless, Polzer was impressed by his interlocutor's ostensible open-mindedness. As he recalled: "I got the feeling that he was honestly concerned with the business at hand, and that the peculiarity, so often to be observed among statesmen, of turning down other people's ideas merely because they are not their own, was alien to his character, and that he, being concerned only for the welfare of Austria, would gladly accept help from any quarter."³²⁵

Clam certainly needed all the help he could get; the *raison d'être* of his government had disappeared along with its chief policy. In the face of this adversity, he chose to bury his head in the sand, and for several days he dared not reveal to any of his ministers the turn of events. Lacking the courage to inform them that months of work had gone up in smoke, he sat idly, possibly praying for a reprieve. After all, he had only heard the information second-hand from Polzer and might have hoped that Karl (or, more importantly, Czernin) would change his mind, or that extraneous events would come to his rescue. Meanwhile, the cabinet remained wholly unaware of the upheaval.³²⁶ Supporters of the octroi in particular remained confident that their endeavours would bear fruit, though their impatience began to show. On 12 April, the *Nationalverband* urgently reiterated its demands for the implementation of the "long-promised" reforms.³²⁷ The same day, Biliński met Handel to discuss details of the special status of Galicia.³²⁸ Urban later indicated that work thereon had continued

³²³ Polzer, pp.283-284. The date is unclear from Polzer's account. The train back from Maribor had left early on 11.4, and his conversation with Karl lasted from 10:15 to 14:30. Once in Laxenburg, he immediately notified Clam of his arrival "in the afternoon" and proceeded to Vienna. It is therefore conceivable that this was still on 11.4.

³²⁴ *Ibid.* Clam pointed out that Polzer's plan mirrored that of Franz Ferdinand.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *SM*, pp.162-163. Spitzmüller, for instance.

³²⁷ *NFPM*, 13.4.1917, p.6.

³²⁸ *NFPM*, 14.4.1917, p.6.

until the very end, and that there existed a version of the drafts dated 11 April.³²⁹ On 12 April, he assured the *Nationalverband* that the government's timetable remained unchanged, and, as late as 13 April, he told Redlich that the Bohemian question would be swiftly resolved in favour of the Germans so that parliament could be reconvened.³³⁰ When Clam met Baernreither the following afternoon, he spent an hour and a half running through the completed proposals with him, without giving any indication that the situation had changed or that he thought any differently about the matter. When he hinted vaguely that circumstances might arise that could prevent his carrying out the octroi, Baernreither responded that such a case would put him, as prime minister, in an untenable situation; Clam seemed to agree that this was self-evident.³³¹ Thus when the emperor confirmed the news to him in person during a private audience the following day, Clam voiced his misgivings and offered to stand down.³³² This demeanour suggested that he had not, indeed, considered Polzer's prior announcement to be definitive; only upon hearing the emperor's words did he grasp the fate of the octroi and act accordingly. But Karl, although he had in effect just removed Clam's legitimacy and credibility as prime minister, refused his resignation, stating that he would only reappoint him thereafter.³³³ A despondent Clam then took himself to Handel's, broke the news to him, and suggested that the whole government step down.³³⁴

The cabinet would have been well advised to do so; for weeks it had been a mere phantom, powerless, illusory and irrelevant. Its work had been voided by foreign policy, and its authority superseded by Czernin's. Whilst it toiled away on controversial, Byzantine, time-consuming, often purely academic and at times plainly insoluble domestic issues, the pragmatic Czernin considered only the immediate reality: Austria-Hungary needed peace before starvation brought about revolution and disintegration. Given free rein by Karl to fulfil his mission, and yet unable to obtain meaningful diplomatic results, his only resort was to thwart a domestic policy which threatened to make his task impossible. In so doing, he emasculated the Austrian government and rendered its work redundant.

³²⁹ Molisch, *Geschichte*, pp.251-252. Personal statement by Urban to Molisch.

³³⁰ *NFPM*, 13.4, p.6; *RT*, II, 16.4.1917, p.288.

³³¹ *NB*, K11, p.34.

³³² *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, pp.291-292.

³³³ *NB*, K11, pp.35-36; *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, p.292. Redlich commented dryly: "Such is the emperor's conception of governing: the naming and sacking of ministers as he sees fit!"

³³⁴ *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, p.292.

In addition, the cabinet's battered reputation had been further tainted in early April by the involvement of three of its ministers in the high-profile trial of profiteer Josef Kranz, who had, amongst others things, provided beer for the army at inflated prices.³³⁵ Czernin, who had used his services in the past, wanted the charges quashed, as did Clam. Spitzmüller, who had also dealt with him, favoured this option, but soon found himself in the thick of the scandal. When Krobotin – who as minister of war had signed the incriminating contract with Kranz – thoughtlessly transmitted a note to the investigating magistrate appearing to defend the accused, Schenk, the minister of justice, called upon his old friend Spitzmüller for help. Both men then turned to Karl, who ordered them to arrange the matter so as to avoid implicating Krobotin, wherefore the damning note was removed and replaced. But the secret soon got out, and Krobotin, Spitzmüller and Schenk were all called to testify as witnesses.³³⁶ The trial caused a sensation, and damaged both the public perception and political credibility of the government.³³⁷ Eventually, Karl dismissed Krobotin (whose removal he had long desired),³³⁸ but refused Schenk's resignation.³³⁹ Opprobrium aside, the trial also soured ministerial relations. In attempting to stop the trial, Czernin had sought to compromise Spitzmüller, who had consequently threatened to stand down.³⁴⁰ But “under the impression of Karl's charm”, he had resolved to stay, though he later regretted the decision. Czernin attempted unconvincingly to justify his actions to his colleague but nevertheless avoided any contact with him thereafter. Moreover, as Spitzmüller wrote, “the relationship of confidence which had reigned heretofore between the prime minister on the one hand, and the minister of justice and me on the other, was overshadowed by clouds which could not be dispersed.”³⁴¹

The liquidation of the octroi

Divided, helpless, aimless, publicly discredited and almost universally maligned, the government had effectively ceased to function. But instead of administering the

³³⁵ *SM*, pp.172-173; *NFPA*, 4.4, p.1. Kranz received a nine-month prison sentence and a 20,000-crown fine.

³³⁶ *SM*, pp.173-175.

³³⁷ *RT*, II, 11.4, p.287; *NB*, K11, p.106.

³³⁸ *MA*, 2481/5, Hoffmann-Ludwig, 14.4.1917.

³³⁹ *NFPA*, 11.4.1917, p.3; *MRP*, K302, 1911.

³⁴⁰ *SM*, p.175.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.176-177.

required *coup de grâce* to his cabinet, Karl, by refusing to dismiss Clam, had propped up its lifeless body. Maintained against his will, the prime minister at least began to face up to his responsibilities. On 16 April, he went round to Baernreither's at 9.30 and finally explained that he had to abandon his intention of decreeing an octroi.³⁴² Nevertheless, it was left to Czernin to act as the policy's official executioner. At 11.00, the foreign minister appeared at the Austrian ministerial council (despite having no function there)³⁴³ and gave a two-hour talk³⁴⁴ in which he declared that three reasons prevented the proclamation of the octroi for the time being. First of all, he cited the effect of the Russian Revolution in Austria, and although he believed dynastic loyalty to be stronger in the Dual Monarchy, he thought it unwise to go against prevailing democratic trends and to ignore the fact that a new world had emerged since the beginning of the war. (This contradicted his announcement that the withdrawal of the octroi was temporary, which nobody present in any case believed.) Secondly, he had sent a Socialist delegation to the international conference in Stockholm to make contact with its Russian counterpart and to initiate peace talks, and thereby reinforce the pro-peace party in Russia. Therefore, no domestic policy could be carried out which would be seen as unconstitutional by the Austrian Socialists and anti-Slav by the Russians. Thirdly, with the end of the war approaching, Austria had to avoid giving the impression that she was unshakeably bound to her ally. The Entente now saw the conflict as a world crusade against Germany and would be discouraged from negotiating with her vassal; the octroi would be seen as a *diktat* from Berlin and only reinforce this image of Austria.³⁴⁵

Although these words were later verified by Baernreither, Spitzmüller and Urban (who were all in attendance),³⁴⁶ Czernin repudiated them in his memoirs. Though he admitted to annulling the octroi in the ministerial council, he refuted the idea that this was connected to the Socialist peace mission to Sweden. As intended proof, he included an undated letter he had allegedly written to Tisza, in which he vigorously denied the link.³⁴⁷ He explained: "I do not want the octroi, as you know, but this has absolutely no relation to Stockholm, the Socialists or peace." In fact, the complete opposite was true: he wanted the octroi and had cancelled it with all three in

³⁴² *NB*, K11, p.34.

³⁴³ *SM*, p.163.

³⁴⁴ *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, pp.292-293.

³⁴⁵ *NB*, K11, pp.34-35.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*; *SM*, p.163; Molisch, *Geschichte*, p.252. Personal statement by Urban to Molisch.

³⁴⁷ Letter in: Czernin, pp.168-169.

mind. His distorted reminiscence of the event crumbles under the weight of his colleagues' testimonies but, as Spitzmüller wrote, "this was probably related to his desire to convince [Tisza] that he was not working together with the Social Democrats", adding that Czernin had "attempted to exonerate himself in every way possible in his memoirs".³⁴⁸ Czernin freely admitted that he had spoken with Austrian Social Democratic leaders and granted them passports to go to Stockholm. But since they had wished to attend the conference of their own volition, he denied instigating the move to the Hungarian prime minister. Moreover, he explained to him that he expected the venture to fail but that in permitting their travel, he wished to prove that he had tried all expedients in seeking an end to the war. He certainly disapproved of a general socialist peace, hoped the conference would fail and even sought to compromise it surreptitiously.³⁴⁹ Irrespective of these intrigues, however, the presence in Sweden of the Social Democrats was part of Czernin's scheme to reach out to the Russians and to exert pressure on the Germans. He had therefore worked to secure their cooperation, so that they left Vienna as government representatives in all but name. Moreover, he hoped that his conciliatory attitude would help placate the party and its mass following, even though it inevitably bemused some of its members.³⁵⁰ Whether or not Czernin initiated their trip, he certainly encouraged, endorsed, organized and exploited it. And to the ministerial council he explained that this collaboration necessitated the forsaking of the octroi.³⁵¹ This was a highly plausible proviso in view of Social Democratic reservations towards the measure, but Czernin, who had manifold reasons for cancelling it, made sure he highlighted this point. In portraying himself as a hostage to leftist blackmail, he could seek a degree of exculpation from the nationalists.

Nevertheless, the annulment of the octroi was his decision alone. His transformation from apostle to hangman was progressive but swift. Though full of bluster in January, he gave the first indication in early March that foreign policy might stall the plan temporarily and that time was running out for its implementation. (He even presented Karl with a toned-down version.) Meanwhile, Bethmann's announcement of constitutional democratization in Prussia did not help matters. And

³⁴⁸ *SM*, pp.163-164.

³⁴⁹ *PA*, I, K958, Czernin-Pallavicini, 10.5.1917.

³⁵⁰ *MRP*, K303, 2196.

³⁵¹ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 28.4.1917. After this, he told Hohenlohe that they now only demanded the declaration of peace without annexations as the price of their cooperation.

events in Russia, which promised peace but threatened proliferation, further sobered Czernin, who sensed that the octroi could imperil the former and accelerate the latter. In the meantime, the failure of his negotiations with the Germans and the growing unrest in the Bohemian lands consolidated these respective fears, and prodded him towards the Social Democrats, who in turn put pressure on him to abandon the plan. He confided to Baernreither that the fortnight following the Russian Revolution had rather complicated the matter. Indeed, by the end of the month, the programme had effectively run aground, but still Czernin took no action and urged work on it to continue. After all, even though he already thought its postponement wise, he still had a strategy for peace which did not require its outright cancellation, and the internal explosion he feared had not taken place. But, despite his apparent satisfaction with the Homburg talks on 3 April, the confirmed failure of the Mensdorff mission the following day and the American declaration of war on 6 April finished off his illusions. Wilhelm's "Easter Message" the following day, which confirmed the chancellor's promises of reform in Prussia, made the octroi increasingly unjustifiable. Suffering from nervous exhaustion and staring at an increasingly cheerless domestic situation, Czernin resigned himself to abrogating the octroi. Karl and Hohenlohe, whose approval was certain, were quickly informed.³⁵² On 9 April, when the emperor set off to visit the Italian Front,³⁵³ he must already have been aware of his minister's conclusion because on the return journey two days later, he was in a position to pass it off as his own to Polzer.³⁵⁴ At the same time, Czernin promised the Social Democrat leaders that no octroi would occur during his tenure, but he had certainly made up his mind beforehand. This places Czernin's decision between 30 March and 9 April. And irrespective of whether he was sincerely heartened or secretly crushed by his time at German headquarters, it most likely came after 6 April and the dual blow from Bern and Washington. On 7 April, however, Karl remained mute when Renner revealed the Socialists' unconditional rejection of the plan. If this was not compelling enough to repudiate it, the severing of diplomatic relations with the United States, and the Petrograd Soviet's offer of peace in return for the renunciation of annexations and

³⁵² *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, p.292. Redlich wrote: "14 days ago [10.4], Hohenlohe had said to Handel-Mazzetti that the octroi could no longer take place".

³⁵³ *NM*, 9.4; *FBM*, 12.4.1917, p.2. Karl left on 9.4, arriving in Adelsberg in Carniola early on 10.4.

³⁵⁴ *WZ*, 12.4.1917, pp.6. 9. And as soon as he returned from his visit to the front – he arrived in Laxenburg on 11 April at 2pm – Karl received Czernin in audience.

reparations, certainly were. Czernin was in any case free of this burden on 10 April when he launched his fresh attempt to get Berlin to act upon Russian overtures.

Nothing that happened between his final decision and his announcement in the ministerial council could have convinced him to reverse the decision. On the contrary, events in Prague, the uncompromising stance of the Social Democrats and the failure to induce the Germans to make a conciliatory declaration towards Russia can only have strengthened his resolve. For a month, arguments against the octroi had accumulated in his mind, but the American declaration of war provided perhaps the most tangible justification for its renunciation, and probably tipped the scales. (Protests from the Czech Union, on the other hand, had no impact.) Decreeing it thereafter would merely vindicate *émigré* propagandists and remove the case for the continued existence of Austria-Hungary in the event of an increasingly likely defeat at the hands of the Allies. Desperate for peace in the east as a result, he had no hesitation in complying with Social Democratic demands. Having ostensibly come to terms with the irrevocable socio-political changes engendered by the war,³⁵⁵ he was able to relinquish a measure he had long cherished in order to avert revolution and help obtain peace (or at least secure an acceptable negotiating position). Against his own aristocratic, arch-conservative and pro-German disposition, and belief in the *bien-fondé* of the octroi, Czernin acted grudgingly, but pragmatically.

Karl, however, must have rejoiced in this disburdenment. Never an outright champion or opponent of the policy – though he had, undeniably, supported some of its provisions – his distrust had grown along the same lines as Czernin's. But despite his increasing doubts, he had interfered with its development only belatedly and meekly and, in the end, he played only a small part in its revocation. Notwithstanding the growing apprehension towards it in his entourage, he had lacked the courage and enterprise to take action. By his own admission in exile, he “dragged out the final decision until Czernin announced after the Russian Revolution that foreign policy matters had now made this absolutist act impossible.”³⁵⁶ The emperor's disinclination towards the programme had long been perceptible to his collaborators, though to differing degrees. Assertive when talking to known opponents of the plan such as Polzer and Spitzmüller, he was less explicit when confronted with its exponents.

³⁵⁵ Czernin, p.147, pp.168-169.

³⁵⁶ UR, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.610.

Baernreither and Urban frequently noticed his reticence,³⁵⁷ but only in early March did he make an open confession of uncertainty, to Clam and Czernin. Baernreither remarked at the time: “Thus the matter entered a new stage. The central figure, the emperor, appears on the scene.” Karl’s tentative pronouncement – almost three months into the cabinet’s tenure – first derailed the octroi, but it was neither spontaneous nor independent, since Karl was simply echoing the reservations expressed by Czernin to Baernreither three days earlier. Moreover, Karl immediately appeared to endorse an amended version of the plan. Shortly after, however, the fall of the tsar stiffened Karl’s resolve through fear.³⁵⁸ Therefore, his circumspection had barely troubled the nationalists; as Baernreither later admitted: “Until that point I believed that there would have been no difficulties in obtaining the emperor’s consent to a properly well-founded octroi.”³⁵⁹ (He blamed Czernin’s contempt for details and Clam’s vacillating manner for failing to do so.)³⁶⁰ Although this was somewhat optimistic considering Karl’s fundamental misgivings,³⁶¹ there is no evidence to suggest that he would have intervened unless compelled to by external events and supported by Czernin. But for these developments, Karl would presumably have acquiesced, albeit hesitantly. Indeed, as long as the octroi did not appear to endanger the obtainment of peace or the stability of the Empire, Karl countenanced it. And even when these concerns materialized, he waited to take his cue from Czernin. Overwhelmingly preoccupied by the issue of peace, and trusting his minister’s strategy and ability to achieve it, Karl allowed him to direct almost single-handedly the domestic and foreign policy of Austria. In so doing, Karl attenuated his own responsibility, and had neither to announce nor to justify the suspension of the octroi. This also enabled him to dissemble the extent of his aversion towards the policy and thus to avoid the brunt of subsequent nationalist discontent.

Several months later, Polzer confessed to Baernreither that Karl had never been fully resolved to go ahead with the octroi.³⁶² Yet in his first weeks in power, the emperor had let go of Koerber and Spitzmüller – two adversaries of rule by decree –

³⁵⁷ *NB*, K11, p.30. Baernreither wrote: “Towards us German ministers, Karl was very guarded concerning the national-political proposals.”

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Baernreither conceded that after the revolution Karl was increasingly exposed to opposing tendencies and that only a very strong influence could have won him over to the octroi.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.28.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp.30, 38, 47-48.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.28. Indeed, in the margin of his manuscript, a pencilled annotation, seemingly that of an otherwise friendly reviewer or editor, reads: “quite wrong”.

³⁶² *Ibid.* p.30.

and had knowingly appointed an almost exclusively German government whose primary aim was to enforce it. And in Konrad Hohenlohe, he had chosen a man who in his recent tenure as minister of the interior had attempted to fulfil the desires of the German nationalists and of the army high command by drawing up plans for a radical octroi. By way of exoneration for these nominations and for his ensuing inaction, Karl claimed that he had had no choice but to yield to nationalist demands. In his brief recollections, he explained that: “this German desire could not be fought openly because the national feeling of the Germans in Austria and their incredibly childish imperiousness had increased tremendously due to German victories and that, in this unfortunate war ‘shoulder to shoulder’, our Germans in Austria could not be obviously snubbed.”³⁶³ This was a somewhat disingenuous elucidation, for Karl had chosen three such “Germans” as his closest collaborators: Czernin, Clam and Hohenlohe. Once in place, they had little difficulty in prevailing upon him to pursue the German course. His lack of political education and absence of dogmatic convictions always left him vulnerable to outside influences and events. Undoubtedly, he was wary of antagonizing the obstreperous German nationalists who, in late 1916, were especially jingoistic and cocksure of military victory. Moreover, he probably underestimated the extent of Czech hostility to the plan, and lacked in-depth knowledge of Bohemian conditions and of the intricacies of the programme. In any case, the government would need German support in the prospective Pole-free *Reichsrat*. Thus, whatever Karl’s personal thoughts on the internal reorganization of the Monarchy, he had eschewed them with scant hesitation when persuaded of the necessity of the octroi. The influence of his advisers and his legitimate apprehension of German disgruntlement, combined with his aversion to conflict, his inexperience and malleability, ensured his compliance. He was scarcely more confident by the spring of 1917 when circumstances exposed the folly of this policy, but Czernin came to his rescue. Karl’s own unflattering version of events was largely correct: he deplored much of the octroi (by April in any case) but dared not oppose it for fear of German protestations, and had to wait for external events to discredit it and for Czernin to liquidate it.

³⁶³ UR, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.610.

Empowered by the emperor, Czernin had no scruples about dictating internal policy, boldly irrupting in a domestic ministerial council in order to lay waste its chief programme. As Spitzmüller wrote, “the entire incident illustrates painfully how greatly the policy of Clam lacked independence and a concept of its own.”³⁶⁴ Indeed, the government’s manifesto had originally been dictated by the imperatives of the German nationalists and now found itself subordinated to foreign policy. In the process, Clam went from puppet to lame duck. Appointed to preside over the enforcement of the octroi, the prime minister never appeared fit for purpose. He had been expected to facilitate Czech acceptance of the measure, but had instead angered and alienated them; now his failure threatened to arouse German ire as well. Moreover, his lethargy – only partly the result of poor health – had disappointed and surprised his supporters. As Baernreither put it: “One had expected too energetic an action rather than the opposite.”³⁶⁵ Despite being the official standard-bearer of the octroi policy, he was ineffectual, wavering and lacking in leadership. In fact, his conduct was suspiciously remiss. From the outset, he was oddly uncooperative, refusing to hand over the octroi drafts, and allowing ministerial councils to get bogged down in technicalities. Considering the deep inner conflicts that bedevilled him, it is conceivable that these were dilatory tactics intended to stall the octroi. Not only did he drag his feet and hinder its progress, he made no attempt to gain public or political approval for the project. Had he wished to put a spoke in the wheels of the octroi covertly, he could scarcely have employed a better method. Enraged by his front-line experiences, he had come to promote the programme, but inwardly, he knew it had little chance of settling the Czecho-German dispute. He might also have begun to feel guilty about imposing this *ukase* on his compatriots. Unlike Czernin, fear of revolution did not contribute to his feelings towards the measure;³⁶⁶ his concerns were more fundamental. As time went by, his commitment drifted ever more; Baernreither sensed his own influence on him ebbing away until it finally disappeared.³⁶⁷ When the project first stumbled, Clam promptly watered it down, and when cancellation beckoned, he put up no resistance, even nodding his agreement to Polzer’s federalist proposals. His elusive behaviour in the following days betrayed his inner torment, and

³⁶⁴ *SM*, p.163.

³⁶⁵ *NB*, K11, pp.24-25.

³⁶⁶ *W2G*, 33, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4.1917. On 15 April, Clam again told Wedel that there was no will for revolution in Austria, not even among the socialists.

³⁶⁷ *NB*, K7, 8.7.1917.

when the definitive verdict arrived, he offered a perfunctory resignation but eventually stayed put and endorsed the decision.³⁶⁸ Though he had to feign dissatisfaction, this outcome undoubtedly relieved him of his predicament.

His compunction was understandable, for the octroi programme was in essence an arbitrary, inequitable and one-sided fulfilment of longstanding Germans ambitions, principally at the expense of the Czechs. It was a decisive step in their reassertion of the inalienably German character of Austria in the face of rising Slav aspirations. To claim, as Baernreither did, that the drafts of April 1917 were well-balanced and offered the prospect of internal pacification,³⁶⁹ revealed either delusion or dishonesty. The modifications they had undergone since December, though moderating,³⁷⁰ had been devised in a vacuum, heedless of the evolving social, economic, political and diplomatic realities. Despite the weakening of the German position in the meantime, they still made no serious attempt at conciliation. As a result, their content remained unacceptable to the non-Germans and could but aggravate the nationality conflict. To think otherwise was seriously to misjudge the spirit of the time. For instance, no non-German nation would now acquiesce in the introduction of German as the official internal language of Austria (even though in certain forms, the measure was not without its logic), and no amount of tinkering could make the plan for the administrative carving up of Bohemia palatable to the Czechs, whose intransigence regarding the indivisibility of lands of the crown of Saint Wenceslas was as unbendingly dogmatic as their opponents' insistence on the octroi. (And lest the Slovenes and the Italians benefit from its provisions in their homelands, a legalistic legerdemain ensured that the programme applied only to Bohemia.) The octroi unblushingly served the interests of the German minority in Bohemia while sparing the German majority elsewhere. Despite its public cloaking in euphemistic phrases and its promotion as a matter of national interest, there was little doubt as to the nature and purpose of the measure, or indeed as to its reception. With the possible exception of Baernreither, proponents of the octroi in government were under no illusion. The prime minister himself understood better than anyone that it was grievous and intolerable to the Czechs. Handel, who had elaborated the first drafts,

³⁶⁸ Czernin, p.168. In his letter to Tisza, Czernin wrote: "The only one who seems to share my viewpoint fully is, apart from Trnka, prime minister Clam."

³⁶⁹ *NB*, K11, p.38.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Baernreither conceded that the original proposals would have "blown up the state".

also believed that they would not assent to the plan, irrespective of any concessions.³⁷¹ Czernin too knew that it was not a just arbitration, and after the war he discouraged Baernreither from publishing its details, pointing out that the Czechs “could hardly find a fair compromise” in the plan and warning that they might use it against their political opponents.³⁷² Even Wedel acknowledged this, writing to Bethmann: “The planned octroi was a blow for a large part of the citizens of Austria.”³⁷³ Far from pacification, the octroi was thinly veiled repression, and certainly no resolution of the issues at hand.

Nevertheless, had it acted promptly, the government could have succeeded in proclaiming the measure (minus the Galician provisions). Between January and March it had a window, but failed to exploit it. (Many contended that the best time for the octroi would have been in 1915, after the military victories against Serbia or Russia, or Italy’s declaration of war.)³⁷⁴ The inadequacy of the previous drafts, the belated start to their reworking and the lack of energetic leadership fatally delayed the octroi. Baernreither squarely blamed Clam for this lag: “In these first six weeks of his tenure, he lost the game.”³⁷⁵ Subsequently, as the certainty of victory receded and the fear of collapse took hold, the octroi lost prominent backers one by one. By April, only the most fervent nationalists were still ready to fight for it. Czernin, however, understood the need for compromise, in order to appease the minorities at home, to undermine their representatives abroad and, above all, to convince the Allies of Austria-Hungary’s egalitarian domestic policies and independence from Berlin. Admittedly, having killed the octroi, Czernin stopped short of burying it. But his declaration that it was only temporarily unenforceable seemed little more than a cursory placation of its supporters. In the way of their plans there now stood a Slav-dominated parliament, Social Democratic opposition, Christian Social indifference, a reluctant prime minister, a distrustful and fearful emperor, and a realistic foreign minister.

³⁷¹ *NH*, K1, pp.125, 129.

³⁷² *NB*, K12, Czernin’s commentary on Baernreither’s planned book about Clam, 22.2.1922.

³⁷³ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4.1917.

³⁷⁴ *NB*, K11, p.40; Krauß, p.79; FJ, II, 11.1916, p.416; Cramon, p.88; Burián, pp.156-157. Baernreither, Krauß, Koerber and Cramon, for example. Curiously (and with hindsight), Burián argued that, in 1915, the Czechs should have been granted by octroi all the concessions offered in previous negotiations, since these could not be refused indefinitely.

³⁷⁵ *NB*, K11, p.20.

The demise of the octroi caused some surprise in the ministerial council,³⁷⁶ but although Czernin claimed to have felt like Daniel in the lions' den,³⁷⁷ the general reaction was in fact muted. Indeed, many of the ministers were relieved by the announcement.³⁷⁸ As the emperor's reservations were now well known to them³⁷⁹ and as the prime minister himself did not oppose the change of course, there was a silent acquiescence in the decision.³⁸⁰ Only Baernreither protested, vehemently and at length. In particular, he asked Czernin whether the argument concerning Germany – expressed rather nebulously – signified disassociation from Berlin, which the latter vigorously denied. When Clam confirmed that he sanctioned Czernin's judgement, Baernreither, Urban and Bobrzyński declared that they reserved the right to decide any further action themselves. In fact, Baernreither resolved to stand down immediately and attempted to convince Clam of the necessity for the entire cabinet to follow suit, but the latter refused to abandon his master. Urban and Bobrzyński, however, agreed to quit.³⁸¹ Along with Baernreither, they had been the strongest proponents of the octroi in the cabinet and their presence therein had been chiefly for the purpose of its execution. Having failed in their mission, the men felt unable to continue. On the other hand, Handel, since he represented no constituency or party, decided “not to aggravate the current embarrassment by following these gentlemen in their resignation”.³⁸²

In contrast to the relative indifference of the cabinet, most nationalists were dismayed by the government's about-turn, and German Bohemians particularly furious.³⁸³ A few had already surmised that there would be no octroi – certainly, since the Russian Revolution, rumours of a partial implementation had circulated – but overall, consternation and shock prevailed.³⁸⁴ Coudenhove, for example, was pleading with Šmeral to accept the octroi on the evening of 16 April when he received a telephone call from the prime minister's office informing him of the news, leaving

³⁷⁶ *SM*, p.163; Molisch, *Bewegung*, p.251. For instance, Spitzmüller and Urban. The latter indicated that some ministers heard about it for the first time then.

³⁷⁷ Czernin, p.168.

³⁷⁸ *SM*, p.163.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *NB*, K11, p.35.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.35-36.

³⁸² *NH*, K1, p.132.

³⁸³ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-3.

³⁸⁴ Molisch, *Geschichte*, p.251, meeting of the German Club, 29.4.1917.

him dumbfounded.³⁸⁵ Redlich spoke of “the greatest confusion among German politicians”³⁸⁶ while the *Neue Freie Presse* reported tremendous agitation among the “profoundly surprised” bourgeois parties,³⁸⁷ whose stupefied leaders and parliamentarians rushed to Vienna following the announcement.³⁸⁸ However, they quickly found the scapegoats to make sense of their bewilderment. Indeed, the consensus soon prevailed within the *Nationalverband* that Czernin had abandoned the octroi under pressure from the Social Democrats.³⁸⁹ It was believed that Adler and Renner had agreed to help him on this condition and that, in turn, he had easily persuaded Karl, still gravely concerned about the spread of unrest since the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. Handel, though he could not corroborate Socialist interference, nevertheless indicated that the main factor behind the decision was Czernin’s declaration to the emperor that if the octroi were proclaimed, he would have no means of proving to the Russians that the Slavs were not oppressed in Austria.³⁹⁰ These explanations were essentially correct. Accordingly, the foreign minister bore the brunt of nationalist wrath. He admitted to Tisza: “People here are indignant towards me, especially in the House of Lords. This is due to the fact that they imagine I “bought” the Social Democrats by promising to prevent the octroi if they obtained peace [...] Wolf made a scene about it in front of me [...]. The supposition that their octroi has been snatched away from them due to my love of Socialists makes them even angrier.”³⁹¹ But whereas Czernin was seen as the *éminence grise*, Clam – mistakenly thought to have fought for the octroi to the death³⁹² – was merely considered incapable.³⁹³ Yet the prime minister was not spared, and in the numerous meetings and conferences following the cancellation, violent and passionate invectives targeted him as well as Czernin.³⁹⁴ The nationalists upbraided the prime minister for failing to execute the programme in good time, for displaying such incapability, for reneging on his word, for presenting them with a *fait accompli*, for

³⁸⁵ *FŠ*, K18, S136, 16.4.1917.

³⁸⁶ *RT*, II, 18.4.1917, p.289.

³⁸⁷ *NFPA*, 17.4.1917, p.1.

³⁸⁸ *FBM*, 18.4, p.2; *NB*, K7, 22.4.1917.

³⁸⁹ *RT*, II, 24.4.1917, pp.291-292.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.293. Handel added Clam and Urban had been unable to sway Czernin.

³⁹¹ Czernin, pp.168-169.

³⁹² *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4; *NFPM*, 18.4.1917, p.2.

³⁹³ *FŠ*, K11, S.93, Tusar-Šmeral, 21.4. As Steinwender admitted to Tusar.

³⁹⁴ *NFPM*, 18.4.1917, p.2; *NB*, K11, p.36.

not resigning and for thereby putting himself in an untenable position.³⁹⁵ His own colleagues did not spare him. Handel reproached him for burying himself in so much detail – he agonized over every little village in delimitating the circles – that progress had come to a standstill. He also claimed Clam had been anxious not to harm Czech interests, fearful of being branded an enemy of the nation.³⁹⁶ Meanwhile, Baernreither contended that Clam had committed “three grave errors” which had prevented any chance of success. Firstly, he had not succeeded in convincing Karl of the merits of the octroi, largely because he himself knew too little about it. Secondly, he had formed a cabinet ill-suited to the task and thirdly – his greatest mistake, according to his minister – he had displayed a fatal lack of political activity when the situation demanded it, particularly in the Polish question.³⁹⁷ Baernreither also castigated those reluctant colleagues who had “crippled the capacity for decision of a cabinet which was determined to act”.³⁹⁸ Conversely, many pointed the finger at Urban and Baernreither himself for continually changing the drafts and for not acting opportunely and decisively.³⁹⁹ (Redlich, no champion of the measure, had long prophesied an unhappy end to Baernreither’s political career, accusing him of lacking the strength of character to lead the government’s policy.)⁴⁰⁰

Meanwhile in Berlin, this *volte-face* was considered symptomatic of Vienna’s growing panic and desperation for peace.⁴⁰¹ Wedel explained to Bethmann that the Austrian government, in fear of a Slav – rather than socialist – revolution, had cancelled the octroi to appease the Czechs, who might exploit a hunger revolt to emulate the Petersburg *coup* and destroy the state.⁴⁰² Though he dismissed this danger and bemoaned the Austrian habit of always giving in to the most dangerous nationalities,⁴⁰³ he conceded that the timing of the octroi would have been highly

³⁹⁵ *NFPA*, 18.4.1917, p.2; *NB*, K11, p.36; *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4, 7pm.

³⁹⁶ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 11am.

³⁹⁷ *NB*, K11, pp.30-31, 47-48; *Verfall*. However, this diatribe did not feature in the published version of Baernreither’s memoirs. Though he was generally unsparing in his manuscript (and far more so in his diary), such criticisms all but disappeared from the posthumous book edited by Oskar Mitis.

³⁹⁸ *NB*, K11, p.31.

³⁹⁹ *RT*, II, 24.4, p.291.

⁴⁰⁰ *RT*, II, 3.1, 2.3, 11.5.1917, pp.254, 280, 296.

⁴⁰¹ *HL*, II, pp.837, Schoen-Hertling, 1.4.1917.

⁴⁰² *Ö70*, 51. Wedel-Bethmann, 1.5.1917.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*.

unfavourable and that serious reservations spoke against it.⁴⁰⁴ He nevertheless added: “The Germans now find themselves in an extremely difficult situation.”⁴⁰⁵

Indeed, the nationalist camp was in disarray. The collapse of the octroi project had wrecked its endeavours of the previous months and its strategy since the outbreak of war. The shock and anger provoked by the decision exposed the deep disappointment of a group which had expended much effort in the pursuit of a policy which it had come very close to realizing, and which the government had promised them. Baernreither commented despondently: “The impression that these events made on the German parties and on a large part of the German population was one of depression [...]. Even the circles which had no clear idea of the planned steps lost that general hope that matters would be sorted.”⁴⁰⁶ This was certainly true among most German Bohemians, who were “extremely upset about this development”.⁴⁰⁷ One such malcontent sent an enraged letter to the Mayor of Vienna, fuming: “Once again, the loyalty and endless sacrifices of [...] the Germans are rewarded with a kick. A Czech prime minister and a diplomat alien to the people dared to do this.” The author reported that, among other symbolic gestures representing the voice of the people, spectacles had been placed on the crucified Christ in Grasslitz so he could better see the injustice, while in Eger the word “Austria” had been inscribed on an empty gravestone on the day of the government’s declaration.⁴⁰⁸ Not a few nationalists across Cisleithania shared this consternation, but beyond these groups, many Germans viewed the measure with indifference, scepticism, contempt or concern, and at any rate now considered it an unnecessary requirement to the much longed-for recall of parliament.⁴⁰⁹ And certainly, such a policy was far removed from the daily wartime concerns of the population, and insignificant in comparison to recent potential upheavals.

In any event, those affected by the cancellation largely managed to conceal the extent of their chagrin. This was understandable: supporters of the octroi wished not only to avoid losing face after months of confident trumpeting of their plans, but also

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 18.4.1917.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ NB, K11, p.36; *NFPM*, 21.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁰⁷ *RPN*, 18.4.1917, p.1.

⁴⁰⁸ *MI*, K2068, 7293, 28.4.1917.

⁴⁰⁹ *NFPM*, 18.4, p.1. Even the *Neue Freie Presse* admitted that in its fixation with the octroi, the *Nationalverband* had failed to listen to the people’s desire for parliament.

to curry favour with the government in the hope that it would eventually satisfy their aspirations. As Otto Steinwender of the *Nationalverband* admitted to Tusar, the Germans Nationals feared Clam's replacement, since they assumed that his successor would have to seek support from the Czechs and the Social Democrats, and make corresponding concessions.⁴¹⁰ In the pro-octroi press, as elsewhere, the reaction was conspicuously temperate. The *Neue Freie Presse*, though it bemoaned the failure of the project and urged parliament to fulfil these "inalienable" German demands in due time, accepted the precedence of foreign policy over domestic affairs in order to attain peace.⁴¹¹ In its pages, *Nationalverband* committee member Ferdinand von Pantz agreed.⁴¹² Major German publications in Prague such as *Bohemia* and the *Prager Tagblatt* echoed this sentiment with equal forbearance, the latter concluding lyrically: "The time for demagoguery and chauvinism is over. The people expect practical work for a new democratic Austria."⁴¹³ As Kestřanek reported (with a telling choice of words), "the deferment of the preconditions [...] was generally discussed with restraint."⁴¹⁴

The hypocrisy of the press was not lost on Redlich, who noted in his diary: "The *Neue Freie Presse* and the other Vienna papers have written in outrageously grovelling tones, offering keen assistance to Czernin and Clam, and denying shamefully what only yesterday they had praised as the greatest wisdom."⁴¹⁵ The *Reichspost* concurred, bitterly recalling the attacks from those quarters: "It is remarkable that the same Liberal press which brandished the hatchet at the Christian Socials a month ago because they were allegedly betraying the *Nationalverband* with their calls for parliament, is now rejoicing in the government's abandonment of the 'preconditions'".⁴¹⁶ Moreover, the *Reichspost* suggested that the postponement of the octroi in fact signified its complete abandonment, since no favourable opportunity for its implementation would present itself again.⁴¹⁷ It later softened its tone by indicating that deferment did not signify abrogation, though it insisted on the parliamentary

⁴¹⁰ *FŠ*, K11, S.93, Tusar-Šmeral, 21.4.1917.

⁴¹¹ *NFPM*, 17.4.1917, p.1.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁴¹³ *NFPA*, 17.4.1917, p.2.

⁴¹⁴ *MRP*, K306, 3063, 30.4.1917.

⁴¹⁵ *RT*, II, 18.4.1917, p.289.

⁴¹⁶ *RPN*, 17.4.1917, p.2.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

execution of the plans.⁴¹⁸ As this was unlikely to occur, this ostensible conciliation was merely glib pacification.

By now, the break between the Christian Socials and the *Nationalverband* was essentially consummated. Nevertheless, their boards met in the *Rathaus* on the afternoon of 17 April and kept up their unconvincing show of unity by unanimously ruing the fate of the drafts while welcoming the recall of parliament and efforts towards peace.⁴¹⁹ However, when the Christian Social leadership convened alone later in the day, it shed few tears for the octroi.⁴²⁰ And in spite of its collective dismay, the *Nationalverband* itself was far from consensual in its strategy. Unsurprisingly, the German Bohemian Union was particularly incensed; many therein supported a policy of outright opposition,⁴²¹ while some suggested abstention, as did several members of the German Radical Party.⁴²² Other zealots mooted the possibility of all German deputies relinquishing their parliamentary mandates. Meanwhile, Carinthian and Tyrolean deputies of the *Nationalverband* urged their Bohemian colleagues to accept the matter calmly.⁴²³ In the end, the extreme proposals were overwhelmingly rejected by the more level-headed majority, but they exposed the vast divergences in an increasingly fractious and fragile organization which appeared on the brink of breaking up.⁴²⁴ Nevertheless, moderating voices prevailed and by the following day, tempers had abated, despite the continued agitation of certain German Bohemians.⁴²⁵ Most nationalists understood that the Clam cabinet represented not only the best chance for the fulfilment of their demands – if these were ever to be realized – but also a bulwark against the designs of the Slavs and the Socialists. Withdrawing support for the current government risked bringing about the emergence of a hostile coalition in its place. As several German parliamentarians confessed to Wedel, they had no choice but to enter the House and attempt to put on a brave face.⁴²⁶ Accordingly, when the joint executive committee of the *Nationalverband* and Christian Socials met on 18 April, it resolved, in the interest of peace, not to impede discussions in the *Reichsrat* or to adopt an oppositional stance towards the

⁴¹⁸ *RPM*, 19.4.1917, p.2.

⁴¹⁹ *FBM*, 18.4, p.2; *RPM*, 18.4, p.2; *NFPM*, 18.4.1917, p.2.

⁴²⁰ V-I, op. cit., K19, Executive meeting, 17.4.1917.

⁴²¹ *FBM*, 18.4.1917, p.2.

⁴²² *Ibid.*; *NFPM*, 18.4.1917, p.3.

⁴²³ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 7pm.

⁴²⁴ *NFPA*, 17.4.1917, p.2.

⁴²⁵ *RPN*, 18.4.1917, p.1. The German Bohemian Union threatened to leave the *Nationalverband*.

⁴²⁶ *Ö70*, 51. Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4.1917.

government, providing the latter maintained its commitment to the desired reforms and to their parliamentary implementation before long.⁴²⁷ As frustrating and unsatisfactory as this strategy was for the nationalists, they had no better option.

In any case, the government still counted on their support and could ill afford to eschew them; in this anxious climate,⁴²⁸ Karl and his men desperately sought to assuage the disaffected Germans and to retain their loyalty. To this end, early precautions had been taken. Notably, the cancellation of the octroi was not confirmed by any formal decision, and the relevant ministerial council was not kept in the records. Moreover, the newspapers were ordered not to treat the information as official.⁴²⁹ Through these actions, the government suggested that the octroi could one day be resurrected, which certainly accounted for the relatively restrained reaction of many nationalists. And very soon, Karl intervened personally in order to reassure the mourners of the project. Even though his lack of enthusiasm for the octroi and assent to its cancellation were now known, at least by his ministers, he had largely escaped the blame amidst the acrimonious finger-pointing in the wake of its repeal. Politicians certainly made more acceptable targets than the still sacrosanct and esteemed figure of the emperor, but this exoneration was also the result of his perceived pliability and limited political standing. Schlitter noted in his diary: “The German-speaking Austrians are cursing the government and saying that the emperor is badly advised.”⁴³⁰ Indeed, many nationalists saw his acquiescence not as the expression of his personal will but rather as the consequence of his ministers’ failure to prevail upon him. Moreover, they ascribed his misgivings concerning the octroi to foreign developments and their potential consequences at home rather than to his intrinsic reservations. Untainted by his government’s U-turn, shielded by his status and still considered sympathetic to the German cause, Karl was in a propitious position to mediate.

Thus, on 19 April, in the presence of Clam, he received in Laxenburg a deputation of German nationalists and Christian Socials headed by Weiskirchner.⁴³¹ The mayor of Vienna, speaking “in the name of the representatives of the German people in Austria”, first assured the emperor of their unconditional loyalty and

⁴²⁷ *NFPM*, 19.4.1917, p.3.

⁴²⁸ *NB*, K7, 22.4.1917.

⁴²⁹ Sitting of the German local council (*Ortsrat*) in Prague on 12.5.1917, in: Molisch, *Bewegung*, p.252.

⁴³⁰ *NS*, K6, 25-27.4.1917.

⁴³¹ *RPM*, 20.4.1917, pp.1-2.

sacrificial devotion. Promising their full collaboration in the future workings of parliament, he nevertheless expressed their “deep anxiety that essential state necessities concerning the vital interests of the whole of Austria [had] now been pushed into the background as a result of pressing external conditions”. In his platitudinous response, the emperor gratefully acknowledged, saluted and vowed never to forget the “exemplary self-sacrifice which the Germans of Austria have shown, their heroic courage, which was put to the test on the battlefield, their loyalty to the state, which they unshakeably maintain [and] the steadfastness with which they have distinguished themselves in enduring the deprivations of war”. He declared: “The Germans of Austria can be assured of my confidence.” Thereupon, he stressed the utmost importance of successful parliamentary activity, in which he expected all national and political representatives to cooperate for the greater good, adding: “I therefore count on the Germans in Austria who, as pillars of state unity, will have a great task in the reforms which were already initiated during the war and which must be completed single-mindedly after its end. My government will stick unshakeably to the goals it has been set.” Though Karl did not specify which reforms or goals, the Germans inferred that these were theirs. However vague and noncommittal, this statement reassured the visitors, who were comforted further by their subsequent discussion with the emperor. Indeed, Karl spoke to each one of his guests⁴³² and, according to Baernreither, “salvaged the situation”.⁴³³ He certainly made a good impression on the men,⁴³⁴ and even the radicals Groß, Wolf and Pacher were pleasantly surprised by his informed grasp of affairs.⁴³⁵ Naturally, he said nothing of his personal reservations about the octroi; on the contrary, he professed to Wolf that it had been very hard for him to come to the decision of changing course.⁴³⁶ Four days later, however, he confided to the visiting German politician Matthias Erzberger that he would repudiate any Germanization of Austria because “the majority of the population consisted of Slavs and he did want to violate his peoples”.⁴³⁷

But few appreciated the nature and extent of his feelings, and his display temporarily soothed the Germans. They, along with the government, had been

⁴³² Ibid, p.2.

⁴³³ NB, K11, p.36.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ FBM, 20.4.1917, p.2.

⁴³⁶ RT, II, 24.4.1917, p.293.

⁴³⁷ Matthias Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart/Berlin, 1920), p.119. Emperor Wilhelm had recently told Karl that Austria should “Germanize more”.

allowed to save face and effectively to hold on to their plans, albeit by a thread. The *Fremden-Blatt* reported that the German deputies – received for the first time by Karl – had left the audience with the conviction that Austria was in safe hands, adding that the meeting had permitted “the profound, sincere and trusting relationship between the Habsburg dynasty and the Germans of Austria to appear once again in the brightest light”.⁴³⁸ The *Deutschböhmisches Korrespondenz* confirmed that the audience had satisfied the visitors in the extreme, thanks to the charming manner of the emperor and to his declaration that the government would stand by its goals.⁴³⁹ Meanwhile, a leading member of the *Nationalverband* relayed to the *Neue Freie Presse* the general agreement that the address of the emperor had been “received with particular pride not just by the German deputies but by the entire German population”.⁴⁴⁰ Contrary to the crowing declaration of the *Reichspost*, the event did not unravel the Gordian knot,⁴⁴¹ but indisputably it succeeded in bringing about a political *détente*. This was evident in party meetings the following day, notably in the consultations of the board of the *Nationalverband* and in those of the joint executive committee of the German bourgeois parties.⁴⁴² However, the protracted and often agitated discussions within the German Bohemian Union, particularly concerning the potential resignation of the two ministers, indicated that the crisis had not fully abated.⁴⁴³ Indeed, the newspaper *Bohemia* remarked dismissively that the ceremony had been meant merely to “cover the back of an embarrassed government”, prompting an intervention by the censor.⁴⁴⁴ Karl and Clam therefore continued their efforts.

On 21 April, the emperor received Baernreither in Baden, and discussed in earnest the abandoned drafts, the swearing of the oath to the constitution and the connection between internal policy and peace prospects.⁴⁴⁵ On the last subject, Baernreither expressed his concern regarding Czernin’s attempted mediation with the Russian socialists since he believed that, like their counterparts elsewhere, they only desired a general socialist peace. He explained that the conservative elements in Austria – also the most loyal, to his mind – were extremely worried about the

⁴³⁸ *FBM*, 20.4.1917, p.2.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ *NFPM*, 21.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁴¹ *RPM*, 20.4.1917, p.1.

⁴⁴² *RPM*, 21.4, p.5; *NFPM*, 21.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁴³ *NFPM*, 21.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁴⁴ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-3, 30.4.1917.

⁴⁴⁵ *NB*, K11, p.36.

socialist-Jewish wave currently spilling over Europe, whose flow would be very difficult to dam after the war. Karl concurred, but declared that everything had to be tried to attain peace. Baernreither noted: “He is full of the most burning desire for peace. Longing for peace and fear of the consequences of the Russian Revolution completely fill the emperor’s thoughts.”⁴⁴⁶ The minister hence deduced that Karl had in fact decided against decreeing the octroi drafts several weeks prior. Addressing this issue, Karl lamented time and again the insoluble contradiction he faced in being asked simultaneously to carry out a *coup d’état* by octroi and to recall parliament. Since the *Reichsrat* would not approve the drafts – an attitude which he ostensibly bemoaned to Baernreither – the promulgation of the octroi would be a *putsch*, for which Karl was unwilling to take responsibility. Baernreither, however, was adamant that parliament would never sort out certain necessities of the state, whose execution could only be achieved through an authoritative act of the crown. He added that adherence to constitutionality precluded any possibility for change and that as a result “the best Austrians and the most loyal supporters of the dynasty and of the state would despair of the future”. Thinking aloud, Karl responded gravely that he neither wanted nor would allow this, though according to Baernreither, “like somebody who fears he might be forced to”.⁴⁴⁷ In the end, the emperor requested that his minister remain in office and calm the Germans. (Urban, whom Karl had received the previous day,⁴⁴⁸ had presumably heard the same entreaties.) Though he gave no guarantees, Baernreither promised to do his utmost.⁴⁴⁹ Again Karl managed to appear favourably disposed to the German cause and to make his qualms regarding the octroi seem circumstantial rather than fundamental. He neither challenged the contents of the drafts nor gave any indication that their suspension was permanent.

Karl continued his mission of appeasement by heading for the Tyrol that afternoon; according to Marterer, the emperor was travelling partly to please his beloved *Kaiserjäger* regiments, but also “to show mercy to the German city of Bozen which, since so many German wishes would remain unfulfilled, might be a good thing now”.⁴⁵⁰ On the following day, he received several Tyrolean nationalist deputies and dignitaries, and explained the reasons for the “temporary deferral” of the octroi while

⁴⁴⁶ *NB*, K7, 22.4.1917.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.* This detail is crossed out in his diary.

⁴⁴⁸ *NFPA*, 21.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁴⁹ *NB*, K11, p.37.

⁴⁵⁰ *NM*, 23.4.1917.

reaffirming the necessity of a unanimous declaration of will of the *Reichsrat*.⁴⁵¹ He also emphasized the fact that, due to the external situation, it was imperative in the interest of peace to avoid disrupting the smooth course of parliamentary negotiations. Once more he praised the behaviour of the Germans and urged his guests to bow to the inevitable and to facilitate thereby the attainment of peace. Clam, who had accompanied Karl on his trip, held similar talks with individual deputies and assured them that he was, and remained, determined to execute the octroi, but that foreign affairs required an adjournment of the matter until the onset of more advantageous circumstances. The parliamentarians reluctantly acquiesced.⁴⁵² Having at last shaken off his torpor, the prime minister had set about winning back the Germans with considerable energy, and considerable success. The day after the Laxenburg reception, he had already assured Baernreither and Urban that he would not admit to the emperor taking the oath on the constitution and that he would rather resign than use a Slav-Socialist majority in parliament. Both ministers passed on this declaration to the German parties, who now urged them to stay in office and persist.⁴⁵³ This step had been widely expected since the audience in Laxenburg, and was finally agreed at a sitting of the joint executive committee of the German bourgeois parties on 23 April.⁴⁵⁴ The following day, despite the reluctance of its German Bohemian members, the plenum of the *Nationalverband* formally endorsed the remaining in office of Baernreither and Urban. However, it warned that its future position towards the government would depend on the latter's attitude. Further, though it reiterated its commitment to cooperation in parliament – whose recall it now requested without delay – it again warned that it would stand by its national-political demands.⁴⁵⁵ At the same time, the board of the Christian Socials also officially approved the ministers' continued presence in government, and exhorted it to recall the *Reichsrat* urgently.⁴⁵⁶ The support of the German bourgeois parties was thereby safeguarded.

However, the Poles, equally appalled by the policy change but radicalized even beforehand, proved less amenable to conciliation than the Germans. When Biliński was received by Clam on 17 April, he vented his countrymen's ill feeling towards the government and warned that their support was also dependent upon the

⁴⁵¹ *NGG*, K2, Deputies Erler and Kofler and to Groß, 23.4.1917.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *NB*, K11, p.37.

⁴⁵⁴ *NB*, K11, p.37; *NFPM*, 20.4, p.1; 24.4, p.3; *NFPN*, 23.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁵⁵ *NFPM*, 24.4, p.3; 25.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁵⁶ *NFPM*, 25.4.1917, p.3.

accommodation of their wishes.⁴⁵⁷ Nevertheless, opinions within the Polish Club concerning the attitude to adopt were most divergent, though radical voices rang the loudest.⁴⁵⁸ On Saturday 21 April, the *Neue Freie Presse* reported that the Galician crisis was stagnating, that there were no signs of relaxation whatsoever, and that disgruntlement still prevailed in the declarations of Polish deputies.⁴⁵⁹ That day, Karl personally received Biliński⁴⁶⁰ and, perhaps as a result of their meeting, the situation cooled during an otherwise inconclusive weekend.⁴⁶¹ On the Monday evening, following talks between Clam and the parliamentary commission of the Polish Club, the government presented the latter with a statement detailing its position on the Galician question.⁴⁶² It reiterated its commitment to the 4 November declaration, vowed to consider Polish demands in order to reach an agreement and promised compensation for wartime damage.⁴⁶³ However, during the commission's consultations the following day, numerous members denounced the declaration as insufficient;⁴⁶⁴ only in the late hours did it succeed in finding a formula to submit to the plenum of the club, in which it endorsed continued negotiations with the government.⁴⁶⁵ However, another day of negotiations and wrangling was necessary before the commission was able to produce a unifying document. Immediately after, the much-delayed plenary session of the Polish Club opened and a resolution was adopted agreeing to wait for the government's proposals on the autonomy of Galicia and on wartime compensations, and to empower its presidium to engage with it in the relevant negotiations. Moreover, Bobrzyński was permitted to stay in the cabinet.⁴⁶⁶ (At the same time, the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commission convened and unanimously rejected any extension of Galician autonomy and any amendment of the constitution by decree.)⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁵⁷ *NFPM*, 19.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁵⁸ *NFPA*, 18.4, p.2; 25.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁵⁹ *NFPM*, 21.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁶⁰ *NFPA*, 21.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁶¹ *NFPN*, 23.4, p.2; *NFPM*, 24.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁶² *NFPA*, 25.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁶³ *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁶⁴ The Democrats, the Polish People's Party and the Social Democrats took a hard line.

⁴⁶⁵ *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ *NFPA*, 25.4, p.2; *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, p.3.

The ministerial crisis had come to an end in just over a week of feverish activity.⁴⁶⁸ Karl was able to issue handwritten letters to his mutinous ministers, rejecting their resignations and ensuring them of his continued trust;⁴⁶⁹ at the same time, he transmitted a missive to Clam praising his work, loyalty and precious advice, and reiterating his unlimited confidence in him and unfaltering support for his efforts.⁴⁷⁰ Again expected to fall,⁴⁷¹ the embattled government had once more displayed unexpected resilience. And though it had merely contained the Poles, it had seemingly succeeded in assuaging the Germans and retaining their support, chiefly by convincing them that the suspension of the octroi was temporary and in the interest of peace. As Urban repeatedly stressed in an interview with the Hungarian newspaper *Az Est*, the government's programme remained the same in every respect; only the method had changed. He confirmed that the administrative division of Bohemia was "naturally" still a part of its policy and would be achieved via parliament or consensus, though he doubted the possibility of the latter.⁴⁷² Aside from his⁴⁷³ and Baernreither's mediating work, the recovery was due in no small part to the swift intervention and persuasive assurances of the emperor and his prime minister. Though still fearful of revolution, Karl was gladdened by the stalling of the octroi and sanguine about his country's prospects for peace. Baernreither had found him "fresh, lively, genial and talkative as always",⁴⁷⁴ and indeed, his personable manner, energy, enthusiasm and considerable charm helped wheedle the Germans into acquiescence. More importantly, he dissimulated his aversion to the octroi and used the unassailable pretext of peace as a justification for the change of policy, likely gambling that the issue would not resurface before the end of the war.

A rejuvenated Clam employed the same arguments and repeatedly pledged his commitment to the future execution of the octroi. As the matter was now largely out of his hands, this was pure bravado. But in their desperation to realize their plans, and their fear that he might be replaced by a less sympathetic prime minister, the Germans chose to believe him. Overlooking his spineless leadership since December and their recent accusatory aspersions towards him, they handed him a vote of confidence. (In

⁴⁶⁸ *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁶⁹ *MRP*, K304, 2386, 26.4.1917.

⁴⁷⁰ *NFPM*, 28.4.1917, p.1.

⁴⁷¹ *RPM*, 17.4, p.3; *RT*, II, 22.4.1917, p.290.

⁴⁷² *NWT*, 26.4.1917, p.5.

⁴⁷³ *NFPM*, 25.4.1917, p.3.

⁴⁷⁴ *NB*, K7, 22.4.1917.

contrast, the Poles granted him a mere stay of execution). However, despite his political survival, Clam did not emerge unscathed; indeed, this episode had shaken many loyal Germans to the core and eroded their trust in his government. Wedel remarked: “Providence in this country is apparently for the Czechs. This time they were supposed to be hit hard but owing to clumsy hesitation and unforeseen events, the Germans are again the ones to suffer.”⁴⁷⁵ Baernreither commented ruefully that the government, the state and the emperor had once again gnawed at their goodwill.⁴⁷⁶ Affected personally, he summed up this failure in his diary: “I reproach myself for not insisting more energetically on the completion of the work. God knows how much I toiled – but Clam could not be made to work intensively or to take decisions, his inner reluctance grew and he did not succeed in exerting any influence on the emperor to accelerate the matter. With time, doubt crept up on the monarch ever more, Czech influences (Lobkowitz and Trnka) had time to work against the octroi, and after the Russian Revolution, the resolve of the emperor waned altogether. Moreover, the Polish question was insoluble – thus the whole plan gradually slipped to the ground until Czernin administered the fatal blow.” He concluded mournfully but defiantly: “We Germans in Austria have lost a battle. It remains to be seen whether the failure to sort out the state language and Bohemian matters can be rectified later. For the time being, the Czechs, the South Slavs, the Socialists and the Jewish circles closely associated with them, have triumphed.”⁴⁷⁷

If not triumphantly, the repeal of the octroi was greeted approvingly by the opposing camp. The Social Democrats naturally welcomed the decision, but remained highly sceptical and critical of Clam.⁴⁷⁸ The Ukrainians, of course, were relieved to see the scotching of the plans for Galician autonomy.⁴⁷⁹ For the Czechs, who found out through Šmeral on the evening of 16 April, the news was, as Wedel reported, “a pleasant surprise [...] which has naturally boosted their self-confidence”.⁴⁸⁰ But they were immediately warned not to celebrate too ostentatiously. Indeed, Coudenhove asked Šmeral to urge Czech newspapers not to scare the German public by reacting too buoyantly, and Trnka called Tobolka to request a moderate response highlighting

⁴⁷⁵ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4.1917.

⁴⁷⁶ *NB*, K11, pp.37-38.

⁴⁷⁷ *NB*, K7, 27.4.1917.

⁴⁷⁸ *AZM*, 18.4.1917, pp.1-2.

⁴⁷⁹ *MI*, K2069, 9757.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 1.5; *FŠ*, K18, S136, 16.4.1917.

Karl's friendly attitude towards the Czechs, without goading the Germans.⁴⁸¹ Accordingly, commentaries in the Czech press were restrained and limited to generic expressions of a desire for a fruitful recall of parliament.⁴⁸² *Národní listy* underlined the tremendous responsibility inherited by the *Reichsrat*, while *Hlas národa* expressed the hope that it would now show a different face. *Venkov* and *Národní politika* both pointed to the gravity of the hour and urged deputies to focus on important matters, and to work with the eagerness, energy and consideration required to serve the interests of the state and the people. *Czech* added that the Czech parliamentarians faced a test of their statesmanlike abilities and needed to comply with the government. And, writing on behalf of the Social Democratic Party in *Právo lidu*, Šmeral revealed his conviction that the recall of the House would not intensify national conflicts, but rather take the sting out of them.⁴⁸³

At first, the news was interpreted as defeat for German nationalism and a victory for Czech unity. In light of emerging Slav solidarity and of the rifts within the German camp, it appeared that the Czech Union had indeed made a remarkable tactical advance in a short time.⁴⁸⁴ As Tobolka commented in his diary on 17 April: "Indubitable success of the tactic of the Czech Union".⁴⁸⁵ But the tone of the government's announcement, the declarations of its members and the sober reaction of the German Bohemian press quickly made clear to the Czechs that this was a change of tactic, not a change of policy or system. They realized that their pressure had played no part in the decision, and that foreign affairs had forced the government's hand.⁴⁸⁶ The Czech political world, caught on the hop by the turn of events and almost immediately disillusioned by its significance, therefore exercised caution. Wedel, who denied accounts according to which the Czechs were now more presumptuous and confident than ever, interpreted this as a sign of repentance. Fed by a source with direct contact to prominent Czech deputies, he painted a somewhat subdued picture of their camp. The ambassador believed that, having seen the error of their ways and having abandoned hope of Russian salvation, the Czechs were "again chained to Austria and had drawn the appropriate consequences". Though he still considered them capable of betrayal, he believed that pragmatism had prevailed and

⁴⁸¹ *FŠ*, K18, S136, 16.4; 17.4.1917.

⁴⁸² *RPN*, 17.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁸³ *NFPA*, 17.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁸⁴ *PMV/R*, K191, 7097, *PDP*, 22.4.1917.

⁴⁸⁵ *TD*, 17.4.1917, p.345.

⁴⁸⁶ *PMV/R*, K191, 7097.

that they now wished to regain the favourable position they had enjoyed in peacetime.⁴⁸⁷ But, perhaps misleadingly influenced by his informant, whose contacts included “several Social Democratic leaders”, he failed to appreciate the more likely reasons behind this apparent temperance. For although the events in Saint Petersburg had indeed dashed pan-Slav aspirations, they had loudly sounded the clarion call of national self-determination. The American declaration of war had greatly boosted this cause, and had broadened its appeal to the parties who feared the social implications of the Russian Revolution. When meeting to discuss these upheavals, the Czech Union had climbed on the bandwagon and invoked the self-determination of nations for the first time.⁴⁸⁸ Thus, even before the collapse of the octroi, outside events had stirred the Czechs to press for a reform of the Empire on this basis. In addition, it was henceforth axiomatic to most Czechs that an Entente victory was not only preferable, but also more likely,⁴⁸⁹ even though neither they nor the Entente yet envisaged the break-up of the Monarchy. Moreover, the Austrian government’s weakness and yearning for an end to the war were clear to them. The Czechs therefore had high hopes for forthcoming peace negotiations.⁴⁹⁰ In this context, the laying *ad acta* of the much-dreaded octroi was a comparative irrelevance and therefore greeted accordingly, especially since most Czech parties felt that this reluctant surrender brought them no closer to the fulfilment of their own demands.

In fact, only the Social Democrats believed in future democratic reform as a result of the Russian Revolution, and *Právo lidu* was one of the rare publications which described the decision as a change in domestic policy.⁴⁹¹ All other parties soon expressed considerable scepticism, and indeed disgruntlement.⁴⁹² Even the Austrophile Jaroslav Goll, a member of the House of Lords and Karl’s former university tutor, wrote in *Venkov* that the official announcement of the democratization of the state and self-determination of nations was merely a hopeless lure to tempt the Russian socialists into a separate peace. Furthermore, the nationalists

⁴⁸⁷ *Ö70*, 51. Wedel-Bethmann, 1.5.1917.

⁴⁸⁸ *NFPM*, 15.4.1917, p.6.

⁴⁸⁹ *PMV/R*, K191, 7097. On top of the American intervention, most thought German strength in the west on the wane.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹¹ *PMV/R*, K191, 8009 in 7600, *PDP*, 1.5.1917; *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-3.

⁴⁹² *PMV/R*, K191, 8009 in 7600.

continued to resent the socialist conception of national autonomy, which was not founded on historic state rights.⁴⁹³

The government nevertheless immediately sought to capitalize on potential Czech goodwill. Trnka, himself greatly relieved by the end of the octroi, tried to convince his compatriots that it really signified a complete change of direction.⁴⁹⁴ Czernin, meanwhile, held it up as proof that there was not the slightest intention to govern against the Czechs and that Austria remained committed to the equal treatment of all nations.⁴⁹⁵ True to their activist line, the Czech Social Democrats assured Clam that they would work in the *Reichsrat* and in the Czech Union to enable constructive parliamentary debate, but even they had little faith in him.⁴⁹⁶ He had wreaked too much damage in his relations with the Czechs and was clearly unrepentant and unreconstructed. Indeed, though he assured the Czechs that he had no desire to harm the nationalities and that they would become convinced of his good intentions, he openly admitted that he regretted the failure of the octroi and that he still wished to follow the road he had embarked upon. He even suggested that he might submit to parliament an outline of his national programme.⁴⁹⁷ Clam thereby undermined the recall of the *Reichsrat* even before its official announcement.

When, on 26 April, an imperial patent finally decreed the reconvening of parliament for 30 May, the government stated that the purpose of this action was “to deal above all with the food question and with the other economic issues related to the war, particularly social and financial ones”.⁴⁹⁸ The declaration promised to reach an understanding with the parties on the future activity of parliament and to initiate the dismantling of political censorship. It expected support for its endeavours “not only to do what is necessary for the present, but also to create for the future the foundations for a peaceable cohabitation of the peoples of Austria”. Echoing Karl’s words at Laxenburg, it again vowed to “stick unshakeably to the goals which it has set itself”, this time singling out the language question, which it promised to pursue “promptly” and “with vigour”.⁴⁹⁹ The text made reference to both national and provincial

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 18.4.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 17.4.1917, 7pm.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 11am; 19.4.1917.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 19.4.1917.

⁴⁹⁸ *NFPM*, 26.4, p.2; 28.4.1917, p.2.

⁴⁹⁹ *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, p.2.

linguistic arrangements, thereby alluding respectively to the establishment of German as the internal language of state and to the creation of circle governments in Bohemia. It also vowed to proceed in accordance with the intentions of the imperial handwritten letter of 26 July 1913 to sort out “pressing” and “urgent” Bohemian matters, and in accordance with that of 4 November 1916 to sort out the Galician issue.⁵⁰⁰ Although the details remained sketchy – a draft response considered by the Czech Union described these passages as “consciously elliptic and fuzzy”,⁵⁰¹ – this was the government’s clearest official commitment since the demise of the octroi and obviously intended to reassure the Germans (and the Poles) further. But by announcing in the same breath that “concerning matters within the sphere of activity of the *Reichsrat*, [it would] contact the parties and groups of parliament to establish the basis of further action and then submit to it the subsequent proposals”,⁵⁰² the government betrayed the impossibility of fulfilling its aims. The very purpose of the octroi had been to enact these reforms by decree in order to avoid a parliament which would never support them. Since the composition of the *Reichsrat* remained largely the same, so did the chances of success of these measures. And having only just recalled the House, the government could scarcely set about circumventing it. Thus a situation arose which the German nationalists had sought to avoid all along; they could console themselves with the belief that the government and the emperor remained on their side, and the conviction that peace would bring rewards for their wartime sacrifices.

Meanwhile, the Czech Union considered its response during meetings of its presidium and parliamentary commission on 26 and 27 April respectively. On the first day, Šmeral suggested a long, detailed statement welcoming the reconvening of parliament and the government’s priorities, but rebuking its continued bias towards the Germans and the Poles and failure to announce democratic reforms, and expounding on the Union’s position and aspirations.⁵⁰³ However, when the visiting members of the Slovene-Croat Club Korošec, Spinčić and Krek pointed out that the government’s unchanged policy did not call for more than a brief, negative response, the Czech Union settled on a terse *communiqué* stating that its attitude therefore also

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., pp.2-3.

⁵⁰¹ *TD*, 26.4, p.351.

⁵⁰² *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, pp.2-3.

⁵⁰³ *TD*, 26-27.4, pp.350-351.

remained unchanged.⁵⁰⁴ The two groups met formally the following day and agreed that both their statements would end with a sentence “noting their full accord in their assessment of the political situation.”⁵⁰⁵

These were inauspicious beginnings for the future of parliament. The ministerial crisis had set the tone for future developments and had marred the reopening of the *Reichsrat* even before it was announced, affecting public mood accordingly.⁵⁰⁶ The war had in fact exacerbated tensions and divisions, and the political atmosphere was, if anything, more poisonous than when parliament last convened. It was evident that traditional national conflicts would be unleashed at the first opportunity; Wedel considered this a “mathematical certainty” and expected that, with the hearts of the deputies full to overflowing, stormy scenes would soon prove the fruitlessness of parliamentary sittings.⁵⁰⁷ The *Neue Freie Presse* was particularly pessimistic, bemoaning the unchanged attitudes of the parties and warning of the “most unpleasant” task of internal reform ahead.⁵⁰⁸ Moreover, the fact that there were no guarantees that the issues of language and administration would be resolved produced an “atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty”.⁵⁰⁹ In particular, a solution to the Czech–German problem seemed as far away as ever; indeed, “the line where the life and death of a government are decided crosses through Bohemia exactly as before”.⁵¹⁰

This issue, however, was likely not at the forefront of Karl’s thoughts. The cancellation of the octroi and the recall of parliament served his quest for peace first and foremost. Here, the outlook was not unpromising: with Serbia and Romania beaten and Russia incapacitated, the threats to the Monarchy’s existence had virtually disappeared, as well as its reliance on Germany;⁵¹¹ only the Italian menace remained, though seemingly undermined by the aforementioned peace offer. With this in mind, and confident in his brother-in-law’s mission, Karl believed that an end to the war was close. Accordingly, the ostensible democratization and egalitarianism suggested

⁵⁰⁴ *TD*, 26-27.4, pp.350-352; *FŠ*, S134, 26.4; *NFPM*, 28.4.1917, p.3.

⁵⁰⁵ *TD*, 26-27.4, p.352. *NFPM*, 28.4.1917, p.3.

⁵⁰⁶ *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, p.1.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 18.4.1917.

⁵⁰⁸ *NFPM*, 26.4, p.1; *NFPA*, 25.4.1917, p.1.

⁵⁰⁹ *NFPA*, 25.4.1917, p.1.

⁵¹⁰ *NFPM*, 26.4.1917, p.1.

⁵¹¹ *Ö95*, 22, Wedel-Bethmann, 15.4.1917.

by the new domestic course constituted a coherent expedient for potential negotiations with the Allies. In addition, Karl anticipated that these measures would stymie opponents abroad and, rather more hopefully, appease his subjects at home and encourage national reconciliation. However, the domestic situation was not propitious to a truce. The appalling circumstances of most of the population⁵¹² continued to exacerbate social tensions and resentment against the authorities, while the drawn-out rigmarole of the failed octroi had sharpened political divisions between the nationalities. Moreover, though Karl's prestige remained untarnished, his prime minister was a pariah in charge of a discredited government. Under such circumstances, Karl hoped peace would come soon enough to stave off social revolution and internecine conflicts. In the meantime, he relied on the continued loyalty of his peoples to crown and fatherland. In late April, this assumption, though already threatened and facing yet graver challenges, was by no means unreasonable.⁵¹³

⁵¹² *KÜA*, K191, 104.774, report of the censor's office in Vienna for April. From the correspondence surveyed, it gathered that the economic and food situation had worsened in April.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.* The aforementioned report, which reviewed over 420,000 letters, detected no news concerning the Czech or South Slav movements, or regarding Italian, Romanian and Ruthene irredentism. Political statements remained rare, and the general mood differed little from that of March.

CHAPTER VII

PAVED WITH BAD INTENTIONS: THE ROAD TO PARLIAMENT

Domestic unrest

For the despondent, war-weary, famished masses,¹ the revival of political life offered above all the hope of a rapid end to the war and thus a release from hunger and want. In the meantime, however, the situation continued to deteriorate, and on 15 April, the flour ration was lowered.² Yet the repartition of suffering remained uneven, with the wealthy still largely unconcerned by issues of food. Moreover, whereas correspondence from regions such as eastern Galicia, Carinthia, Styria, Carniola, the South Tyrol, the Littoral, Istria, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed near unbearable privations, few items of necessity appeared to lack in Moravia and Silesia.³ Of the Bohemian lands, Bohemia, especially the industrial Sudetenland,⁴ was by far the worst hit, and food shortages in the province were on the rise.⁵ Protests, though more sporadic elsewhere in Austria, were numerous here, and the authorities increasingly struggled to contain them.⁶ The Czechs were once again at the forefront of demonstrative unrest, their anger towards Vienna further stoked by the alleged export of potatoes and coal to the capital.⁷ Substantial strikes broke out in Czech provincial cities,⁸ and continued to plague mining areas, particularly the German-speaking district of Falkenau.⁹ Prague also endured its usual litany of troubles,¹⁰ and the yearning for an end to the war was evermore evident among its inhabitants. When 800 people gathered in Vršovice on 30 April to protest against ration reductions, many called out: “We want peace”.¹¹ The district commissioner in Žižkov, though he had not observed the influence of any revolutionary movement or socialist pacifist

¹ *KŮA*, K191, 104.774. The desire for peace was present in every letter read by the censor in April; complaints about hunger and famine were ubiquitous; bad weather suggested worse was to come.

² Gratz-Schüller p.80. From 200g to 175g for non-self-sufficient, non-heavy workers.

³ *KŮA*, K191, 104.774.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-3.

⁶ *SH*, 1779, 1780, 1786, 1798, 1822, 1825, pp.222-224, 228.

⁷ *KŮA*, K191, 104.774.

⁸ *SH*, 1770, 1774, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1787, 1799, pp.221-223, 225.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1771, 1789, 1790, 1801, pp.221, 223-225.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1781, 1784, 1802, 1807, 1819, 1835, pp.222-223, 225-227, 229.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1805, p.225.

propaganda, warned that peace was confidently awaited everywhere.¹² Kestřánek, however still believed that a secret organization was directing the workers and stoking their irritability, and their excellent information on events in Russia made him suspect foreign links.¹³ Yet ideological slogans were still largely absent, except in a few isolated cases,¹⁴ such as the anonymous leaflet found in Prague which read “Long live the Revolution! Freedom! The nation can decide its own fate. Long live Liebknecht and Adler. Away with the despots!” and urged soldiers to use their weapons to put an end to the misery.¹⁵ Statements of the Social Democratic leaders and reports of the police appeared to confirm that the labour movement had no political motives, and was exclusively the result of the prevailing food crisis.¹⁶

Czernin therefore appraised the situation correctly when he told Hohenlohe on 23 April: “It is ever clearer that the food problem is becoming the most burning question of the entire war.”¹⁷ The poor outlook for the coming harvest further convinced him that a separate peace with Russia offered the only possibility of countering this threat, through the import of foodstuffs.¹⁸ Moreover, he believed it would be the first step towards a general peace, and therefore pursued this goal relentlessly. Doubtless to his satisfaction, his Social Democratic envoys in Berlin, along with their Hungarian colleagues, had won over their German counterparts for a joint declaration on 19 April in support of the Soviet manifesto in favour of peace without annexations or reparations, which had been announced four days earlier.¹⁹ When the Socialist *Internationale Korrespondenz* thereupon requested that the German government express its readiness to accept this formula, Czernin immediately put Berlin on the spot and indicated that *he* was willing to comply.²⁰ But meanwhile in Bad Kreuznach, as yet unbeknownst to him, the German high command had just succeeded in imposing its uncompromisingly radical war aims, which included the annexation of Courland, Lithuania, and considerable tracts of Polish territory (in addition to Liège, the Flanders coast, Arlon, Luxemburg and Briey-Longwy, as well

¹² *Ibid.*, 1785, 1811, pp.223, 226.

¹³ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1783, 1788, 1793, 1821, pp.223-224, 227.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1910, p.239; *PMV/R*, K191, 7519.

¹⁶ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-3.

¹⁷ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 23.4.1917

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *NFPN*, 16.4, p.1; *PA*, I, K957, G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 27.4.1917. During the talks, Adler repeatedly pointed to his influence on the government in Vienna.

²⁰ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 23.4.1917.

as extensive control over the remainder of Poland and Belgium).²¹ Bethmann, though he had reservations about this programme,²² was nevertheless no more inclined to listen to Czernin, and instead had an article published in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* chiding the Social Democrats and rejecting any German declaration of war aims.²³ Undiscouraged, Czernin went it alone and gave his “Answer to Social Democracy” in the *Fremden-Blatt* of 26 April, asserting that Austria-Hungary had no aggressive plans towards Russia, that she did not contemplate territorial increases at her expense, and that the slaughter could come to an end.²⁴ Its stated target notwithstanding, this pronouncement was badly received in Germany, by government, press and public opinion alike.²⁵ (It was, of course, easy for Austria-Hungary to champion this course of action since she stood to retrieve her occupied territories while Germany surrendered conquered land.) Through Hohenlohe, Czernin offered Bethmann and Zimmermann a disingenuous apology but insisted that he faced much tougher domestic circumstances, which he described as “extremely grave”.²⁶ Again, he warned of a genuine threat of revolution and again he bemoaned Berlin’s lack of comprehension. Pointing to the strong desire amongst the restless Slavs of Austria-Hungary for an understanding with Russia, he urged cooperation with the like-minded Social Democrats, who demanded the renunciation of annexations as the price of their cooperation (just as they had previously requested the abandonment of the octroi). Boasting of Karl’s full support, he pleaded: “It is a requirement of absolute necessity to commit the Social Democratic organization to us and through it, to influence the masses.” Czernin urged Hohenlohe to illustrate the gravity of the situation by informing Bethmann of the massacre that had taken place in Prostějov in Moravia on 26 April, in which the military had shot dead twenty-three starving workers and wounded thirty-seven during a hunger riot.²⁷ He warned that similar incidents were expected in the near future in the different provinces of the Empire, though he vowed to respond most vigorously; proof, according to him, that the Austrians followed up

²¹ *W15G*, 3, notes on the Talks, 23.4.1917; *MD*, 23.4.1917, pp.260-261.

²² *W15G*, 2, Bethmann’s handwritten notes (25.4) on Grünau’s report, 24.4.1917.

²³ *PA*, I, K957, G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 24.4; *FBM*, 25.4.1917, p.3.

²⁴ *FBM*, 26.4.1917, p.1.

²⁵ *PA*, I, K957, G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 27.4.1917.

²⁶ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 28.4.1917 (286).

²⁷ *Ibid.* (284; 286); *MKSM*, K1306, 28-3/3-2 ex917; 28-3/3-3; *KÜA*, K191, 105.311. A crowd of 3,000 people heading towards the city had encountered a military cordon guarded by a single platoon. When the demonstrators pelted the soldiers with stones and tried to snatch their guns, their commander ordered them to open fire. The men, 17 and 18-year-olds in their seventh week of training, panicked and shot uncontrolledly and indiscriminately.

their words with deeds.²⁸ Rather less characteristically, Karl displayed the same stern determination. Wedel, summoned to breakfast in Laxenburg three days after, found him unshaken by the bloodshed.²⁹ (On the contrary, Karl appeared confident and in a good mood, and offered his warmest congratulations for recent German successes on the Western Front.) The emperor explained that although such events were sad, they had to be borne, and that he had ordered any repeats to be put down with the utmost energy. And indeed, Wedel was informed that forces armed with machine guns were on their way to the Ostrau-Karwin area, where potato reserves for 60,000 workers were expected to run out in two weeks.³⁰ Karl might have been grandstanding in order to reassure the Germans of his resolve, but Wedel, for one, was unimpressed. When first told the news by Czernin, he had riposted dryly: “In Germany, the military would no longer shoot at the people.”³¹

In this tense climate, the government’s understanding with Cisleithanian Social Democrats seemed to help bring about a degree of respite on a potentially volatile May Day. Very shortly after the abandonment of the octroi, Tusar had approached Handel to announce his party’s intention to hold a meeting on 1 May, and had asked him to instruct the political authorities in Bohemia and Moravia to ensure that no obstacles hampered this.³² He promised that the speakers would show great moderation and avoid any declaration likely to intensify the national conflict in Bohemia, or likely to be interpreted abroad as a desire for peace at all costs.³³ Handel raised no objections but urged caution.³⁴ Tusar then took himself off to Czernin’s to present this plan and to ascertain the room for manoeuvre.³⁵ In the name of the Czech Social Democrats, he promised to respect the interests of the state and, in return, asked Czernin for complete openness regarding the country’s situation. The minister thanked him for his loyalty and frankness, and told him that Austria-Hungary would be in a position to enter peace negotiations with the Entente if she survived until the next harvest. Regarding May Day, Czernin warned that any imprudence could cause

²⁸ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 28.4.1917 (286).

²⁹ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 29.4.1917

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 28.4.1917 (284).

³² *FŠ*, K18, S136, S137; *PM1911-1920*, K4976, 12152.

³³ *PM1911-1920*, K4976, 12152.

³⁴ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 11am.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7pm.

serious damage to the state, but nevertheless stressed the importance of these addresses. He demanded that the Social Democrats express support for an honourable peace rather than a peace at all costs, and that they declare their solidarity with his last pronouncement on the question³⁶ in order to prove the unanimity of the government and the people, as both had one common enemy: the war. Czernin's reliance on the party's goodwill, and plea for its help, were evident as he averred sycophantically: "Without the Social Democrats, it would be impossible to wage this war even for a week". This alliance, however, was not unnatural. Since both desired a rapid end to the war and the preservation of the Empire, their interests could but converge. To secure Socialist collaboration, Czernin had only to promise a degree of social reform and democratization – he again vowed that the masses would be rewarded for their heroism – and to banish the spectre of the octroi.³⁷ The criticism he thereby earned from conservative circles was a small price to pay in his quest for peace at home and abroad. On the other hand, the Social Democratic leadership, still in the firm grip of Šmeral, further risked its credibility by cooperating with the imperial government. Moreover, having already lost much popular support due to its caution and perceived passivity, the party experienced the significant signs of internal opposition in April, principally from its potent Pilsen branch, led by Gustav Habrman and Ludvík Pík, whose daily newspaper, *Nová Doba*, started to express reservations concerning the strategy pursued by Šmeral.³⁸ He, however, was more interested in cultivating good relations with the government than with his colleagues, and, at the time, he could argue that the abandonment of the octroi and promises of democratization had vindicated his activist policy.

Two days after his meeting with Czernin, Tusar³⁹ repeated his declaration of loyalty to Clam, vowing that the Czech Social Democrats would henceforth always serve the state and its interests, in the expectation that, after the war, the government would make concessions to the working class in political and social matters in order to prevent revolutionary upheaval.⁴⁰ Clam, impressed by this pledge, acquiesced in the necessity of social reform – albeit within the constraints of the budget and of the existing order – and assured him that the emperor thought likewise. He conceded that

³⁶ His *Fremden-Blatt* interview on 31.3.1917.

³⁷ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 7pm.

³⁸ Galandauer, *Šmeral*, p.100.

³⁹ *FŠ*, K18, S137; *NFPM*, 22.4.1917, p.5.

⁴⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 19.4.1917.

the equivalent of centuries had elapsed since 1914 and that it would be short-sighted to go against the extension of civil and democratic rights. As for May Day, he had already been briefed by Czernin, and had issued the relevant instructions to the governors in Prague and Brno, who were ordered not to make any difficulties as long as the speakers followed the foreign minister's guidelines.⁴¹ These required Tusar and Šmeral to endorse the government's efforts towards an honourable peace, to speak out against a war of conquest, and lastly to demand that the masses rally around Austria and her flag in order to support the conclusion of peace. Both men agreed, and the government had no doubt that they would be true to their word.⁴²

The Czechs' Austrian counterparts had at first decided against observing a holiday on 1 May, but a bitter internal debate had subsequently erupted. Worried opponents of an action pointed to the incalculable effect a general strike might have if food supplies failed completely, while the minority in favour argued that workers needed to emerge from their lethargy, that the party would gain credit amongst them for taking the initiative, and that peace would be brought considerably nearer. In the first instance, the party resolved to stick to its original plan.⁴³ However, it soon got wind of the ministry of war's instructions to military authorities not to cause any difficulties for workers under their jurisdiction, should they wish to stop work partially or completely on 1 May.⁴⁴ Thus receiving an authorization they had not dared request, the Austrian Social Democrats reversed their decision on 26 April, ostensibly to support international peace efforts.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the following day, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* called on workers to mark the event, but instructed them to avoid internal political issues and to make an orderly return to their jobs in the morning.⁴⁶ The same day, police authorities pored over the matter with Seitz and Tusar.⁴⁷ As a result, the minister of the interior issued a telegram to his provincial governors on 28 April, ordering them not to make any difficulties for participating workers. And though he forbade freely accessible meetings, open-air gatherings and processions, he insisted that they should take no action against such activities unless absolutely forced to by the threat of riots or by specific local circumstances. Conflicts were to be

⁴¹ Ibid.; *MRP/R*, K19, 344. 18.4.1917.

⁴² *MRP/R*, K19, 344. 18.4.1917.

⁴³ *MI*, K2067, 6851, 22.4.1917.

⁴⁴ *MI*, K2068, 8164. 21.4.1917.

⁴⁵ *MI*, K2067, 6851; 6658; K2068, 8164.

⁴⁶ *NFPA*, 27.4.1917, p.4.

⁴⁷ *MI*, K2067, 6851; *PMV/R*, K191, 8009 in 7600.

avoided, he confirmed, since an incident-free day was desirable from both a domestic and foreign standpoint. Likewise, the ministry of war stood by its original instructions.⁴⁸

As a result, the day passed calmly. In fact, work stoppages were not general and many enterprises vital for the war effort continued their activity.⁴⁹ Gatherings were well attended in the industrial centres, but there were almost no incidents before, during or after.⁵⁰ Uniform reports from Carinthia, Carniola, Dalmatia, Galicia, the Littoral, Salzburg, Styria, Tyrol and Silesia testified to the overall tranquillity of Cisleithania.⁵¹ Vienna too was undisturbed, despite playing host to twenty-two gatherings in eighteen districts, attended by around 12,000 people.⁵² The governor of Lower Austria noted that in the rest of the province the gatherings went by without incident, and that the speakers stuck to the draft provided by the party and to the instructions of the interior ministry. There was praise for Czernin and his peace efforts, and in many meetings in the province the efforts of the government on the food question were acknowledged. In addition, speakers dismissed the idea of peace at any cost and enjoined those present not to get carried away to the point of disturbing public order or demonstrating, since this would be seen as weakness abroad.⁵³ In individual gatherings in Tyrol, the speakers “adopted a welcomingly warm tone by encouraging further self-sacrifice and loyalty to the state”.⁵⁴ Such declarations were not limited to German elements. At an assembly in Freistadt in Silesia, the German speaker and his Polish counterpart “not only did not require intervention from the authorities, but were bluntly patriotic in their declarations”. They explained that the Social Democrats wished to support the Austrian government – the first to offer peace – with all their strength.⁵⁵

In the Bohemian lands, the overall picture was much the same. The Bohemian governorate informed the interior ministry that the day had gone by “in complete calm” and “had yielded not the slightest trouble”.⁵⁶ From Prague, the chief of police concluded that it had “passed in the most complete calm and order, above all

⁴⁸ *MI*, K2067, 6851.

⁴⁹ *MI*, K2068, 8164; *KBA*, 37b, K37, 76/T.R.

⁵⁰ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 76/T.R.

⁵¹ *MI*, K2068, 8164; 9344.

⁵² *MI*, K2068, 8164.

⁵³ *MRP*, K305, 2876.

⁵⁴ *MI*, K2068, 8164.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *PMV/R*, K164, 7694 in 8017.

expectations” while Kestřanek confirmed that the day “went by calmly and that in general people worked”.⁵⁷ Indeed, many chose not to exercise their right to idleness. In Moravia, work stoppages had taken place only in individual districts, and in Bohemia, the picture was rather mixed.⁵⁸ In Prague, a mere 7,000 stayed off work, mostly from small companies outside military jurisdiction, while the larger concerns, in particular the munitions factories, simply sent deputations to the gatherings. On the other hand, in Pilsen – Habrman’s territory – around 43,000 out of 44,480 workers took the day off. Yet even in these cases, the decision was taken in agreement with the factories’ military leadership, and not a single conflict was reported.⁵⁹ A handful of hunger and peace demonstrations did, as usual, take place in Bohemia,⁶⁰ but these were uncoordinated and not specific to the occasion. Nor did they all display anger towards the authorities. In Písek, the peace protestors offered to support the government with all their strength, if it heeded their request to initiate steps towards a quick and honourable peace without annexations or reparations.⁶¹ Reports noted that the mood in the poorly attended Social Democratic gatherings was placid, and in many cases apathetic.⁶² The addresses obeyed the directives from Vienna, were moderate in tone and content, and expressed no ill will. The speakers stressed the universal yearning for peace, and their declarations “usually culminated in a welcome approval of the position of the foreign minister on the question of annexations”.⁶³

In his speech in the Municipal House in Prague,⁶⁴ Tusar made clear that the interests of the Czech working class were best served by Austria, declaring: “We see the historical necessity in the Austrian state, uniting the nations of Central Europe on the bridge from west to east, and by building on Austrian ground we are simply echoing what the founders and the greatest leaders of the Czech nation advocated.” He also called for a revision of the constitution based on the self-determination of all Austrian nations, but stressed that such reforms could not be dictated from abroad.⁶⁵ The local police chief observed with satisfaction that he had said nothing about state

⁵⁷ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-4; *PMV/R*, K191, 8413 in 7600.

⁵⁸ *MI*, K2068, 8164; *PMV/R*, K164, 7694 in 8017.

⁵⁹ *PMV/R*, K164, 7694 in 8017.

⁶⁰ *PMV/R*, K164, 7722 in 8017; *SH*, 1815, 1823, 1826, 1835, pp.226, 228-229.

⁶¹ *MRP/R*, K74, 3243.

⁶² *PMV/R*, K164, 8017; 7694 in 8017; *MI*, K2068, 8164. In Bohemia, the total number of participants from the meetings listed in the report was just over 40,000. In Moravia, the meetings were poorly attended and entirely peaceful.

⁶³ *PMV/R*, K164, 7694 in 8017.

⁶⁴ *SH*, 1806, p.226.

⁶⁵ *PL*, 2.5.1917.

rights, thereby riling “the so-called middle class, in which the national and state-rights spirit is the liveliest”.⁶⁶ Tusar also denounced a peace at all costs, as per Czernin’s instructions.⁶⁷ Similarly, in Brno, speaker Antonín Němec condemned Wilson’s attitude and exclaimed: “We do not want peace at any price but an honourable, fair peace, without annexations, as our foreign minister has declared.”⁶⁸ The resolution later adopted maintained that Austria-Hungary had only been dragged into the war to defend her existence.⁶⁹ In his own speech at the Municipal House, Šmeral likewise began by justifying the wartime policies of the party, and by apologizing for its lack of contact with the workers, who, he acknowledged, had become suspicious and distrustful.⁷⁰ He explained that the Social Democrats wished to participate constructively in the business of state, and were therefore making common cause with the bourgeois parties within the Czech Union. In the name of the party, he openly reached out to the Centralists, to the German Social Democrats and even to the German bourgeois parties in order to pave the way for democratization and constitutional reform. He expressed his conviction that the “messy” relations between Czechs and Germans in the Bohemian lands only played into the hands of the opponents of democracy. Yet he also confirmed the party’s commitment to its founding principles, to rapturous applause: “Our aim is for a fundamental, revolutionary change of the existing political and economic order to emerge from the upheaval of this world war. The word “revolutionary” I use in full consciousness of its meaning.”⁷¹ But in spite of this grandiloquent reassurance, Šmeral’s policy was anything but revolutionary. On the contrary, he wished to achieve his goals within the framework of Austria-Hungary, and with the assistance of the government. This, as Clam had been told, would in fact help avert revolution.⁷² What is more, his promotion of national reconciliation, though no doubt pleasing to the authorities, no longer corresponded to the political reality. Although he continually claimed to speak in the name of Czech Social Democracy, this was fast becoming a baseless assertion. Indeed, Šmeral was increasingly out of step with the mood of his party, of the Czech

⁶⁶ *PMV/R*, K191, 8413 in 7600.

⁶⁷ *PL*, 2.5.1917.

⁶⁸ Moravský zemský archiv v Brně, Brno, *MMP*, B13, K408, 8086.

⁶⁹ *MMP*, B13, K408, 8006.

⁷⁰ *MRP/R*, K74, 3243; *PL*, 2.5.1917.

⁷¹ *MRP/R*, K74, 3243; *PL*, 2.5.1917.

⁷² *FŠ*, K18, S137, 19.4.1917.

political world and of the Czech public. Yet for the time being, despite rumblings, he faced little organized opposition and pushed on single-mindedly.

From the point of view of the government, however, the marriage of convenience with the Social Democratic leadership had seemingly paid dividends, and the latter's sincerity in this collaboration, and continued loyalty to the state, were everywhere in evidence. The May Day congregations ended with the adoption of resolutions which echoed Czernin's own words in the *Fremden-Blatt* on 31 March and 26 April, stating the readiness of the working population for an immediate peace without conquests or humiliation of the belligerent nations, and objecting to the further outpouring of blood.⁷³ And although they also saluted the Russian proletariat for having paved the way towards a new political and social era, it seemed that Czernin had already resigned himself to this compromise, ostensibly at least. He therefore had cause for satisfaction, while Karl, who fully endorsed his minister's strategy, was able to boast that, unlike Germany, Austria-Hungary had experienced an untroubled May Day.⁷⁴

This, however, was an illusory satisfaction, and the truce in the Austrian half of the Empire owed less to the benevolent attitude of the authorities, the calming influence of the Social Democrats and the goodwill of the masses, than to the marginal and temporary improvement in supplies. Kestřanek recognized this and urged work by every means "towards the stabilization and improvement of the current food situation [...] in order to maintain peace in the province and thereby perhaps in the whole of Austria".⁷⁵ As he dreaded, this was not achieved, and the entire month was subsequently plagued by incidents. In his summary of events relevant to the state police for the month of May, the minister of the interior noted that the difficulty in the provision of food and other articles of daily necessity "had caused numerous demonstrations by the population in almost all administrative areas" of Cisleithania.⁷⁶ The authorities managed these effectively, and in the occasional cases of rioting, the summoned military forces refrained from using their weapons. However, this was a meagre consolation in light of the extent of the troubles and of the remarkable evolution that had taken place over the course of two months. Their concentration was

⁷³ *MMP*, B13, K408, 8086; *PM1911-1920*, K4966, 14049.

⁷⁴ Sixte, p.161. Karl instructed Erdödy to pass on the message to Sixtus, which he did on 4.5.1917.

⁷⁵ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-4.

⁷⁶ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 108/T.R.

also a source of concern. In his aforementioned compendium, Handel drew a list of the demonstrations not included in his daily reports: these had affected four locations in Lower Austria (excluding Vienna), one in Upper Austria, one in Salzburg, five in Styria, five in the Littoral, two in Tyrol, two in Silesia and two in Galicia, but thirteen in Moravia and, Prague aside, forty-three in Bohemia. Further, all three lands of the crown of Saint Wenceslas dominated the register of previously unreported strikes. The protests and demonstrations across Bohemia were almost always carried out before the local seats of authority, and involved mostly women and children.⁷⁷ Yet acts of violence and theft occurred relatively rarely.⁷⁸ As the authorities reported, many of these demonstrations resembled peace rallies.⁷⁹ The strike movements in mines,⁸⁰ industrial works and factories,⁸¹ and among railway workers⁸² were short and relatively small, but very frequent. In some cases, the authorities suspected outside influences⁸³ or ulterior political motives,⁸⁴ suggesting greater planning and organization; at least once they blamed the Social Democrats for their involvement in the movements,⁸⁵ but on another occasion they concluded that the party had had no inkling of these, and had intervened hurriedly to prevent any imprudence.⁸⁶ In fact, the latter occurrence was more symptomatic of the times, and betrayed the loosening grip of the party on the masses. The replacement of the older peacetime representatives by younger, politically motivated elements, which had begun in Prague during the mid-April troubles, continued.⁸⁷

In the Bohemian capital, demonstrations of starving women and children took place almost daily in front of the governor's office and the various town halls, often accompanied by the familiar cries for peace and bread.⁸⁸ In his report on 15 May, Kestřanek stood by his judgement of 30 March and still thought it unlikely that the workers' movement was pursuing political and national goals as well as social ones.⁸⁹

⁷⁷ *SH*, 1812, 1841, 1846, 1848, 1849, 1855, 1856, 1862, 1868, 1872, 1875, 1877, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1895, 1890, 1901, 1902, 1904, pp.226, 230-239.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1845, 1847, 1853, 1884, 1885, 1886, pp.230-231, 236.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1815, 1857, 1859, 1884, 1890, pp.226, 232, 236-237.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1818, 1843, 1844, 1854, 1863, 1898, 1899, pp.227, 230-231, 233, 238.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1840, 1851, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1887, 1892, 1897, pp.230-231, 234, 236-238.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1858, 1878, pp.232, 235.

⁸³ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7 ad I.

⁸⁴ *SH*, 1869, p.234; *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7 ad I.

⁸⁵ *SH*, 1869, p.234.

⁸⁶ *SH*, 1891, p.237.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1804, p.225; *PMV/R*, K191, 6705 in 6855.

⁸⁸ *SH*, 1835, 1906, pp.229, 239; *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-4.

⁸⁹ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-4.

However, he stressed its unpredictability and warned of its potential exploitation by national chauvinists. He once again urged coordinated efforts to tackle the supply problem, and especially to end the pointless and embittering queues for food. Though he acknowledged that the mood of the workers had been raised a little by the modest improvement of the situation, he insisted that it remained critical in many areas.⁹⁰

Alongside – or, indeed, because of – this growing desperation, there was a corresponding increase in the frequency and intensity of subversive activities. The survey of cases relevant to the state police in May revealed the overwhelming predominance of Bohemia and Moravia in acts of insubordination, of treason and of hostility towards the state, the army and the imperial house.⁹¹ Further, Kestřánek reported that the number of anonymous offences against the state was greater than usual. One letter, posted to the governor on 4 May and signed by “The Czech nation”, threatened him personally, and added: “We draw attention to the fact that as soon as Karl moves to Prague, he and his family are lost.”⁹² Earlier, a letter sent from Karlín to the emperor himself had already warned: “We will not let ourselves be tormented by hunger – our fathers and brothers have weapons in their hands and will certainly know how to turn them against you. Woe betide you! This will be even more terrible than in Russia. Austrian democracy will punish the culprits more severely. In a week everything will be avenged.”⁹³ Invariably, the authorities had little success in punishing the elusive perpetrators; at the time, Kestřánek could point to only two cases prosecuted by the military court in Prague, both of which had ended without a conviction.⁹⁴ What is more, acts of insubordination extended beyond the civilian population. For example, at the Poldi steelworks in Kladno, forty soldiers ordered to unload coal performed their task in a deliberately casual manner, and three-quarters of the men failed to show up the following day, prompting charges of mutiny.⁹⁵

In addition, this strained atmosphere reawakened traditional national antagonisms. Largely latent until then, their emergence did not escape the watchful and increasingly worried eye of the authorities. The chief of police in Prague observed that the deep-rooted desire for peace and confidence therein was moving in a pan-Slav

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ *KBA*, 37b, K37, 108/T.R.

⁹² *SH*, 1833, p.229.

⁹³ *SH*, 1909, p.239.

⁹⁴ *MKSM*, 28-2/10-4.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

and anti-German direction due to the “nationalization” of Social Democracy.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, Kestřánek also noticed a growth in Slavophile – he thought perhaps even Russophile – thoughts in certain strata of the population, as well as an intensification of the conflict between Germans and Czechs. The latter’s feelings of animosity invariably extended to the German Empire and the Hohenzollerns, at a time when Bohemia was awash with rumours of an imminent declaration of war by Berlin on Vienna.⁹⁷ The climate of agitation and uncertainty throughout the crownland was propitious to such tales; hearsay at the time also held that Kramář was free and on a special mission, that Bohemia was soon to become an independent kingdom, that Karl intended to come to Prague to be crowned, and that he would stay until Zita bore him a prince.⁹⁸ Of course, none of this was true, and in light of the overwrought local conditions and death threats, even a simple stopover by the emperor in the Bohemian capital might have been considered an unnecessary risk. Six months after coming to the throne, Karl was yet to visit Prague⁹⁹ – in fact, he never did throughout his reign.

Yet once again, the emperor needed not travel to the epicentre of unrest in order to witness popular discontent and comprehend the gravity of the situation. On 8 May in Baden, he noticed from his study in the *Kaiserhaus* a gathering of over 50 people in front of the building, screaming their resentment at the lack of food; though they were easily dispersed, he immediately ordered an investigation into the local supply situation. As the inquiry concluded that the town was rather better off than others in this respect,¹⁰⁰ Karl could easily imagine conditions elsewhere in the Empire. Sensitive to the plight of his people, he often tried to help directly, but was not always as successful as he had been after the Prague crisis in mid-April. For instance, his donations of food to the local population around his residence in Laxenburg had encouraged mass processions to the palace by poor women demanding help. The authorities in the district had noted that the parties whose requests they turned down often responded by declaring that they would simply go to the emperor himself.¹⁰¹ More unfortunately still, Karl had given his moral and financial backing to a relief action planned for Zita’s twenty-fifth birthday on 9 May, entitled “Free bread for the

⁹⁶ *PMV/R*, K192, 9220, *PDP*, 13.5.1917.

⁹⁷ *SH*, 1874, p.235; *MKSM*, 28-2/10-4.

⁹⁸ *MKSM*, 28-2/10-4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *MRP*, K313, 5295.

¹⁰¹ *MI*, K2131, 6608.

poor of Vienna”, whose initial aim was to reach 10,000 people a day.¹⁰² Mayor Weiskirchner has his doubts from the start, and became increasingly worried when the numerous posters and press announcements for the campaign seemed to indicate that it was in fact a free addition to the ration. His fears were justified, as thousands stormed individual district posts demanding extra bread, in vain. Voices were heard shouting: “We want the bread of the empress! The empress wants to give us bread and we are not getting any!” In several locations, scenes of pandemonium and violence erupted, requiring interventions from security guards, the police and even the fire brigade. The female volunteers on duty complained that their safety had been endangered, and rejected any further participation in an action planned “without any social understanding”. As a result, in order to restore calm, Weiskirchner had to organize an emergency distribution at considerable cost. He could scarcely conceal his displeasure in informing Marterer of the fiasco, and concluded by highlighting the unanimous resolution of all twenty-one district mayors that any such scheme be properly vetted in future.¹⁰³

Unable to feed his subjects, Karl could at least thank them for their sacrifices and enjoin them to persevere, which he did through a handwritten letter to Clam published in the press on 12 May.¹⁰⁴ He declared: “The third winter of war with all its hardships lies behind us, [...] we can expect spring to bring relief to our lives but until then it is necessary to hold on, and in this we shall also undoubtedly succeed, even with great privations”. He added: “In this difficult time, I feel pressed to tell my beloved peoples how deeply their trials and tribulations go to my heart, that I send them my warmest thanks for their willingness to make sacrifices and the patience with which they have taken upon themselves all the burdens of war.” He also specifically acknowledged the achievements of the women of the Empire.¹⁰⁵ Although he was undoubtedly sincere in his gratitude (and in his fear of social revolution, which many still considered inevitable),¹⁰⁶ and although the German-speaking educated classes continuously praised his compassion, such declarations found little resonance among the exasperated and despondent population.¹⁰⁷ Though the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Reichspost* fell over themselves to extol Karl for his words, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*

¹⁰² *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/54. Despite Vienna's strict system of bread distribution by area.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *NFPM*, 12.5.1917, p.1. The letter was from 8.5.1917; a similar one was sent to Tisza.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *NS*, K6, 6-9.5.1917.

¹⁰⁷ *MI*, K2069, 10101, 11628.

carried the missive without commentary, under the laconic title: “The emperor on holding out.”¹⁰⁸

The quest for peace

But, at the time, Karl believed in earnest that peace was approaching and that, indeed, his people needed to persist only a little longer. Russia’s apparent incapacity to fight on (despite Milyukov’s renewed promise that she would honour her alliances and fight until the victorious end),¹⁰⁹ Italy’s secret peace offer, and his brother-in-law’s ongoing mission, all continued to convince him that an agreement with the Entente was close. These hopes soon proved misplaced. In the remainder of May, peace with Russia remained elusive, Italy launched her tenth offensive on the Isonzo and, crucially, Sixtus’s endeavour faltered. Indeed, by the time Karl’s brothers-in-law had returned to Paris with his letter in late March, Briand had been replaced by Alexandre Ribot, who was considerably less enthusiastic about this channel.¹¹⁰ Lloyd George was still keen to pursue the matter but insisted that the Italians be informed.¹¹¹ But when he and his French counterpart met foreign minister Sonnino in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne on 19 April, they found him uncompromising, and the negotiations were consequently put on hold.¹¹² Sixtus transmitted the news to Erdödy on 25 April in Switzerland, urging Karl to make sacrifices towards Italy.¹¹³ When they met there again, on 4 May, the envoy carried a letter from Karl and one from Zita, both of which implored Sixtus to visit them once more.¹¹⁴ He also delivered an oral message from the emperor, apparently indicating that he was willing to make a secret peace

¹⁰⁸ *NFPM*, 12.5, p.1; *RPM*, 12.5, pp.1-2; *AZ*, 12.5.1917, p.3.

¹⁰⁹ *NFPA*, 4.5, p.2; *RPM*, 7.5, pp.2-3; *Ö86 Nr.1*, 22, Wedel-Bethmann, 9.5.1917. Milyukov did so in a note to the Allies on 1.5, but suffered a public and political backlash. On 9.5, after his visit to the Eastern Front, Karl told Wedel he could not imagine a serious Russian offensive. He believed that the Western Powers now only hoped to prevent Russia from signing a separate peace.

¹¹⁰ *Sixte*, pp.98, 111.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.112.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp.142-144, 148, 150, 152-153.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.157-158. He urged Karl to decide whether to negotiate on the basis given by Lloyd George, according to whom, apparently, he could keep his entire Adriatic coast.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.159. Zita’s letter read: “Il y a des choses nouvelles et qui ne sont pas claires. L’Italie veut obtenir davantage par vous que directement par nous. Viens.”

with the Entente, albeit without openly betraying Germany.¹¹⁵ Sixtus agreed to go to Vienna the following day.¹¹⁶

On 8 May, he met Karl (and later Czernin) in Laxenburg, and stressed that this was the best time for peace. He pointed to the failure of unrestricted submarine warfare and to the irresistible boost provided by the Americans, who might favour the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary.¹¹⁷ Karl still balked at Italian claims, but was no longer quite as categorical. On 1 May, he had put to Arz the simple supposition that the surrender of the Trentino might be the key, though upon hearing his general's stiff response, he reassured him that he harboured no such thoughts.¹¹⁸ Karl nevertheless told Sixtus that he would consider the cession of land of Italian language and sentiment in return for compensation in the form of Italian territory.¹¹⁹ (In a conversation with Berchtold in January 1915, he had mentioned relinquishing "a small piece" of the Trentino, though this was to buy Italian neutrality.)¹²⁰ There was certainly no sign of desperation, or of a desire for peace at all costs, as Czernin's unrelenting ambitions in Romania (and Karl's qualified support therefor) showed.¹²¹ Nor had the Austrian strategy changed. As Czernin had written to Musulin on 5 May: "We are following our line completely consistently. We hereby have the dual task of leaving the Entente in no doubt that we cannot be separated from our ally, but, on the other hand, of putting pressure on Germany to obtain moderate demands."¹²² This was, of course, a fantasy, since peace with the Entente was categorically impossible as long as Austria remained committed to her alliance. Czernin, asked by Sixtus how Germany would react to a separate Austro-Hungarian peace, responded defiantly that his country was not under Berlin's thumb, that he did not spare the chancellor and that the sabre-rattling of the German high command did not impress him.¹²³ Moreover, much as he had done during Sixtus's previous visit, Karl declared: "Si l'Allemagne continue à ne pas vouloir écouter nos suggestions raisonnables, nous ferons la paix

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp.159-160. At the time, however, he did not believe Germany would attack him, though he said he would fight if she did.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp.162-163.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp.167-168.

¹¹⁸ Arz, p.252.

¹¹⁹ Sixte, pp.169-170. Czernin agreed. Sixtus suggested Eritrea and Somalia, arguing: "Le nègre vaut mieux que l'irréductible".

¹²⁰ *NBT*, K5, 6.1.1915.

¹²¹ Sixte, pp.171-172. Czernin appeared intent on annexing the whole of Romania, though Karl was less enthusiastic, joking: "Non. Non. Laissons les Roumains, si nous les annexons, je serai forcé d'apprendre une nouvelle langue". However, the emperor did not rule it out.

¹²² *PA*, I, K957, Czernin-Musulin, 5.5.1917.

¹²³ Sixte, p.171.

sans elle, car c'est notre droit et notre devoir et nous en avons les moyens." He even added: "Si, cependant, cela devait se gâter entre nous et l'Allemagne, je dois être en mesure de pouvoir compter sur l'appui de l'Entente." However, he immediately qualified his declaration: "D'ailleurs, je compte dès maintenant sur la raison d'une grande partie de la population allemande."¹²⁴

Indeed, though undeniably exasperated by the Germans,¹²⁵ neither Karl nor Czernin seriously envisaged breaking the alliance, despite their bluster and the recent tensions with Berlin. When speaking to Wedel the very next day, Karl lauded his and Czernin's relations with the chancellor and the state secretary which, he said, "ensured a harmonious and consistent collaboration and allowed their holding out until the end, faithful and united".¹²⁶ On the eve of Sixtus's visit, Czernin had already publicly thanked Bethmann – who had congratulated him on being awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Stephen by Karl – by declaring: "The close alliance with the German Empire is the bedrock of the policy of Austria-Hungary."¹²⁷ Later in the month, when Baernreither warned him that the Czechs were exploiting the strained relations with Berlin and causing increasing resentment among the Germans of Austria, Czernin emphatically declared that he would rather jump off the balcony than abandon the alliance.¹²⁸ Meanwhile, both Karl and Czernin had recently given express assurances to the Bavarian prime minister Hertling that they would not leave Germany in the lurch under any circumstances.¹²⁹ Moreover, the Austrian and Hungarian governments had only just met for a joint ministerial conference, under Czernin's chairmanship, to initiate the economic *rapprochement* of the Monarchy with Germany, a prelude to *Mittleuropa*.¹³⁰ (Admittedly, Karl quickly and resolutely rejected this.)¹³¹ But since neither the emperor nor his minister believed scission from Germany to be an indispensable precondition for an agreement with the West, both were confident of success in achieving peace, whether a general settlement by dint of German moderation or, should this fail, a separate agreement with German

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp.173-174.

¹²⁵ NB, K7, 11.5.1917. In a conversation with Baernreither soon after, Karl acknowledged their military achievements but disparaged their policies and diplomacy, complaining that they did not understand other nations and did not know how to deal with them.

¹²⁶ Ö86 Nr. I, 22, Wedel-Bethmann, 9.5.1917.

¹²⁷ NFPM, 8.5.1917, p.1.

¹²⁸ NB, K7, 25.5.1917.

¹²⁹ Ö95G, 4, Treutler-AA, 2.5.1917.

¹³⁰ Komjáthy, 25, 6.5.1917, pp.499-510; NB, K7, 5.5; 6.5.1917; K11, pp.93-96.

¹³¹ Karl-Czernin, 15.5.1917, in :Werkmann, pp.170-172.

approbation. Czernin therefore shook Sixtus's hand with a smile and added: "J'espère que bientôt nous ne serons plus ennemis",¹³² while a buoyant Karl promised to write a new missive specifying his intentions towards Italy, in the expectation of a clear and definitive answer from the Entente.

The following day, he handed his brother-in-law his second handwritten letter, declaring: "C'est assez clair maintenant, je l'espère." In fact, Karl again stopped short of committing himself to any concessions to Italy, and merely indicated that he would postpone consideration of her secret offer until France and England responded to his own proposal. He adjoined a blunt note by Czernin, which unconditionally refused any one-sided cession of land to Rome and demanded guarantees for the Monarchy's territorial integrity. Only after clarification of both points, it explained, would Austria-Hungary enter into negotiations with her ally. To keep his venture alive, Sixtus deliberately mistranslated this point, in order to give the impression that Austria-Hungary would conclude a separate peace with the Entente upon receipt of the two aforementioned guarantees, and inform her allies only after the event.¹³³ But not even this deception could save a mission in any case condemned by the question of Italy. Nevertheless, the imperial couple were certain that peace was near – Karl believed it "three-quarters done" – and that a new life dawned for the Monarchy.¹³⁴ Overconfident of Sixtus's influence, misled by Italy's dubious offer and blind to the Entente's implacable attitude towards Germany (and *vice versa*), Karl believed he could secure a peace which both denied the claims of his arch-enemy and preserved his loyalty towards his ally. But such was now the gap in outlook between him and the Entente that the latter did not even deign to answer his missive.¹³⁵ Sixtus's mission limped on for a few weeks, until the Prince finally gave up and returned to his regiment on 25 June, ten days after the date Karl had envisaged for the final negotiations in Switzerland with the Entente.¹³⁶

In any case, the emptiness and futility of Austrian assurances to Sixtus were exposed soon after his departure. Determined to involve Germany, Czernin swiftly asked Bethmann to Vienna and, on 13 May, indicated to him – without mentioning the

¹³² Sixte, p.172.

¹³³ All three drafts in: Sixte, pp.177-180.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp.174-175, 192.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.242.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp.185, 241.

source, and indeed quite inaccurately – that England, France and Italy had made Austria-Hungary a separate peace offer in exchange for ceding the Trentino and a few islands to Rome.¹³⁷ However, Czernin immediately made clear that he would not act upon the proposal before consulting his ally, assuring the chancellor that Austria would remain loyal and that this hypothetical “legitimate separate peace” would not damage Germany in any way.¹³⁸ The Austrians, exasperated and exhausted, appeared to consider a separate peace for the first time, yet still would only proceed with Berlin’s blessing. In fact, for Czernin, and, indeed, for Karl, any such offer from the Entente was above all a useful means of putting pressure on their ally, not an incentive to break the alliance. As Czernin made no threats and sought no concessions from Bethmann, he perhaps reasoned that his revelation alone would help sway the Germans in the desired direction. He was mistaken. On the other hand, he cannot have imagined that Berlin would tolerate any kind of separate peace between Austria-Hungary and the Entente. Unsurprisingly, Wilhelm was categorical in response to Bethmann’s report: “The offer *must* be rejected”.¹³⁹ In any case, there was no offer, and neither the general nor the separate peace which Karl and Czernin imagined could possibly arise from Sixtus’s flawed mission. When Bethmann – who had consented to Czernin’s pursuing the matter – later inquired about its progress, the foreign minister simply answered that the enemy had not given any news.¹⁴⁰ And just as the lights went out on Austria’s peace prospects in the west, so too did they in the east.

Ever since the declaration of the Austrian, Hungarian and German Socialists, and the subsequent publication of the conspicuously discordant newspaper articles, relations between Berlin and Vienna had been strained.¹⁴¹ In vain, and assisted by Hohenlohe,¹⁴² Czernin had continued to press for German moderation towards Russia, in order to lay the ground for peace talks. The Austrians again made much of their dismal domestic circumstances. Czernin pointed out that, unlike Germany, where both

¹³⁷ W2G, 36, Bethmann-Wilhelm, 14.5.1917; Wedel-AA, 14.5.1917. He also told Wedel that the offer had been spontaneous.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ PAAA, *Grosses Hauptquartier 12*, 1, 1a, 2, undated. Wilhelm admitted it was a great temptation for Karl, “always disquieted by the nervous Czernin”. He added: “Austria is vain and certainly wants to lead the negotiations for the peace which will liberate the world and bring happiness to the peoples”.

¹⁴⁰ Bethmann, II, p.204.

¹⁴¹ PA, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 28.4; G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 29.4; Ö95G, 4, Wedel-Zimmermann, 29.4.1917. Each condemned the other’s article.

¹⁴² PA, I, K957, Hohenlohe-Czernin, 1.5.1917.

a war and a peace party existed, Austria was home only to the latter;¹⁴³ meanwhile, Karl joined him in emphasizing the need to prevent the Slavs of the Empire from being able to claim that Austria-Hungary was fighting only for German war aims.¹⁴⁴ Both warned that the threat of revolution had to be taken particularly seriously in a country held together only by its ruling dynasty.¹⁴⁵ As Karl told Admiral Holtzendorff, in an echo of Grillparzer's famous words: "Your Kaiser has an easy time of it. He rides a proud national horse. I have a team of four horses, all of different temperaments."¹⁴⁶ A fatalistic Czernin added: "We shall hold out to the last, until the collapse of the Monarchy, but, tell me, where is the advantage if we let things go too far?"¹⁴⁷ The Germans, once again, thought that the Austrians had lost their nerve and that they were desperately seeking a rapid peace at their expense.¹⁴⁸ In light of their intransigence, Czernin had even abandoned his insistence on the *status quo ante bellum* with Russia, so as to acknowledge German wishes for "border rectifications". He then enlisted the help of Hertling to obtain a joint declaration by Vienna and Berlin expressing their wholehearted solidarity with each other's war aims towards Russia: *status quo ante* in the case of Austria and territorial adjustments for Germany (though Czernin undoubtedly envisaged corresponding Austrian gains elsewhere).¹⁴⁹ They hoped this would, at a stroke, banish the rumours of divergences and entice the Russians to the negotiating table. Yet Bethmann, though he had repeatedly promised that he would not allow peace negotiations to fail on account of annexationist desires, rejected this plan, as did Zimmermann.¹⁵⁰ Czernin was incensed – he thought Bethmann "short-sighted" and bemoaned his "unreasonable obstinacy", which he ascribed to fear of the pan-Germans – and continued to pester Berlin, arguing that the Slavs of the Monarchy already expected a separate peace and a break from Germany as a result of these disagreements.¹⁵¹ Diplomatic relations were

¹⁴³ Ö95G, 4, Wedel-Zimmermann, 29.4.1917.

¹⁴⁴ Ö95G, 4, Treutler-AA, 2.5.1917. When talking to Hertling.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ MD, p.265, 4.5.1917; Franz Grillparzer, *Tagebücher* (Warendorf, 2005), p.267. In 1830, he had written portentously in his diary: "The Hungarian hates the Czech, who in turn hates the German, while the Italian hates them all, and, like absurdly tied horses, they will scatter all over the world when the advancing spirit of the times weakens and breaks the power of this restraining yoke."

¹⁴⁷ MD, p.265, 4.5.1917.

¹⁴⁸ W2G, 34, Bethmann-Treutler, 26.4.1917.

¹⁴⁹ PA, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 30.4.1917.

¹⁵⁰ PA, I, K957, G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 1.5; 2.5.1917; Ö95G, 4 Zimmermann-Wedel, 3.5.1917. The chancellor's resolve at the time was evident in his reply to Czernin's 12 April memorandum, which he finally wrote on 4.5.

¹⁵¹ PA, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 2.5; 3.5.1917.

increasingly strained,¹⁵² but the Austrians could not raise their voices too loudly for fear of undermining the chancellor, whose position was already under threat from the pan-German hardliners. Despite his frequent reticence and impotence, Vienna was desperate for him to stay in office, lest a stooge of the high command replace him.¹⁵³ And although Karl and Czernin had in fact weakened Bethmann's position and angered the *Wilhelmstrasse* by dealing directly with the German military,¹⁵⁴ Hohenlohe had succeeded in smoothing over these differences by the time Sixtus arrived in Vienna.¹⁵⁵ Encouraged by the prospect of a separate peace brought by the Prince, Czernin abandoned his pleas for a joint declaration of war aims and ceased to put pressure on Germany for moderation in the east.

In any case, the Russians themselves were not forthcoming. The fall of Milyukov and the inclusion of several socialists in the provisional government had raised hopes for a quick peace, but its first announcement on 18 May dashed these illusions.¹⁵⁶ With Kerensky now minister of war, it firmly rejected a separate peace, defended a general settlement without annexations or reparations, and sought unity with its allies on the basis of Lvov's April declaration of war aims;¹⁵⁷ moreover, it announced its concord with the Petersburg Soviet which, in its appeal to the world's socialists three days earlier, had also rejected any separate peace which would give the imperialist Austro-German alliance free rein, and had called on the military to defend Russian freedom.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, in his speech to the *Reichstag* on 15 May, Bethmann refused to reveal German war aims (and thus to renounce annexations in the east) and emphasized, albeit untruthfully, his complete agreement with the army high command. He boasted: "Our military situation is better than it has even been since the beginning of the war", adding: "Time is on our side". On the other hand, his words towards Russia were conciliatory, if vague, and he strove to deny any divergence of opinion with Austria in the question of peace.¹⁵⁹ For Czernin, who had

¹⁵² PA, I, K957, G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 4.5; Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 5.5; NB, K7, 5.5.1917.

¹⁵³ PA, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 9.5; *Ö86 Nr.1*, 22, Wedel-Bethmann, 9.5; S324, Tucher-Hertling, 18.4.1917.

¹⁵⁴ *Ö95G*, 4, Grünau-AA, 2.5; Zimmermann-Wedel, 4.5; *W15G*, 3, Wedel-AA, 5.5; PA, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 5.5.1917. Czernin had even told Holtzendorff he found it easier to deal with Ludendorff than with Bethmann and Zimmermann.

¹⁵⁵ PA, I, K957, G. Hohenlohe-Czernin, 6.5; Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 8.5.1917.

¹⁵⁶ *NFPM*, 18.5.1917, pp.1-2.

¹⁵⁷ *NFPN*, 21.5.1917, p.2.

¹⁵⁸ *NFPM*, 17.5.1917, p.4.

¹⁵⁹ *NFPM*, 16.5.1917, pp.3-4.

discussed the content of the address with him during his visit to Vienna,¹⁶⁰ this was better than nothing. A semi-official reaction was issued in the *Fremden-Blatt* the following day, praising the chancellor, assuring Russia once again that she could conclude an honourable peace with Germany and Austria at any moment, and asserting bombastically: “no power in this world could tear the Monarchy from the side of her ally. [...] The bonds which tie us to the German *Reich* are never to be broken.”¹⁶¹ This claim was soon given substance.

Having tried and failed, through Wedel, to win over Czernin to the Kreuznach plan (which respected neither the parity of war gains and war losses agreed upon, nor the territorial integrity of Austria-Hungary),¹⁶² the Germans had finally asked him to a conference on eastern war aims.¹⁶³ In the meantime, they had become unsettled by the news of the Entente’s alleged peace offer to Austria, even though they did not doubt Karl’s and Czernin’s loyalty.¹⁶⁴ Wedel worried that Austria now faced a potential choice between an advantageous peace with the Entente, and continued fighting alongside Germany until the bitter end with neither guarantee nor hope of a positive outcome.¹⁶⁵ But, rather than encourage the Germans to moderate their ambitions in the interest of peace, this development prompted them to indulge Austrian pretensions, particularly in Romania;¹⁶⁶ Czernin played along. Accordingly, the Kreuznach Agreement, worked out on 17 and 18 May, marked the end of his campaign for peace in the east, and the victory of the German high command. According to the terms of the covenant, Austria-Hungary retained her full territorial integrity (plus the Lovćen) while Montenegro, northern Albania and a reduced, landlocked Serbia would become her military, political and economic dependencies; furthermore, if Germany acquired Courland, Lithuania and control of Poland, occupied Romania would enter Austria’s sphere of influence (though German economic and material interests there would be guaranteed). In any case, the two powers agreed to the equality of gains in the east and in the Balkans.¹⁶⁷ With Russia

¹⁶⁰ PA, I, K957, Czernin-G. Hohenlohe, 13.5.1917; K504, Czernin-Otto Czernin, 16.5.1917.

¹⁶¹ FBM, 16.5.1917, p.1.

¹⁶² W15G, 3, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.5.1917. The prospect of annexing all of Walachia softened Czernin’s resolve.

¹⁶³ Ö95G, 4, Grünau-AA, 2.5; W15G, 3, Bethmann to Lersner, 6.5.1917.

¹⁶⁴ W2G, 36, Bethmann-Wilhelm, 14.5.1917.

¹⁶⁵ W15G, 3, Wedel-AA, 15.5.1917.

¹⁶⁶ W2G, 36, Wedel-AA, 16.5.1917. Czernin was by now solely concerned with Romania. He had apparently come to terms with the full renunciation of Poland.

¹⁶⁷ W15G, 3, notes on the Kreuznach Talks, 17-18.5.1917.

now denied the compensation envisaged for her in the original plan, a negotiated peace in the east – in any case a dim prospect – was out of the question. This agreement implied complete victory.

Czernin returned from the conference seemingly very satisfied, particularly with the guarantees for the preservation of the Monarchy's integrity and the acquisition of Romania.¹⁶⁸ He told Wedel that although they had “shared out uncaught fish and he doubted whether the catch would succeed”, the prospect of winning the war was now more encouraging; he added that Karl thought likewise. In the same breath, however, he told the ambassador that the resumption of hostilities with Russia had to be avoided at all costs.¹⁶⁹ Czernin was evidently not willing to fight for the Kreuznach Agreement. Perhaps he intended it as a bargaining chip in future negotiations with the Entente for his “legitimate separate peace”, or as an enticement towards a general peace. He told Baernreither on 24 May that he would conclude peace as soon as the *status quo ante* was offered, but also indicated that he needed to safeguard the Monarchy's autonomy in order to preserve its chances of being the peace mediator, in full agreement with Germany and, indeed, to her advantage.¹⁷⁰ These designs were of course illusory; thus the net result of his stay at German headquarters was to tie Austria-Hungary more closely to her ally, to renounce Poland and to eliminate the possibility of peace with Russia.

Reform?

Karl was nevertheless sanguine. As yet unaware of Sixtus's failure, and still convinced of imminent diplomatic success, he now sought to pursue the fundamental domestic reform which his plan for peace also presupposed. Here, too, his actions fell short of his ambitions. Finally rid of the octroi, he proved unable to push through his preferred course. On 14 April, he had received from Polzer the draft manifesto so keenly requested on the train three days earlier. The document in question “was to give expression to [his] resolution to deal justly with all his peoples, to set Austria on her natural, because firmest, foundations, and to guarantee national autonomy within the limits drawn by the interests of the state as a whole”, and exhorted the *Reichsrat*

¹⁶⁸ *WI5G*, 3, Wedel-Bethmann, 23.5; *PA*, I, K504, Czernin-Karl, 18.5; *NB*, K7, 25.5; *NS*, K6, 23.5.1917. Schlitter, however, noted that others claimed the contrary.

¹⁶⁹ *WI5G*, 3, Wedel-Bethmann, 23.5.1917.

¹⁷⁰ *NB*, K7, 25.5.1917.

to cooperate in the constitutional reorganization of the Monarchy. But when Polzer subsequently presented his autonomy programme, he realized that Karl's enthusiasm had been dampened: "I got the impression that the emperor had already discussed the question with Count Clam, and had come up against opposition from him, as the responsible head of the government. Nor had I any doubt that Count Czernin had also taken the liberty of saying a decisive word. The manifesto was dropped, which I regretted very much."¹⁷¹ Karl thus sacrificed a programme apparently "entirely in harmony with [his] intentions"¹⁷² under pressure from the same men who had previously manoeuvred him into accepting a programme wholly at odds with these same intentions. Karl had managed to banish the octroi because he had Czernin's support but, by the same token, he failed to implement Polzer's plan because he lacked it. As long as the foreign minister and the Clam cabinet were in place, such a reform was inconceivable. Moreover, the German nationalists' outrage at the abandonment of the octroi had deterred Karl from striking a decisive blow to their cause. Instead, he had pleaded for their support and had conserved his pro-German cabinet. Further, by failing to repudiate the octroi personally and by suggesting to its supporters that its suspension was temporary, he kept their hopes alive. For instance, after a conversation with him on 10 May, Baernreither once again gained the impression that a "consistent, brave and purposeful influence, illustrated by facts (to which he is *very* receptive) and accompanied by a genuine sense of justice, would find a ruler within him who could perhaps put Austria back on her feet". Though he felt it would require steady work and the ability to make dry subjects palatable to the emperor, he believed that was "by no means unattainable".¹⁷³ To Baernreither, of course, the country's salvation lay in the octroi. Notwithstanding Karl's oft-remarked reluctance to speak bluntly and unfailingly sincere demeanour,¹⁷⁴ his accommodating attitude reflected both his fear of a German revolt and his desire for a political truce at home while he concluded peace abroad.

Yet the internal reorganization of Austria-Hungary he advocated to this end seemed driven less by sincere ideological conviction than by his desire to prevent social revolution, and to end the war under terms that would preserve both dynasty and empire. Polzer himself reasoned that his plan would cut the ground "from beneath

¹⁷¹ Polzer, pp.284-285.

¹⁷² Polzer, p.283.

¹⁷³ *NB*, K7, 11.5.1917.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

the feet of the enemies of the Monarchy and at the same time of the republican-democratic elements, of whose emergence after the war there could be no doubt". He admitted: "The emperor, like me, was of the opinion that the realization, even the proclamation of national autonomy, would deprive the Entente Powers of their trump card, pity for and desire to champion the little nations."¹⁷⁵ Seen thus, the "national autonomy" promoted by Polzer appeared to be a vague cultural autonomy, devoid any of any real decentralized administrative or political power – as Karl had always intended. In any case, the emperor desisted from forcing the realization of this pragmatic view, and for now, the dismantling of military dictatorship, the repeal of the German course and the recall of parliament must have seemed sufficient signals for home and abroad that Austria was on the path to democratization.

Even so, Karl could not fully resign himself to abandoning the plan, especially since he thought peace within reach. In early May, he told Haerdtl, a former interior minister: "One must govern with the people, for only the people have fought the war."¹⁷⁶ On 15 May, while travelling back from Trent, he once again broached the subject with Polzer. He admitted that he had encountered the greatest difficulties in attempting to convince his ministers of the merits of the programme, which was generally considered impracticable. Polzer reiterated his views at length, and stressed that the Slavs could be won over to cooperation only if a resolution of the South Slav question was announced, and dualism gradually abolished to allow national autonomy in Transleithania too.¹⁷⁷ Karl listened in silence, and the following morning instructed Polzer to telephone Clam at once, and to demand the inclusion of a passage on national autonomy in the speech from the throne, which was to be held before parliament on 31 May. The prime minister replied that this would "upset his draft entirely" and that he would need to speak to the emperor in person. Polzer realized that the government adamantly opposed his idea, but he nevertheless insisted to Karl that it study the question thoroughly, since a future cabinet facing an emergency ought not to be caught unawares. Karl agreed that the matter should be investigated by an *ad hoc* commission of experts within the cabinet office, and ordered Polzer to discuss this with Clam. When the two spoke on 19 May, the latter, who had stiffened since their last conversation, revealed his fundamental hostility to the programme, which he

¹⁷⁵ Polzer, p.285.

¹⁷⁶ *RT*, II, 6.5.1917, p.295.

¹⁷⁷ Polzer, pp.285-286. He again urged a complete change of the political course in Hungary.

regarded as unfeasible, but nevertheless considered Polzer's principles suitable "in the unlikely event of [their] ever coming to closer quarters with the idea".¹⁷⁸ In other words, it would not be carried out as long as he was prime minister.

This left his government with no policy to present to the *Reichsrat*. Having drudged on the octroi for almost four months, the cabinet had neither the time nor the will to prepare an alternative. In the six weeks he had at his disposal, Clam diligently addressed all the technicalities and trivialities connected to the recall of the House,¹⁷⁹ but proved far less adept at the formidable task of securing parliamentary support. Straight after the octroi's repeal, it had been thought that he would have to reshuffle his cabinet and broaden its support by including both Czech and German deputies.¹⁸⁰ (The idea of forming a new government consisting of parliamentarians or, failing that, bureaucrats, was also in the air.) Trnka had approached Tusar on 17 April¹⁸¹ to establish whether the Czech Union was willing to "collaborate actively": in other words, to join a future cabinet. Trnka suggested that the Czechs could thereby acquire considerable power in affairs of state; he also intimated that the emperor might ask him, as a Czech minister, for his opinion on the composition of the next cabinet and on suitable candidates. Tusar responded that the parliamentary commission had discussed the issue in its last meeting without reaching a decision, but nevertheless indicated that the Czech Union was capable of cooperation as long as it was fully informed of the government's future direction. When Trnka inquired about the specific participation of the Czech Social Democrats, he was told that this would represent a complete turnaround for the party, and was not, therefore, part of its aims. Only in the case of the German Social Democrats entering government would the Czechs feel compelled to follow. And should the party be forced to do so under other circumstances, out of absolute necessity, it would insist on the inclusion of the Agrarians. The men ran through a few names, but Tusar indicated that the whole discussion was purely academic.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Polzer, pp.286-287.

¹⁷⁹ *NB*, K11, p.114.

¹⁸⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 18.4.1917.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* At 8.30am, thus prior to his meetings with Handel at 11am and Czernin at 7pm.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

Despite this tepid response, rumour soon had it that Šmeral was to be offered a ministerial post (along with Renner).¹⁸³ Dismayed and worried by this prospect, Habrman responded violently in *Nová doba*.¹⁸⁴ *Lidové Noviny*, *Večer*, *Venkov* and *Národ* joined in the agitation against Šmeral's participation in government.¹⁸⁵ Šmeral, though he did not object in principle, cannot have been enthusiastic. The risks and responsibilities of joining a wartime administration were considerable, the rewards uncertain. In any case, he could hardly consider entering Clam's reviled cabinet. The hearsay continued incessantly for several weeks¹⁸⁶ until eventually, on 22 May, an article by Soukup in *Právo lidu* confirmed that the Social Democratic leadership had no intention of entering government, though it left the door open for such a possibility, should it correspond to the will of the people.¹⁸⁷

As it happened, Clam made no such offer to Šmeral and no reshuffle took place. The cabinet remained unchanged, as did the prime minister's outlook. And as he had already made clear that he would rather stand down than use a Slav-Socialist majority, he could, at best, count on the German bourgeois parties and the Poles. The nationalist elements of the former had seemingly been pacified, at least until the reopening of parliament, but the latter demanded a substantial down payment for their cooperation. As a result, Clam focused all his energies on winning their support, and for weeks, to the dismay of many, scarcely sought or made contact with any other party.¹⁸⁸ Unable to satisfy its traditional allies, whose continued support was in any case dependent on the impossible fulfilment of their demands, and unwilling to reach out to other partners, the government faced an inescapable predicament. Its inability to react attracted scorn and derision, and wreaked further damage on its already low standing. Redlich, sharp-tongued as ever, complained that the government's "incompetence and indecision [were] as great as its inactivity".¹⁸⁹ He later added: "Here, 'above', complete helplessness reigns."¹⁹⁰ Earlier in the month, his friend Haerdtl had predicted that the cabinet would last only a few weeks.¹⁹¹ Meanwhile, Schlitter noted: "Our Clam cabinet is still wobbling because it is unlikely to get a

¹⁸³ *RPM*, 4.5.1917, p.6. Speculation was rife in German and Czech newspapers in Bohemia.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Hajšman, p.70.

¹⁸⁶ Hajšman, pp.62, 70.

¹⁸⁷ *PL*, 22.5.1917.

¹⁸⁸ *PTM*, 22.5.1917, p.2.

¹⁸⁹ *RT*, II, 11.5.1917, p.296.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.5.1917, p.297.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.5.1917, p.295.

majority in the *Reichsrat*.”¹⁹² For his part, Koerber was typically negative and believed that it no longer wanted to open parliament at all, to avoid the emperor having to take the oath on the constitution.¹⁹³ Klein, the former minister of justice, sighed: “Lasciate ogni speranza!”¹⁹⁴ Such pessimism was not limited to external observers. Baernreither, for one, now regretted not having resigned in February,¹⁹⁵ while Handel admitted that, after the failure of the octroi, “the ground had disappeared from under the feet of the Clam cabinet and it could no longer hope to consolidate its position again, even to the extent of working in a makeshift way with parliament”.¹⁹⁶ The day after the octroi’s demise, he had told Tusar that the cabinet was doomed, and that he could not wait to get some peace and quiet.¹⁹⁷

Additionally, the beleaguered cabinet remained plagued by internal divisions. Baernreither, for instance, rued its lack of organized will. He and Urban continued to be frustrated by the passivity of their colleagues, who apparently failed to heed their warnings about the impending parliamentary storm. The former complained that the old Stürgkh ministers were fully estranged from the *Reichsrat*; Handel and Schenk, for instance, had never been before the House and seemed ruled by “a certain inactive fatalism”.¹⁹⁸

Furthermore, there were grave reservations about Clam’s personal competence. In early March, Baernreither had already committed his concerns to his diary: “Clam is scared of political waters and, truthfully, I do not know how he will act in parliament, when facing the pounding of waves which will certainly be as high as houses.”¹⁹⁹ The Czechs complained to Czernin about his “hapless” methods and expressed serious doubts regarding his capacity to lead parliament.²⁰⁰ Steinwender told Tusar that if Clam had any understanding of parliamentary life, he would already have resigned.²⁰¹ Austerlitz, the editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, thought Clam kind and well-intentioned, but incapable and without a hope in parliament.²⁰² Wedel, too, worried that the prime minister did not seem up to the task and lacked relevant

¹⁹² *NS*, K6, 1.5.1917

¹⁹³ *RT*, II, 11.5.1917, p.296.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *NB*, K7, 27.4.1917.

¹⁹⁶ *NH*, K1, p.132.

¹⁹⁷ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 11am.

¹⁹⁸ *NB*, K11, pp.114-115.

¹⁹⁹ *NB*, K7, 7.3.1917

²⁰⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 7pm.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 20.4.1917, am.

experience. He added that the fact that the *Reichsrat* had remained *terra incognita* for Clam made him strongly reliant on his officials and parliamentary advisers, impairing his certainty and self-confidence.²⁰³ The *Neue Freie Presse* also admitted that despite his political experience, Clam had had only minimal contact with the Lower House, and therefore needed, beyond the support of the crown, “the trust of parliament, the help of parties willing to work [and] a popular policy [...]”.²⁰⁴ Unfortunately, he lacked all three.

Admittedly, Clam had secured the endorsement of the German bourgeois parties, but while the continued backing of the Christian Socials appeared safe, the nationalists remained wary. As Leopold Waber, a deputy for Lower Austria explained, they retained an attitude of “extreme reservation” towards the policy of the government.²⁰⁵ What is more, the prime minister was in no position to regain their trust and to cement their support, since he could not guarantee the execution of their plans, despite vowing to stick unshakably to his goals. Clam, as often in such situations, preferred to make himself scarce, leading the German nationalists to bemoan his unavailability.²⁰⁶ Frustration increased and spread throughout their camp. At a sitting of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, Redlich noted a strong resentment against the government, even among traditional toadies.²⁰⁷ Schlitter, too, remarked upon the general embitterment of the Germans.²⁰⁸ In adversity, the *Nationalverband* closed ranks; its Bohemian and Alpine leaders conferred to dispel any semblance of discord and expressed their desire for harmonious cooperation.²⁰⁹ Despite this, the former still held sway, as was apparent from the organization’s selection of a president for the Lower House. (As the largest bloc in parliament, its candidate would be unopposed.)²¹⁰ Although the comparatively consensual Johann Dobernig from Carinthia was at first the overwhelming favourite, Wolf and his radicals instigated the candidacy of *Nationalverband* chairman and fellow Sudeten Groß, who was duly elected.²¹¹ To most, his unexpected nomination seemed a provocation; the German

²⁰³ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 6.4.1917.

²⁰⁴ *NFPM*, 28.4.1917, p.1.

²⁰⁵ *NFPM*, 10.5.1917, p.5.

²⁰⁶ *RT*, II, 11.5.1917, p.296.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *NS*, K6, 6-9.5.1917.

²⁰⁹ *NFPM*, 11.5.1917, p.3.

²¹⁰ *NFPM*, 4.5.1917, p.3.

²¹¹ *NFPA*, 3.5, p.3; 4.5, p.3; *NFPM*, 5.5, p.3; *RT*, II, 6.5.1917, p.295.

Social Democrats, the Slovenes, the Czechs and the Ukrainians all registered their aversion to this choice, but the German Nationals and Christian Socials refused to consider a replacement.²¹² Redlich, who had voted against Groß, commented that it boded ill for parliament.²¹³

Indeed, the revival of constitutional life, and Karl's urgings towards national conciliation, did little to bring about greater temperance within the *Nationalverband*. Certainly, the most radical – and therefore most disaffected – voices in the *Nationalverband* were often the loudest, and the majority of German Bohemians showed no inclination to soften their tone or moderate their views. On 13 May, a large representation of the German Progressive Party of Bohemia met in Prague to reaffirm its intentions.²¹⁴ Though loyalty to the emperor appeared undiminished and his prestige untarnished,²¹⁵ the government came under heavy criticism. Chairman Kafka declared: "The solving of the ministerial crisis in no way signifies the final reconciliation [...] of the German deputies with the Clam-Martinic cabinet. The decision is simply postponed." He expected the subject of internal reorganization to appear on the parliamentary agenda from the start and added that, henceforth, there would be neither concessions nor tolerance of delays. Should the constitutional execution of the matter fail, he demanded the unhesitant resuscitation of the octroi.²¹⁶ At a meeting of the influential German People's Council for Bohemia a week later, the message was much the same. The resolution it adopted stressed the "bitterness and indignation" caused by the deferment of the octroi and, appropriating the rhetoric of the day, invoked the right to self-determination of the German Bohemians. It insisted on the ruthless defence and immediate execution of its demands in parliament, and warned that its future attitude towards the government depended on their fulfilment.²¹⁷

But there were, nevertheless, level-headed men within the *Nationalverband*, even amongst the Bohemians. Rudolf Lodgman von Auen, for instance, wrote a piece in the *Neue Freie Presse* rejecting the repression of non-Germans and the bias towards individual nations; and, despite his paternalistic insistence on the reforming mission of the Germans of Austria, he affirmed that the national slogans of the future could no longer be "I am a German or a Slav and therefore better than you", but "I am

²¹² *NFPA*, 24.5.1917, p.2.

²¹³ *NFPM*, 13.5.1917, p.7; *RT*, II, 6.5.1917, p.295.

²¹⁴ *NFPN*, 14.5.1917, pp.4-5.

²¹⁵ There were three cheers for him, and gratitude for his words in the wake of the octroi's repeal.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *PTM*, 22.5.1917, p.6.

a German and therefore different from you”.²¹⁸ (This, of course, suggested separation and therefore autonomy for the German-speaking lands.) A few German nationalists, distrustful and despairing of the government, sought to negotiate directly with the Czechs in order to agree on a *modus vivendi* and *operandi* in parliament. In the days following the octroi’s repeal, the Carinthian deputy Steinwender – who anticipated Clam’s fall and the appointment of a government of national unity – addressed the matter with Tusar, while Waber, himself a Moravian German, did so with Šmeral.²¹⁹ But these receptive Czechs warned that the matter had to proceed quickly before minds on both sides were poisoned.²²⁰ In any case, this concerned purely parliamentary issues such as the standing orders, the choice of president, the extension of mandates, the committees and delegations; nobody could yet envisage tackling the thorny national questions.²²¹ These technical discussions did take place, with some success,²²² but no wounds were healed. This was not solely due to German reticence, however. Waber may have complained that the radical members of the *Nationalverband* prevented united action,²²³ but he soon discovered that the Czechs were no more inclined towards cooperation. When he approached Tobolka on 26 April and explained that he intended to table a motion urging a *rapprochement* between Czechs and Germans, active propaganda for an *Ausgleich* between both nations and opposition to a one-sided settlement of the Galician question, Tobolka responded that this was “already entirely too late” and prophesied the failure of his action, which duly occurred.²²⁴ Likewise, when Lodgman called by Tobolka on 1 May to ask him what the Czechs really wanted for the future, and whether they would support the reorganization of Austria on the basis of national autonomy, the latter responded that this was impossible, as it would signify the acceptance of the old German programme and the abjuration of their own. Tobolka pointed out to Lodgman that time would bring the Czechs far more than his proposals. Since Tobolka was considered moderate and well-disposed towards the Germans, Lodgman was stunned.²²⁵

²¹⁸ *NFPM*, 13.5.1917, p.4.

²¹⁹ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 7pm; 18.4.1917 – Waber; K11, S.93, Tusar-Šmeral, 21.4.1917.

²²⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S137, 17.4.1917, 7pm.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.4.1917; K11, S.93, Tusar-Šmeral, 21.4.1917.

²²² *FŠ*, K18, S137, 20.4.1917, pm.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 18.4.1917 – Waber.

²²⁴ *TD*, 26.4.1917, p.350.

²²⁵ *TD*, 1.5.1917, p.354.

In spite of their heterogeneity, both the *Nationalverband* and the Czech Union were unable to mitigate the strident national influences within their organizations. The German Nationals thus stood by their national-political programme, and continued to offer the government conditional support, while the Czechs retracted their previously announced willingness to negotiate on these issues, and continued to oppose the government.

Clam's only hope of achieving a parliamentary majority lay in obtaining the additional backing of the Poles. Previous negotiations with them had failed, and they had only narrowly agreed to pursue talks. The outlook was not promising.²²⁶ When consultations resumed between the cabinet and the presidium of the Polish Club on 1 May, Biliński declared that the handwritten letter of November promised the creation of a state rather than a provincial government, and demanded a corresponding political, administrative and financial reorganization.²²⁷ He claimed that the aim of the Poles of the Monarchy was unification with the Kingdom of Poland, but that if this proved impossible, the special status of Galicia was still the lesser evil (compared to the *status quo*). According to Baernreither, his entire speech was based, much to Clam's indignation, "solely on the Polish idea, with no echoes of the unitary state, completely detached from any Austrian consciousness",²²⁸ While the faltering talks continued in Vienna,²²⁹ Karl adopted a different tactic to woo the Poles. On 2 May, he suddenly announced to Marterer that political matters required a trip to Galicia,²³⁰ and duly set off, officially to visit the front. Three days later, joined by Clam,²³¹ he was received by the presidium of the Polish Club in Cracow. On this occasion, he declared: "Filled with genuine sympathy for the Polish nation, I want to help build the newly formed Poland and to realize the handwritten letter of my predecessor from 4 November 1916. May the land see in this an important sign of my outstanding trust, in order to create harmony between both peoples of the province, and to bind Galicia all the more intimately to me and to my house."²³² However, the Polish public was disappointed with the timidity of these words on the Polish state and the special status

²²⁶ *NB*, K11, pp.82-83.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.80-81.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.81.

²²⁹ *NFPM*, 5.5.1917, p.3; 11.5.1917, p.2.

²³⁰ *NM*, 10.5.1917.

²³¹ *NFPA*, 4.5.1917, p.3.

²³² *NFPM*, 6.5.1917, p.1.

of Galicia, for which the local deputies blamed the prime minister.²³³ The vagueness of the speech was evident to Redlich, who saw it as proof of “the complete lack of plan of the government, which will perish on the Polish question alone”.²³⁴

The government could offer little to the Poles, who, in spite of their numerous consultations with ministers, deemed its proposals unsatisfactory and its intentions unclear.²³⁵ Though the Polish Club remained internally divided, disgruntlement towards the administration grew steadily within its ranks.²³⁶ The Socialists, the *Piast* Party, the People’s Party and the National Democrats displayed particular hostility; the last two had already withdrawn from negotiations on the special status of Galicia. Officials warned that political agitation and popular discontent were driving more and more groups into opposition.²³⁷ Requisitions, the export of food from the province, delays in the rebuilding effort and in the provision of compensation, and the third appointment of a general as governor, all contributed to the alienation of the Poles.²³⁸ Meanwhile, there were violent hunger riots in Cracow.²³⁹ Worried authorities reported great unrest in the crownland and a nervous tension in expectation of developments in Russia and in Vienna.²⁴⁰ Sensing that the tide was turning, Biliński announced his resignation on 14 May, which was accepted the following day.²⁴¹ The “lesser evil” he defended represented too much for the government, yet too little for a growing number of his compatriots.²⁴² The path was now clear for a drastic change of orientation.

Accordingly, during an extremely agitated plenary session in Vienna on 16 May, the Polish Club voted to reject any further discussion of the special status of Galicia, and to withdraw support from the government. In violent terms, it denounced the latter’s indifference and passivity towards the Club throughout the war, its empty promises, and the actions and behaviour of the authorities in Galicia.²⁴³ On the subject of the constitutional future of the Polish lands, the Club eschewed the moderate

²³³ ZA, K125, 8.5.1917.

²³⁴ RT, II, 6.5.1917, pp.295-296.

²³⁵ NFPM, 13.5, p.7; NFPN, 14.5.1917, p.5.

²³⁶ NFPM, 16.5.1917, p.5.

²³⁷ NFPM, 10.5, p.5; 17.5, p.2; MI, K2117, 9438, 9.5.1917.

²³⁸ MI, K2117, 9995, 26.5.1917.

²³⁹ KBA, 37b, K37, 108/T.R, 12-15.5.1917.

²⁴⁰ MI, K2117, 9438.

²⁴¹ NFPM, 15.5, p.5; NFPA, 15.5.1917, p.3; MI, K2117, 9995.

²⁴² NFPM, 15.5.1917, p.6.

²⁴³ NFPM, 17.5.1917, pp.2-3. The motion to withdraw support was adopted with 35 votes to 10. Further motions were passed thanking Karl for his magnanimous words in Cracow and welcoming the recall of parliament.

proposal recommended by its parliamentary commission, and adopted instead an uncompromising resolution by the painter and People's Party deputy Włodzimierz Tetmajer demanding a united and independent Poland with access to the sea.²⁴⁴ (Upon hearing of these developments, Redlich commented sardonically: "Now that is a lovely prelude to the opening of parliament.")²⁴⁵ Supporters of the decision not to back the government claimed that it expressed the mood of the Galician population, but, in the immediate aftermath of the declaration, dissenters, such as the Conservatives and Democrats, believed that due to the limited participation in the vote, it would have little effect, bar the likely resignation of Bobrzyński.²⁴⁶ Thus, at first, the significance of this development was played down in Vienna. The *Neue Freie Presse* had no doubt that the Polish Club would assist parliamentary work, and considered the resolution merely a sign of irritation worth noting.²⁴⁷ Karl too was possibly unworried; after all, he had recently told Wedel in reference to Congress Poland: "The Poles have shown themselves to be men of words, not action."²⁴⁸

The government's Polish policy had unmistakably failed, and this failure turned out to be twofold. Indeed, the Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation, vexed by the government's unilateral negotiations with the Polish Club, now unanimously resolved to take on a staunchly oppositional stance.²⁴⁹ Clam had reassured the Ukrainians in late April that the special status of Galicia would not be decreed by octroi before the recall of parliament, and had promised to consult them on the matter.²⁵⁰ However, he omitted to do this, despite the considerable agitation Karl's declaration in Cracow had caused amongst them.²⁵¹ (Additionally, they were aggrieved by the fact that the emperor had failed to stop in Lwów.)²⁵² Instead, he chose to confer exclusively with the Poles, even though they could not be satisfied and would almost inevitably withdraw their support. In light of their irreconcilable aims, Clam could not hope to win over the Poles and the Ukrainians together; in the end, he estranged both.

²⁴⁴ *NFPM*, 17.5.1917, p.3; *MI*, K2117, 9995. Its content was censored in the press until 2 June 1917.

²⁴⁵ *RT*, II, 17.5.1917, p.297.

²⁴⁶ *NFPM*, 17.5, p.2; 18.5.1917, p.2.

²⁴⁷ *NFPM*, 17.5, p.3.

²⁴⁸ *Ö86 Nr. I*, 22, Wedel-Bethmann, 9.5.1917.

²⁴⁹ *NFPM*, 17.5, p.3; 18.5.1917, p.6.

²⁵⁰ *NFPM*, 28.4, p.3; 10.5.1917, p.5.

²⁵¹ *NFPM*, 10.5.1917, p.5.

²⁵² *NM*, 10.5.1917

Czech radicalization

Clam had originally required only a few weeks to achieve the same result with the Czechs. Their subsequent expressions of loyalty and attempts at dialogue, calculated as some of them were, had fallen on deaf ears, and had proved the fruitlessness of activism as long as he was prime minister. Even after the cancellation of the octroi, he had remained high-handed and inflexible, ensuring continued Czech hostility. At two meetings of the Czech Union on 11 and 12 May, Staněk, who had spoken with Clam, reiterated that, as a result of his continued intransigence, the Czechs did not need to change their stance towards his government.²⁵³ In any case, cooperation with a cabinet which had been formed specifically to implement the German course and which had backed down from this plan only unwillingly, was virtually unthinkable. What is more, although the Union had passed a resolution, barely a month earlier, urging a joint collaboration of all nations in tackling the political and economic problems facing the Empire, and affirming its willingness to work towards a necessary understanding,²⁵⁴ such conciliation was now out of the question. The attitude of the *Nationalverband* since the collapse of the octroi – most recently the nomination of Groß – showed the futility of such endeavours.²⁵⁵ The Poles likewise made clear that they were unwilling to cooperate.²⁵⁶ Nor could they count on the support of the Austrian Social Democrats, who had rejected collaboration even with their Czech counterparts due to their long-standing differences on the sore question of nationally separate trade unions, and had objected to their participation in the bourgeois-dominated Czech Union.²⁵⁷ The Czechs therefore ceased even to pay lip service to the idea of compromise, and prepared for battle, with only the South Slavs as allies. But although unanimous in opposing the government, and in seeking constitutional reform and greater national autonomy, the Czech Union still lacked a definite programme and a concrete strategy. In late April, one possible course of action emerged from abroad, in the form of a letter from Masaryk and Beneš.²⁵⁸ Worried that the Union might

²⁵³ *FŠ*, K18, S134, executive meeting, 11.5.1917; plenum, 12.5.1917.

²⁵⁴ *NFPM*, 15.4.1917, p.6. 13-14.4.1917.

²⁵⁵ *NFPM*, 17.5.1917, p.8.

²⁵⁶ *FŠ*, K18, S134, executive, 11.5.1917.

²⁵⁷ K18, S136, 11.4.1917, evening. Victor Adler was still bitter about the trade-union dispute. As Renner told Šmeral, when Czernin suggested taking a Czech Social Democrat on his trip abroad, Adler had refused.

²⁵⁸ Letter in: Beneš, *Světová válka a naše revoluce. Vzpomínky a úvahy z bojů za svobodu národa. Dokumenty*, volume III (Prague, 1929), 35, pp.121-123.

resume its activism, the exiles urged local politicians not to damage their cause. The missive's guidelines exhorted the Czech parties not to vote for the government on any matter, not to attend the emperor's oath on the constitution, to refrain from demonstrations of loyalty in parliament, to initiate passive resistance, not to disavow the movement abroad, and to claim historic state rights without compromising the attachment of Slovakia. But at the time, this was too extreme a posture for almost all Czech politicians. Indeed, the Czech Union wished to engage earnestly in parliamentary work.²⁵⁹ Even the nationalists did not yet think beyond their desire for the rapid conclusion of a general peace at all costs,²⁶⁰ a development which would terminate the *émigrés'* ambitions. Moreover, the idea of including the Slovaks was virtually unheard of. And those who dared stray from Union orthodoxy were decried by activists as "Prague coffeehouse" chatterers, "radicals", "irresponsible forces" and "Masarykian agitators".²⁶¹ In any case, the Czech Union was more susceptible to domestic pressure.

Yet at home, expectations were also high, and the reopening of parliament was awaited with tremendous excitement throughout the Czech population.²⁶² After more than three years of near silence, and at such a crucial juncture, Czech politicians could ill afford to be out of step with the mood and hopes of their people. Nor could they allow traditional party political divisions to divide them. In the end, the Czech Union devised a three-part programme in preparation for the inaugural session of parliament: a joint state-rights proclamation to be delivered on the opening day, a proposal for the establishment of a committee to revise the constitution, and an interpellation of the government regarding its behaviour towards the Czech nation during the war.²⁶³ The first point proved the most contentious. Though Tobolka had succeeded in convincing Social Democratic leaders that Czech national interests now required a declaration of state rights,²⁶⁴ the fundamental difficulty lay in defining and expressing these. In effect, the Union faced a choice between appealing to Bohemian state rights or to natural rights. The implications were not merely academic: the fulfilment of the former necessitated the establishment of a Czech state (traditionally understood to be within the Habsburg Empire) according to immutable historic frontiers, while the

²⁵⁹ Tobolka, IV, p.238.

²⁶⁰ *PMV/R*, K191, 8413 in 7600, *PDP*, 8.5.1917.

²⁶¹ Hajšman, p.67.

²⁶² *MI*, K2069, 10101, report of the censor's office in Vienna for May.

²⁶³ Tobolka, IV, pp.238-239. Tobolka does not specify when this programme was adopted.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.239; *TD*, 17.12.1916, p.227. He had first brought this up in mid-December 1916.

latter, though it could accept the emergence of such an entity within ethnic borders, could be realized through territorial, personal or cultural autonomy within the Monarchy. A majority of deputies within the Czech Union supported historic state rights, although it was clear to them that the original declaration of 1879, which had been read out by the bourgeois parties at the beginning of each parliamentary term ever since, was now out of date.²⁶⁵ However, the Social Democrats were unwilling to comply, since this would signify the abandonment of the principle of national self-determination, and thus the disavowal of the programme announced by their first deputies to the *Reichsrat* in 1897 and confirmed by the Žofín Resolution at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1913.²⁶⁶ The urgings from abroad brought forth two additional, confounding considerations: firstly, the potential inclusion of the Slovaks, which technically ran counter to both Bohemian state rights and self-determination (and violated Hungarian state rights); and secondly, the role, if any, of the Habsburg dynasty in the future of the Czech nation. For the time being, however, it seemed highly unlikely to many that Austria-Hungary would disappear or that the Magyars would fail to uphold the integrity of the lands of the crown of Saint Stephen.²⁶⁷ In any case, the Czech Union had no intention of disowning either empire or dynasty in its proclamation.²⁶⁸ But despite its desire to read out a unifying and coherent manifesto on 30 May, its motley nature made agreement difficult. A common proclamation had been discussed,²⁶⁹ but only in the wake of the octroi's collapse did work begin in earnest, encouraged by the Social Democrats.²⁷⁰ Each of the main parties within the Union then set about preparing its own proposals for the draft, with the ultimate aim of producing a text which would satisfy all political factions, as well as public opinion.

The executive of the Union first discussed the content of the planned address at a meeting on 11 May, when three of its parties submitted proposals: the Young Czechs, the Agrarians, and the National Socials.²⁷¹ All three drafts demanded the implementation of Bohemian state rights within a federal and democratic Austria

²⁶⁵ Soukup, I, p.400; *TD*, 8.11.1916, p.214. Tobolka had already made this point in early November.

²⁶⁶ Zdeněk Tobolka, "Státoprávní prohlášení z dne 30. května r.1917", in: *NR*, II, p.163; Soukup, I, pp.400-401; Paulová, *Tajný výbor*, p.225.

²⁶⁷ *NS*, II, p.164.

²⁶⁸ Tobolka, IV, p.239.

²⁶⁹ *FŠ*, K18, S141/1, meeting of the National Committee, 15.3.

²⁷⁰ *NR*, II, p.163.

²⁷¹ *FŠ*, K18, S134, executive, 11.5.1917.

under the Habsburg crown, with no mention of Slovakia.²⁷² Unsurprisingly, these suggestions were unacceptable to the Social Democrats.²⁷³ In fact, only the text of the Young Czechs – which reinforced these historic claims with the concepts of self-determination and full national development – survived the discussion.²⁷⁴ (Two further writings received from outside the Union, both highly radical in tone, one by State-Rights Progressive deputy Antonín Kalina and another signed by a number of Czech authors, were not touched upon, though copies were made for each member.)²⁷⁵ As a result of this impasse, the decision was postponed until the next series of meetings in Vienna.²⁷⁶ However, this setback did not deter the Czech Union from its objective. The following day, members of its parliamentary commission stressed the need for a common statement, and all constituent parties declared their willingness to work towards a compromise. Immediately after, at its plenary meeting, the sixty-eight deputies in attendance unanimously endorsed this endeavour.²⁷⁷ The National Committee also approved the work of the Czech Union.²⁷⁸

In the meantime, negotiations continued, and on 15 May, Tobolka worked out a compromise draft with Social Democrats Lev Winter and Adolf Meissner. The original proposal of the Young Czechs served as its basis, with the admixture of concessions to the Socialists, who nevertheless continued to oppose the appeal to mediaeval rights. In effect, the new composition sought “to convey the principles of both the so-called historic and natural state rights, without violating one or the other”.²⁷⁹ Though it insisted that the majority of its members stood by the 1879 declaration, it concluded helter-skelter with a demand to reform the 1867 Constitution according to the principles of federalization, democratization, self-determination and equality between nations. Tobolka presented the text to the Czech Union executive on 17 May and, after a handful of stylistic modifications, it was submitted to the parliamentary commission for the following day.²⁸⁰ But when Šmeral opened this meeting by expressing his delight with the attainment of a compromise draft, he

²⁷² Original copies in: *FŠ*, K18, S133/2, and S134, reproduced in: *NR*, II, pp.163-171.

²⁷³ *NR*, II, pp.171, 174.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.163-164, 174.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.174; *FŠ*, K18, S134, 11.5.1917.

²⁷⁶ *FŠ*, K18, S134, 11.5.1917.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, parliamentary commission, 12.5.1917; plenum, 12.5.1917; *NR*, II, p.174.

²⁷⁸ Hajšman, p.67. It met on 15.5.1917.

²⁷⁹ Draft in: *NR*, II, pp.174-176.

²⁸⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S134, executive, 17.5.1917.

encountered a volley of objections.²⁸¹ At the forefront of this opposition were fellow Social Democrat Antonín Němec, Agrarian deputy Josef Špaček and Karel Baxa of the National Socials, all of whom proposed amendments during this agitated debate.²⁸² Baxa's words in particular revealed that his party had taken an extremely radical direction. Once again, the final resolution on the address had to be postponed until a future executive meeting, to which were invited the commission members who had suggested changes.²⁸³

This sudden stiffening and hostility to compromise was not fortuitous, and occurred under the influence of the concurrent publication of the Manifesto of Czech Authors (the content of which the Czech Union had discovered a week earlier).²⁸⁴ Announced in the press on 17 May, it appeared uncensored in the Agrarian newspaper *Večer* the following day,²⁸⁵ and had a profound, radicalizing effect on Czech political life. This declaration, directed at Czech *Reichsrat* deputies, was largely the work of Jaroslav Kvapil, a poet, playwright and director at the Prague National Theatre.²⁸⁶ Under the impulse of the *Maffie*, 222 Czech writers had signed it.²⁸⁷ The piece reflected the concern of most domestic *literati*, which the exiles shared, that the Czech Union would fail to promote their own radical opinions in parliament or, worse, that it would reiterate the sentiments of the 30 January declaration.²⁸⁸ It therefore exhorted Czech politicians to honour their responsibility to the nation by championing “Czech rights and Czech *desiderata*” at a time when “Czech fate was being sealed for centuries”.²⁸⁹ It warned that the whole world was watching expectantly. Like Masaryk and Beneš in their letter, it urged the representatives of the nation to demand the restoration of civil liberties, the removal of press censorship, full freedom and immunity in parliament, and an amnesty for all political prisoners. In veiled language, it reasserted historic state rights and requested an uncompromising and relentless fight for their fulfilment. The belief in their realization, it proclaimed, had never been extinguished in

²⁸¹ *NR*, II, p.176.

²⁸² *FŠ*, K18, S134, parliamentary commission, 18.5.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ Jan Heidler, *1917, Projevy českých spisovatelů* (Prague, 1921); Jaroslav Kvapil, *Projev českých spisovatelů r. 1917* (Prague, 1924).

²⁸⁵ Hajšman, pp.60-62.

²⁸⁶ Tobolka, IV, pp.233-234; Paulová, *Tajný*, pp.199-200.

²⁸⁷ Tobolka, IV, p.234. No Slovak had put his name to the document.

²⁸⁸ Tobolka, IV, p.233; Soukup, I, p.395.

²⁸⁹ Manifesto reprinted with full list of signatories in: Soukup, I, pp.396-399.

“Czechoslav” hearts. Indeed, the declaration described the *Reichsrat* deputies as the “spokesmen of the Czechoslav nation”.²⁹⁰ The appeal ended: “A democratic Europe [...] of autonomous and free nations is the Europe of tomorrow and of the future. Gentlemen, the nation requires you to be part of this great historic occasion, to devote all your skill to it, to sacrifice all other considerations, and to act as independent men in this moment, free of personal ties or interests, men of sovereign, moral and national consciousness. If you cannot satisfy what the nation expects of you and what duty has imposed on you, relinquish your mandates before you enter parliament and defer to your supreme authority: your nation.” No mention was made of the Empire or the dynasty.

This was, in effect, the first publication of the exiles’ programme in the Bohemian lands.²⁹¹ And indeed, once they read the manifesto, they ceased to fear the reopening of parliament.²⁹² Signed by so many eminent and esteemed men and women – first and foremost by the much-loved historical writer Alois Jirásek – it caused a popular sensation.²⁹³ *Maffie* operative Hajšman described the scene in Prague: “On Friday 18 May at midday [...] I ran to the nearest newsagent’s [...] but it was already sold out, and I could not get a single copy in the whole of the Old Town. [...] Wherever I looked, [...] everybody was clutching *Večer* in their hands [...]. Prague exulted, nobody spoke of anything else. [...] Not even the news of the Russian Revolution had had the effect of the manifesto. Instead of greeting each other, people called out with a gasp: ‘Did you read the address? It’s fabulous, isn’t it?’” He continued: “The effect was enormous, moving, indescribable, [...] it electrified, lifted the nation.”²⁹⁴ Indeed, the writers claimed that their views were not simply those of the Czech cultural and intellectual world, but those of the nation. The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* – the only Viennese newspaper to publish the manifesto – agreed, noting that “it casts a clearer light on the actual tendencies in the Czech population than all the telegrams and audiences”.²⁹⁵ Certainly, few Czechs could object to the sentiments

²⁹⁰ *PMV/R*, K162, 29755. The word “Czechoslav” (*československý*) was used to mean “Czech”, without necessarily any other associations.

²⁹¹ *NR*, II, p.173.

²⁹² Beneš, I, p.476.

²⁹³ Signatories included Jindřich Baar, Otokar Březina, Karel and Josef Čapek, K.M. Čapek-Chod, Jakub Deml, Viktor Dyk, Adolf Heyduk, Karel Klostermann, Eliška Krásnohorská, Kamil Krofta, Kvapil himself, Jiří Mahen, J. S. Machar, Zdeněk Nejedlý, Marie Majerová, Alois Mrštík, Ivan Olbracht, Karel Václav Rais and Antal Stašek.

²⁹⁴ Hajšman, pp.61-62.

²⁹⁵ *AZ*, 22.5.1917, p.5.

expressed in the text. Hunger and want were no obstacles to national feeling. Indeed, on his way home, Hajšman noticed that the famished, ragged women queuing for food all held copies of the newspaper and were letting out of cries of joy. The reproduction of the address the following day on the front page of *Národní politika* ensured its extensive distribution in the Bohemian lands and beyond.²⁹⁶ Soon, “from all towns and villages, from every corner of the Empire, from the front and then from abroad, there arrived ardent declarations of approval, a huge, unsuspected public response”.²⁹⁷ On his subsequent travels in the country, Hajšman observed that framed rescripts and pictures of the Bohemian crown had appeared on the walls of private dwellings, clubs and public houses.²⁹⁸ Notwithstanding the one-sidedness and embellishments of this account, the Writers’ Manifesto certainly made a significant contribution to the awakening and stirring of the Czech masses’ national consciousness, dulled by three years of war.²⁹⁹

What is more, it also hit its intended target, producing considerable political repercussions.³⁰⁰ Inveterate Austrophobes like Kalina, who wished for independence, were naturally ecstatic. But the nationally minded deputies within the Czech Union, whose parties had until now been at the forefront of activist policy, also embraced the declaration, men such as the Agrarians Karel Prášek, Jaroslav Rychtera, Isidor Zahradník and Josef Žďárský, as well as the Social Democrats Habrman, Pik and František Modráček. Stránský was particularly delighted, remarking that the lull during which the activists had done as they pleased was now over, and he appeared to relish the coming storm. A good number of parliamentarians, however, scowled, not least because they resented being usurped, upstaged and admonished by amateurs.³⁰¹ They censored the Agrarians for leaking a document they had hoped to conceal.³⁰² But above all, the activists thought the manifesto irresponsible, dangerous and detrimental to their work and to Czech interests. Šmeral took the lead in denouncing it and a vigorous condemnation appeared the next day in *Právo lidu*.³⁰³ Brno’s *Rovnost* quickly followed suit.³⁰⁴ This, of course, gave it additional publicity, as did the fact

²⁹⁶ Hajšman, pp.61-62.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p.62.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p.66.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p.66.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p.62; Soukup, I, pp.394.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.63.

³⁰² Ibid., pp.61-63.

³⁰³ Article in: Hajšman, op. cit., pp.64-66. It was unsigned, but likely Šmeral’s.

³⁰⁴ Tobolka, IV, p.236.

that the main Socialist mouthpiece soon published it in full.³⁰⁵ Though the newspaper continued to decry it for several months,³⁰⁶ this was a hopeless crusade. Šmeral's authority had already waned considerably in May. As the champion of activism, he had become the focus of hatred for the increasingly numerous opponents of this policy. Even before the publication of the Writers' Manifesto, journalistic attacks on him, particularly those of the Agrarian newspaper *Venkov*, had compelled him to raise the issue in the Czech Union.³⁰⁷ But the animosity towards him and his ideology had a genuine popular basis. In late March, he and Tobolka had already discussed their mistreatment at the hands of public opinion, though he had refused to act upon it.³⁰⁸ By May, Hajšman claimed that he had heard people threaten to kill him "a hundred times in the month, several times daily, everywhere, in Prague and outside". More prosaically, many threatened to box his ears and spit on him. Šmeral and his newspaper received a stream of threatening letters, and though he remained defiant, he was increasingly isolated.³⁰⁹ The Writers' Manifesto liberated those who had uneasily followed his direction, and amplified popular expectations. Its stark words and solemn tone raised the stakes for Czech politicians, who now feared demanding too little rather than too much.

Authorities monitoring the mood in Bohemia at first failed to pick up on the manifesto,³¹⁰ suggesting, aside from possible Czech exaggerations of this supposedly universally visible jubilation, a crucial intelligence failure. By the time they finally discussed it, in mid-June, it was to complain about its noxious effect on the masses.³¹¹ Allowing its publication was, in any case, an extraordinary oversight. Those behind the declaration, who had not imagined seeing it in print, were amazed that a willing newspaper had been found, and even more so that the censor had not altered a single word.³¹² But on the day of the publication, all eyes were on Vienna, where the trial of Friedrich Adler had begun. On 18 and 19 May, he answered for his assassination of

³⁰⁵ *PL*, 24.5.1917, p.1.

³⁰⁶ Hajšman, pp.64-66.

³⁰⁷ *FŠ*, K18, S134, executive, 11.5.1917.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, S136, 30.3.1917

³⁰⁹ Hajšman, p.59.

³¹⁰ *PMV/R*, K192, 10186; *MKS/M*, K1305, 28-2/10-7 ad I; *MI*, K2069, 10101, 11628. Neither the police report of 22.5 on the political mood, nor the biweekly mood report of the military command on 2.6.1917, nor the reports from the censor's office for May mentioned it.

³¹¹ *PMV/R*, K192, 11674, *PDP*, 12.6.1917.

³¹² Hajšman, p.62.

prime minister Stürgkh before a juryless special court. His defence delivered an eloquent and scathing attack on Austria's wartime dictatorship, and on his own Social Democratic Party's failure to fight it. He scolded military justice, particularly the suspension of trial by jury, which was declared even before the declaration of war and which he considered a *coup d'état* against the constitution and the judicial system. He especially denounced censorship, notably in the crownlands: "Prague is a chapter of the [...] disgrace to itself." He exonerated the emperor, since the imperial decrees were the responsibility of the ministers, but deplored the fact that Austria had mere subjects rather than citizens. Yet he reserved his most trenchant criticism for his party, rebuking its cowardice in the face of dictatorship, and betrayal of internationalist and socialist values through its "Austrian patriotism" and German nationalism, going so far as to call it a "semi-official organ of the Berlin foreign office". For all these deviances he chiefly blamed Renner. He summarized: "With the shots, I wanted to wash down the dirt which the policy of the Social Democratic Party had amassed". He also delighted in remarking that Czernin himself was now seeking contact with "subversives" like him in Russia.

Though Adler claimed that he had not expected his action to rouse the masses,³¹³ his courtroom defence certainly did. Redlich observed that it had had the greatest impact in Vienna,³¹⁴ while the local police confirmed a considerable increase in the number of Adler supporters among the workers.³¹⁵ As the Social Democrat Bretschneider remarked shortly after: "Fritz Adler had a devastating effect on the views of party comrades, in particular on the younger minds."³¹⁶ Wedel commented that the trial had contributed to stirring up the already rebellious mood of the Viennese proletariat, and that Adler's partly justified attacks on the government had gained him sympathy far beyond socialist circles.³¹⁷ Immediately sentenced to die,³¹⁸ his martyrdom was almost complete. The ambassador remarked bitterly a few weeks later: "Neither Victor Adler, Renner, Seitz, Leuthner or Šmeral enjoys the confidence

³¹³ *NFPM*, 19.5.1917 p.8.

³¹⁴ *RT*, II, 21.5.1917, p.298.

³¹⁵ *MI*, K2000, 8983 in 8987.

³¹⁶ *VGA, PA, M2*, joint sitting of the party representatives, trade union commission and Vienna executive, 1.6.1917.

³¹⁷ *Ö86 Nr.2*, 22, Wedel-Bethmann, 23.5.1917.

³¹⁸ *NFPM*, 20.5, p.1; *AZM*, 7.9.1917, p.1. It was commuted to an 18-year prison sentence on 7.9.1917.

of the masses; Friedrich Adler, the minister killer, condemned to death, is the hero of the day, the man of the people.”³¹⁹

Adler’s accusations provided an additional complication for Clam, who was fully aware that he would have to bear responsibility for the previous government’s wartime record.³²⁰ As (inaccurate) press reports emerged announcing that all Czech parties had agreed to demand Bohemian state rights,³²¹ it seemed inevitable that the country’s bitterest national conflict would immediately burst to the fore in parliament. The unwavering support of the South Slavs for the Czechs and the irreconcilable rift between Poles and Ukrainians completed the picture of national chaos which Vienna was so desperate to conceal. The government’s prospects were indeed catastrophic: opposed by all Slavs, unwilling to court the Socialists for domestic purposes and uncertain even of German nationalist support. Only the Christian Socials offered unequivocal backing.

Aware that time was running out to secure a political truce and the goodwill of the reticent nationalities, in order to ensure the smooth running of the *Reichsrat* and present a harmonious front to the outside world, Karl took action. Doubtless exasperated by his prime minister’s ineptitude, he convoked, without apparently informing him,³²² the representatives of the main parties to Laxenburg, for 21 May, to discuss the political and parliamentary situation.³²³ That evening, Karl received, separately, members of the *Nationalverband*, the Czech Union, the Ukrainians, the Croat-Slovene Club and the Christian Socials.³²⁴ The Poles were not even invited.³²⁵ The essence of the emperor’s appeal to the parliamentarians most likely echoed the rhetorical question of the *Neue Freie Presse*, which asked of future plans of individual parties: “What are they in comparison to the food question, to the peace question, and to the great problems of financial and monetary policy?”³²⁶ In other words, Karl hoped that the parties would work together in parliament to solve the country’s pressing socio-economic issues and avoid national and political conflicts. He had no

³¹⁹ *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 12.6.1917.

³²⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S133, 2, report on the meeting between Clam and the Czech Union on 24.5.1917.

³²¹ *NFPM*, 17.5, p.8; 23.5.1917, p.6.

³²² *PTM*, 22.5, p.2; *DZM*, 22.5.1917, p.5. According to the *Prager Tagblatt*, although *Die Zeit* claimed that the invitations had been issued through the prime minister’s office.

³²³ *NFPN*, 21.5.1917, p.1.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*; *NFPM*, 30.5.1917, p.6.

³²⁵ *DZM*, 22.5.1917, p.5.

³²⁶ *NFPN*, 21.5.1917, p.1.

concrete, long-term plans for constitutional or administrative reform to present, and simply wanted help in extracting the Empire from the war unscathed. The participants of these brief meetings were sworn to secrecy, although the Christian Social Hauser obtained permission to divulge a few details: the emperor had again impressed with his intimate knowledge of internal political questions, and had spoken freely and informally with his interlocutors.³²⁷ Other delegations got a distinctly different impression. During the Czech Union's meeting, Fiedler spoke about Bohemian state rights, Staněk about domestic conditions in Bohemia and Šmeral about the demands of the Czech workers. Karl listened attentively but his answers apparently betrayed complete ignorance, especially on the matter of state rights and Bohemian independence.³²⁸ Staněk, however, warned Karl that the incarceration of Czech deputies and journalists made it impossible for the Czechs to pursue any kind of activist policy.³²⁹ The notes of Vjekoslav Spinčić – the only Croatian representative from the Croat–Slovene Club³³⁰ – revealed that, when told by the South Slav deputies of the need to unite their lands, a coy Karl had simply given a friendly smile and muttered: “Yes, yes”. In all other matters – peace, hunger, official persecution and wrongful imprisonment – Karl was understanding and accommodating. He finished by praising the bravery and loyalty of the South Slavs.³³¹

Karl was seemingly blind – consciously or not – to national aspirations. He simply hoped for reconciliation under his aegis. But his considerable charm and enthusiasm could not heal existing rifts, particularly between the Germans and the Czechs. The *Nationalverband* delegation, led by Groß, Wolf and Stölzel, left no room for illusion. As the last-named wrote the following day in the *Neue Freie Presse*: “The *Deutscher Nationalverband* will do everything in order to make the sitting of parliament fruitful. There are only two boundaries it cannot cross: the interest of the state and the interest of the German nation in Austria.”³³² Clearly, no concessions could be expected from them. The Czech contingent, on the other hand, appeared more moderate. Indeed, the parties to which its three members belonged – the Agrarians, the Social Democrats and the Young Czechs – had been at the forefront of

³²⁷ *NFPM*, 27.5.1917, p.10; *PTM*, 22.5.1917, p.2. The meetings only lasted 30 minutes.

³²⁸ The National Archives, Public Record Office, FO 371/2864, report by Tusar sent to the Czech National Council in Paris during his trip to Switzerland in October 1917.

³²⁹ Tobolka, IV, p.257; Polzer, p.304. In Polzer's version, Šmeral also spoke out on the subject.

³³⁰ The four Slovenes present were Korošec, Krek, Šusteršič and Pogačnik.

³³¹ HDA, *Rukopisna ostavšina Vjekoslava Spinčića*, Z-189, meeting with the emperor, 21.5.1917.

³³² *NFPM*, 23.5.1917, p.6.

wartime activism. Moreover, men such as Šmeral and Fiedler were convinced Austrophiles whose loyalty was unquestionable. But Staněk, the head of the delegation, already had a more ambiguous position, much like his party – notably, he had played a part in the disclosure of the Writers' Manifesto. As Chairman of the still irresolute Czech Union, however, he had to maintain decorum. Yet overall, these men were unrepresentative of an increasing number of their colleagues and countrymen, the extent of whose radicalization they cannot have revealed to Karl, despite their allusions. They themselves did not yet know what form the Czech Union's final draft would take. It is thus unlikely that Karl's encounter with these politicians opened his eyes to the extent of Czech dissatisfaction and rebelliousness. Nor did he heed the hints of the South Slavs. Indeed, though he worried about social upheaval, there is little evidence to suggest that Karl was anything but confident about his peoples' patriotic attachment to crown and fatherland prior to the reopening of parliament.

But had he been aware of the evolution of Czech politics, he would have had legitimate cause for disquiet. Indeed, when, on 23 May, five days after the appearance of the Writers' Manifesto, the executive of the Czech Union reconvened in its expanded form³³³ to discuss amendments to the draft of the *Reichsrat* proclamation, Stránský submitted a text of unprecedented radicalism within the organization.³³⁴ Though based on the compromise proposal, it followed the *émigrés* and the Czech authors in demanding, albeit euphemistically, the addition of Slovakia to the application of historic state rights. However, all hitherto produced documents were effectively rendered redundant by Staněk's announcement that Karl did not intend to take the oath on the constitution and would simply content himself with his speech from the throne.³³⁵

Previously touched upon by Koerber, the issue of the emperor's pledge to uphold the constitution – a legal prescription – had finally been settled during a lengthy ministerial council on 19 May.³³⁶ Nobody in the cabinet wished for the monarch to bind himself solemnly to a document, decried from all sides, which had proved unusable and irremediable. It was therefore decided unanimously, if

³³³ *FŠ*, K18, S134, executive, 5.1917.

³³⁴ Draft in: *NR*, II, p.176-178.

³³⁵ *FŠ*, K18, S134, 23.5.1917.

³³⁶ *NFPM*, 20.5.1917, p.7; *NB*, K7, 20.5.1917.

unhappily, that he should abstain from doing so.³³⁷ But whereas Baernreither and Handel also wanted him to dispense with the speech from the throne in order to avoid exposing the contradiction between promising to rule constitutionally and shunning the vow, all other ministers insisted that Karl should, in fact, address parliament and announce the postponement of the oath himself.³³⁸ The emperor consented.

The Czech Union, therefore, had to start afresh, but since agreement on a draft still appeared far off, the delay was not unwelcome.³³⁹ Aware of its own limitations and of the need to reach the broadest possible consensus, the executive resolved to ask Antonín Švehla of the National Committee to call a meeting with the representatives of all parties for 27 May, in order to decide on the final wording of the declaration.³⁴⁰ Šmeral was indignant, and wrote a letter to Švehla, complaining that the authority of the Czech Union was being undermined.³⁴¹ He also insisted that pragmatism required the mention of dualism in the address. He confessed that he awaited forthcoming developments with apprehension. He was right to worry, but rather than a weakening of the Czech Union, this was in fact a weakening of his position therein. The radical frenzy which threatened to engulf him was typified by the draft of National Social deputy Baxa, who was absent from the aforementioned board meeting but wrote up the proposals he had made orally on 18 May.³⁴² He had previously followed Union doctrine, but his words and tone were now virulent and uncompromising.³⁴³ Although he stuck to the historic borders and thus omitted the Slovaks, he demanded the complete independence of the Czech state. The Habsburgs, deemed foreign rulers, were to play no part in the future of the Czech nation. In the end, he urged the resolution of the Czech question through an international peace conference. As Tobolka wrote, this draft was “the most radical of all, even though it did not coincide entirely (on the question of Slovakia) with the Czech revolutionary programme abroad”.³⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, these new radicals also began to fear a separate peace with

³³⁷ *NB*, K11, p.113.

³³⁸ *NB*, K7, 20.5.1917.

³³⁹ Tobolka, IV, p.242.

³⁴⁰ *FŠ*, K18, S134, 23.5.1917.

³⁴¹ *NR*, II, Šmeral-Švehla, 24.5.1917, pp.181-182.

³⁴² Original copy in: *FŠ*, K18, S134, printed in: *NR*, II, pp.180-181.

³⁴³ Galandauer, *Šmeral*, p.104; Wingfield, *Flag*, p.216. As mayor of Prague between 1919 and 1937, Baxa had shown unashamedly anti-German (and anti-Semitic) tendencies.

³⁴⁴ *NR*, II, p.181.

Russia, believing that this would result in a “German” settlement which would destroy their aspirations.³⁴⁵

In addition, several significant personnel changes compounded the radicalization of the Czech political world, particularly in the National Social and Young Czech parties, where Hübschmann and Tobolka were respectively replaced. On 25 May, the Young Czechs’ executive committee, controlled by František Sís and Bohdan Bečka, was hastily expanded, in violation of the party’s statutes, to include several new members who endorsed the *émigrés*’ programme, and shifted the balance of power decisively in their favour, at the expense of the Club of Deputies.³⁴⁶ Jindřich Metelka, an opponent of activism, was elected chairman.³⁴⁷ Moreover, as Karl had granted leave earlier in the month to members of both Houses serving in the army,³⁴⁸ several radicalized deputies returned from the front in time to assert their influence before the opening of parliament. Notable among these was the National Social Jiří Stříbrný,³⁴⁹ who seized the leadership of the party and imposed a firm, oppositional line in tune with the programme of the exiles.³⁵⁰ The National Socials were henceforth at the forefront of Czech radical policy;³⁵¹ their defiance was evident in the decision to elect their imprisoned chairman Václav Klofáč as the party’s representative.³⁵² The Agrarian party was, admittedly, divided, but only between men of varying degrees of radicalism. Meanwhile, in the Social Democratic party, the strength of the nationalists rose, as Habrman’s camp was joined by deputies Rudolf Bechyně (who had also returned from military duty) and František Modráček in opposition to Šmeral, whose dogmatic views were no longer heeded.³⁵³ On 28 May, at the organization’s first political meeting, the previously moderate Lev Winter, co-author of the compromise draft, announced that the Social Democrats supported “the amalgamation in one entity of all parts of the Czech nation, including the Slovaks, within the framework of this Empire”, and that they would achieve their aims through opposition.³⁵⁴ Tobolka

³⁴⁵ *PMV/R*, K192, 10186, *PDP*, 22.5.1917. Compounded by Milyukov’s fall.

³⁴⁶ Tobolka, IV, p.243; Hajšman, p.68.

³⁴⁷ Hajšman, p.68.

³⁴⁸ *KM, PB*, K2123, 54-21/11; 11-2. It was announced on 6.5 and granted to all by 15.5.1917.

³⁴⁹ Wingfield, *Flag*, pp.207, 215. In 1929, he was elected to the Czechoslovak Parliament on a Fascist platform.

³⁵⁰ Tobolka, IV, p.243; Hajšman, p.68.

³⁵¹ Hajšman, p.68.

³⁵² *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.7. On 28.5. He was still under investigation in military custody.

³⁵³ Hajšman, pp.68, 73.

³⁵⁴ *NFPM*, 30.5.1917, p.7.

noted: “In all parties, the radical waves rose.”³⁵⁵ The *Maffie* now had at least a foothold in every party of the Czech Union; only the Clericals stayed immune.³⁵⁶

Clam’s mission to win political support thus appeared more hopeless than ever. He had been scheduled to meet the parliamentary party leaders the day after Karl hosted them in Laxenburg, and it was indicative of the emperor’s lack of confidence in his prime minister that he had stepped in beforehand. Nevertheless, from 22 May onwards, Clam received the various groups one after the other, before addressing them together two days later.³⁵⁷ The aim of the exercise was to discuss the impending *Reichsrat* session and to present the projected government bills.³⁵⁸ Although he took the time to accomplish his task – his talk with the Croat–Slovene Club lasted several hours, for instance – this was too little, too late. Ideologically unchanged, and having heretofore ignored every faction bar the Poles, he could not realistically expect to rally any last-minute support. As Schlitter noted, Clam’s sole backing came from the emperor’s handwritten letter.³⁵⁹ In spite of this, when he appeared on 24 May before the Convention of Party Leaders, he made a plea for unity.³⁶⁰ He expressed the hope that parliamentary activity would be such as to increase the standing of the Monarchy abroad. In addition, he announced that the government opposed official censorship of parliamentary reports, although he expected the *Reichsrat* presidium to ensure that these reports showed the necessary discretion in matters relating to war and foreign affairs, and urged the House itself to ensure that the sittings were as “smooth, dignified and successful” as possible. He then gave an overview of the proposals the government intended to submit to the House, which concerned a variety of social and economic measures, the temporary budget until the end of 1917, the standing orders, and the imperial decrees previously enacted through Paragraph Fourteen. By remarking that the government had had to stick to absolute necessities, Clam brushed the debate on constitutional and administrative reform under the carpet. This was, of course, no surprise to the men in the audience.

³⁵⁵ Tobolka, IV, pp.243-244.

³⁵⁶ Hajšman, p.70.

³⁵⁷ *PTM*, 22.5.1917, p.3.

³⁵⁸ *NFPM*, 23.5.1917, pp.2-3.

³⁵⁹ *NS*, K6, 22.5.1917.

³⁶⁰ *NFPM*, 25.5,1917, p.6.

Straight after his speech, Clam finally received the presidium of the Czech Union, consisting of Staněk, Šmeral, Tusar, and Stránský, for a two-hour talk.³⁶¹ In a seemingly conciliatory mood, the prime minister insisted that the deputies speak their native Czech (even though he stuck to German, which he spoke better).³⁶² He began by expressing his regret that an atmosphere of enmity had developed between them, but defended his actions: “I was open enough to tell you directly when I was really thinking about an octroi. Perhaps I would have made things easier for you, had I behaved less outspokenly and been less loyal.” On the other hand, he readily declared that he had not changed his views and was merely seeking different ways to implement them. He fully anticipated the Czechs’ opposition in parliament but pleaded with them to approve his provisional budget, stressing that in these exceptional circumstances, it would not be seen as a vote of confidence. He emphasized the unique importance of the coming *Reichsrat* session, and hoped an agreement could be reached: “I do not want there to be an abyss between you and me so big that no bridge can be built across it.” He admitted to his political isolation and revealed that he would enter parliament and simply announce: “My programme is Austria. Who wants to come with me?” Staněk, however, repeated that the Czechs could not change their course of action until the government established a basis for them to do so; they would therefore adopt an oppositional stance. Moreover, Šmeral impressed upon Clam the importance of announcing constitutional changes in the speech from the throne in such a manner as to give the non-Germans and non-Magyars hope of reaching a settlement within the state. He demanded an unfettered debate on centralization and federalization. Clam promised both would eventually be discussed and all demands considered. He added that he himself had grown up in a federalist environment and had “been to the school of state rights”, and therefore had a sense for the doctrine, even though he considered it impracticable. Indeed, he made clear that certain limits had to be imposed on national autonomy to guarantee the solid foundations of the Monarchy. Moreover, he criticized the concept as a mere slogan which had never truly been carried out, except in Switzerland, “those happy lands, where the nationality of the citizens coincides with the territory”. Yet he conceded that it had become a reality which had to be incorporated into future peacetime plans. The reform of Austria, as he saw it, necessitated a compromise between historic

³⁶¹ *NFPM*, 25.5, p.6.

³⁶² *FŠ*, K18, S133, 2, 24.5.1917.

frontiers, national autonomy and state unity. Furthermore, Clam justified his recommendation to withhold the oath, indicating that the emperor would take it once parliament had helped modify the constitution. Stránský considered its postponement dangerous under a government so close to the Germans, explaining that the Czechs would see it as a manoeuvre designed to allow the German nationalists to claim that the crown, as well as the government, supported their “preconditions”. Clam, however, argued that the two-thirds parliamentary majority necessary for constitutional change could never be achieved, and that an oath would thus for ever prevent its amendment. But he assured them that there would be no octroi, declaring: “When you see what is going on in the world, can you imagine unilateral measures which are not state necessities being taken against you as a nation? I cannot.”³⁶³ Of course, he and the German nationalists had always described the octroi itself as a state necessity. In any case, the prime minister’s attempts at conciliation and vague promises fell short even of the Czechs’ minimal desires. And his curious mixture of desperation, reassurance and rigidity contrasted with the Czechs’ confident resolve. No bridge was built; in fact, by now, no bridge could be built. The meeting had been quite superfluous, and the press soon reported that it had come to nothing.³⁶⁴

The belated efforts by Karl and Clam to secure a working majority, and to guarantee unperturbed parliamentary activity, had borne little fruit. Almost a month had passed since the recall of parliament had been announced, and the combined effects of the government’s inflexibility and lethargy on the one hand, and increasing popular unrest and political radicalization on the other, meant that the chances of national reconciliation and parliamentary unity were by now virtually non-existent. The remaining days leading up to the inaugural sitting would make these firmly impossible.

Domestic unrest (2)

Firstly, still under the spell of the Adler trial, Vienna was swept by its first mass strike movement of the war. On the morning of 22 May, the rumour that a comrade had collapsed through exhaustion led all 16,000 workers of the arsenal’s artillery production to down tools, and to call for better provision of food and the introduction

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ *NFPM*, 26.5.1917, p.4.

of an eight-hour working day.³⁶⁵ By 24 May, the movement had reached its zenith, totalling 42,000 idle workers from the city's most significant industrial concerns.³⁶⁶ Two days later, the movement still affected more than fifty companies and 26,000 strikers.³⁶⁷ In the end, work resumed everywhere on 29 May, although negotiations between workers and union representatives continued.³⁶⁸

Aside from lack of food and war-weariness, the Vienna police diagnosed the Russian Revolution, the Adler trial and the recall of the *Reichsrat* as the chief contributing factors to the workers' agitation.³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it concluded that the movement was neither revolutionary nor planned, nor intended to bring about an early peace by crippling the war effort.³⁷⁰ Indeed, its evolution had been haphazard, and, in one case, the workers had apparently not known why they were downing their tools;³⁷¹ furthermore, there had been no great riots, and the strikers had largely ignored attempts at political exploitation by revolutionary and left-wing radicals.³⁷² Thus, although galvanized by political events, the action itself was largely unpolitical, and concessions on wages and working conditions sufficed to end it. Comparisons with Saint Petersburg were thus misplaced. Tellingly, when Karl twice happened to be driven past the *Arbeiterheim* in Favoriten (where the meetings between the union and the workers were being held), he was "greeted most deferentially" by those gathering before the building.³⁷³

Nevertheless, the authorities had reasons for concern, having been unable to prevent or to put a rapid end to a rash of strikes which threatened the conduct of war. What is more, work interruptions had taken place concurrently outside the capital,³⁷⁴ with Bohemia again at the forefront.³⁷⁵ In its helplessness, the ministry of war had resorted to issuing a plea to the workers, male and female, which was posted on 26 May in all industries under military administration in Cisleithania.³⁷⁶ In its appeal, printed in all local languages, it argued that since the setting-up of Complaints

³⁶⁵ *MI*, K2000, 8987.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; 8983 in 8987; *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/17.

³⁶⁷ *KBA*, 37b, 97/T.R.

³⁶⁸ *MI*, K2000, 8987.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8983 in 8987.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *MI*, K2000, 8987.

³⁷² *MI*, K2071, 18658.

³⁷³ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/17.

³⁷⁴ *KBA*, 37b, 94/T.R.; *MI*, K2000, 8928, 9238, 9239. In Lower Austria and Galicia, for instance.

³⁷⁵ *SH*, 1925, 1930, 1931, 1936, 1939, 1959, pp.241-244, 246.

³⁷⁶ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/18.

Commissions in mid-March, wages and working conditions could no longer be a cause for strikes. It admitted that difficulties in the provision of food were inevitable after almost three years of war, but gave assurances that the government and all competent organs of state were striving tirelessly to remedy these. Striking as a result of these privations, it claimed, only played into the hands of the enemy, adding: “Our glorious young emperor has done everything in order to bring about a dignified peace. The enemies contemptuously reject this!” It continued: “The duty of each individual is to place his entire strength at the service of the fatherland and, where necessary, to exert his influence on hot-headed elements. Think of the dangers, of the manifold trials and tribulations, of the privations and toils, to which your fathers, brothers and sons are exposed out there in the trenches! [...] Certainly, times are hard, but everybody has to make sacrifices.” And although it praised the workers’ behaviour (“until recently”), it warned of drastic coercive measures for those who forgot their honour and duty. Finally, it urged them to hold out for the good of the state, as well as for their own sake, in the coming honourable peace. This desperate patriotic entreaty had no obvious impact, as ongoing strikes either dragged on³⁷⁷ or ended only through negotiation,³⁷⁸ while new ones sprang up,³⁷⁹ notably in Bohemia.³⁸⁰

In addition, the authorities’ connivance with the Social Democrats had proved less fruitful than anticipated. In fact, the collaboration itself had contributed to denting the party’s credibility in the eyes of the masses and of the radicals, and had earned its leaders the scornful epithets of “government socialists” and “social patriots”.³⁸¹ And the industrial action in Vienna further undermined the Socialists’ already broken authority. Not only had it begun without the knowledge of the party, the workers’ representatives or the trade unions, it had continued against their will.³⁸² Events had revealed the growing presence of the radical Left among the workers, and its infiltration of the party, particularly of its youth organization. In addition, the Adler trial, which the Socialists also acknowledged as a chief factor in the strikes, had a devastating effect on the party. Pernerstorfer declared that Adler had inflicted on it “the most terrible wounds in its existence”. Gravely concerned, the Social Democrats resolved to counter the developments through a public relations offensive. The party

³⁷⁷ *MI*, K2000, 9241; *SH*, 1930, p.242.

³⁷⁸ *MI*, K2000, 8987.

³⁷⁹ *KBA*, 37b, 99/T.R.; 108/T.R.

³⁸⁰ *SH*, 1934, 1947, 1955, pp.242, 244, 246.

³⁸¹ *VGA*, *PA*, M2, op. cit.

³⁸² *Ibid.*; *MI*, K2000, 8987; K2068, 8932.

had previously agreed to bring to the attention of parliament the indignation of the majority of the population concerning Adler's death sentence and the horrors of wartime military justice, but, in the wake of the strike movement, it needed first and foremost to reassert its authority, to assuage the restless masses and discourage them from revolution.³⁸³ As a result, it decided to clarify its position by publishing a statement in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* on the Adler trial, the strikes and the demonstrations.³⁸⁴ However, the influence of the Austrian Social Democratic leaders was already greatly diminished, as they themselves admitted and as Wedel reported to Berlin.³⁸⁵

Their Czech counterparts were in a similar position.³⁸⁶ Having already lost ground to the radicals throughout April and May, they too faced serious challenges to their authority at the end of the month. Admittedly, food conditions had improved in areas of the Bohemian lands which had enjoyed a good early harvest and which had been largely spared from requisitions.³⁸⁷ One such zone described a semicircle between Teplitz in north-western Bohemia and the *Böhmerwald* in the south, via Eger, Pilsen and Písek, while another spanned southern Moravia.³⁸⁸ Yet northern and eastern Bohemia, large stretches of Moravia, and almost all of Silesia, were among the worst-affected regions in Cisleithania.³⁸⁹ As a result, the near incessant unrest which had characterized the entire month of May in the historic crownlands intensified in the week preceding the reopening of parliament.³⁹⁰ On 23 May, the director of the Prague Iron and Industry Company informed the military chancellery that lack of food had recently led to continual hunger strikes in several of its mines and works.³⁹¹ Having been told not to count on any supplies before the new harvest, he announced that he could no longer vouch for the unperturbed activity of his enterprises, all of which exclusively served the army. This situation was mirrored in numerous localities, and it was therefore no surprise that, at the height of the unrest in Vienna, a wave of strikes had erupted, chiefly in Czech-speaking areas. Workers

³⁸³ Ibid.; *MI*, K2068, 8932.

³⁸⁴ *VGA, PA*, M2, op. cit.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 12.6.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ *MI*, K2069, 11628, report of the censorship department of the joint intelligence bureau for May, compiled from the correspondence to and from prisoners of war.

³⁸⁸ *MI*, K2069, 11628.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7, 2.6.

³⁹¹ *MKSM*, K1335, 93-2/39. This concerned 15,000 workers with 35,000 relatives.

again requested more food and higher wages, but also extra clothing and lower working hours. The synchronicity and similarity of these local actions suggested a link between them, and perhaps prior planning; at least once, the military authorities believed that the movement had originated outside the factory.³⁹² The patriotic appeal of the ministry of war was even less likely to succeed among the Czechs, and the strikes continued, accompanied by numerous demonstrations protesting against requisitions,³⁹³ lack of sustenance and the lowering of rations,³⁹⁴ or simply demanding peace.³⁹⁵ Discontent sometimes boiled over into violence,³⁹⁶ notably in Budweis/České Budějovice, where, on 22 and 23 May, after a demonstration degenerated, the entire urban area was subjected to a spree of plunder and vandalism which only ended after vigorous military intervention.³⁹⁷ Though these protests were caused by the unbearable shortage of food, they were firmly anti-Semitic and anti-German in character.³⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Kestřanek again played down the significance of such sentiments: “Under the influence of the numerous organized political agitators, political issues such as the Czech-German or Slavophile ideas may well be picked up by the masses, but in light of the lack of food, they cannot see them as burning questions. The interest of the masses towards these political questions thus seems to be pushed back by the sharp increase in supply difficulties.”³⁹⁹ And when he was again received in audience by Karl on 28 May, he told him that the strike movement in Bohemia was simply the result of difficulties in the provision of food.⁴⁰⁰ Other investigations appeared to corroborate the limited politicization of the workers’ movements. For instance, in the Ostrau-Karwin coalmining region, two leaflets signed by “Austrian workers” had been found, calling for a strike on 17 May, demanding an end to the war and vowing not to hand over coal, cannons or munitions before this was achieved and they were provided with food.⁴⁰¹ The authorities promptly dispatched an undercover agent to assess the mood of the workers, and were reassured by his findings. Despite the violent and disparaging remarks against Germany, and the

³⁹² *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7 ad I.

³⁹³ *SH*, 1956, p.246.

³⁹⁴ *SH*, 1912, 1920, 1923, 1927, 1928, 1947, pp.240-242, 244, 246.

³⁹⁵ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7 ad I.

³⁹⁶ *SH*, 1921, 1922, 1940, pp.241, 243; *KBA*, 37b, 102/T.R.

³⁹⁷ *KBA*, 37b, 93/T.R; *SH*, 1916, p.240.

³⁹⁸ *SH*, 1916, p.240; *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7 ad I; *PMV/R*, K191, 8643 in 8653.

³⁹⁹ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7, 2.6.

⁴⁰⁰ *MRP/R*, K19, 433.

⁴⁰¹ *MI*, K2000, 9511 in 10212.

desire for a separate peace with Russia, he could establish no political motives in the movement of the previous months. He ascribed the repeated, partial interruptions of work simply to the workers' unhappiness concerning food and wages, and considered a general strike unthinkable.⁴⁰² Nor did the authorities seem to lose much sleep over the threats they occasionally received, such as the anonymous letter to the governor in Prague which read, in part: "The emperor and empress must also be exterminated. Long live the Czech Republic! Away with the government!"⁴⁰³ Nevertheless, Kestřánek complained that individual newspapers were exploiting the supply difficulties to stoke existing national and social conflicts. He noted pointedly that certain articles concerning the Adler trial and domestic party political programmes would have been suppressed under previous censorship practice.⁴⁰⁴ Overall, the increased laxness of the authorities, their continued belief in the non-political nature of the protest movements, and their frequent inability to bring culprits to justice meant that court cases for political and military offences remained extremely rare.⁴⁰⁵

However, officials were not oblivious to the fact that the popular mood had worsened considerably in May.⁴⁰⁶ Alongside the aforementioned areas of the Bohemian lands, the worst living conditions were found in the neighbouring parts of western Galicia, and above all, in the Littoral, Istria and Dalmatia. In these areas, complaints about lack of food had given way to fears of imminent starvation, and to reports of epidemics, of hunger deaths, and of a general decline in health.⁴⁰⁷ In their summary for the month, the Vienna censors described the state of mind of the population across Cisleithania as "bad, very depressed and partly despairing".⁴⁰⁸ Its patience seemed at an end, and numerous letters expressed the desire for an eternal peace through death.⁴⁰⁹ Scarcely a line in all the correspondence indicated either resigned acceptance of the present or hope for the future.⁴¹⁰ The question of food appeared in every letter, as did, inevitably, the issue of peace (which almost all believed near), though no

⁴⁰² *MI*, K2000, 10212. He had attended gatherings in Witkowitz/Vítkovice on 20 and 28.5.1917.

⁴⁰³ *SH*, 1941, p.244.

⁴⁰⁴ *MKSM*, K1305, 28-2/10-7 ad I.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ *MI*, K2069, 10101; 11628.

⁴⁰⁷ *MI*, K2069, 11628.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; 10101.

⁴⁰⁹ *MI*, K2069, 10101.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*; 11628.

particular agitation in this direction could be detected.⁴¹¹ The populace still worried exclusively about procuring its daily bread, and remained oblivious to “the significance of the times”.⁴¹² Its preoccupation with the events of the war was no more than “modest”, and it had largely forgotten the reasons for having entered it.⁴¹³ Only the German-speaking intelligentsia and urban middle classes retained their interest in these developments and confidence in their outcome. Hopeful that the Russian Revolution would bring peace in the east, they also dismissed the impact of the American intervention “with a cool movement of the hand”. The belief in political and military victory – thanks in particular to submarine warfare – still held sway among these circles’ “less profound thinkers”.⁴¹⁴ But the great masses, the urban proletariat and rural population saw things very differently. Infuriated by the lowering of the bread and flour rations, and scornful of *ersatz* products, they now brought forward their complaints “with a raised fist”.⁴¹⁵ The moderation and resigned acquiescence of earlier reports had given way to stinging, uninhibited rebukes of local and state authorities and of the central food offices,⁴¹⁶ denouncing their incompetence, indifference and weakness: “The sharpness of the language which now makes itself felt in the letters is completely new and most conspicuous”.⁴¹⁷ Moreover, a “socialist-minded ferment” was increasingly perceptible in the correspondence, even in that of the middle class.⁴¹⁸ Despite the despair and pessimism of previous months, no socialist tendencies had been in evidence. Yet these, chiefly influenced by the Russian Revolution, had found resonance among the population, particularly the slogans decrying the power of the few over the many.⁴¹⁹ In addition, the thought appeared increasingly frequently that the war was a large capitalist concern, prolonged by those allegedly benefiting from it: profiteers, agrarians, peasants, industrialists, Jews, the great lords and, occasionally, the bureaucrats. Many believed that the war would end only when the rich experienced hunger.⁴²⁰ The censors now worried that the uncritical and easily influenced masses, far from following the beaten track towards a sound,

⁴¹¹ *MI*, K2069, 10101; 11628.

⁴¹² *MI*, K2069, 10101.

⁴¹³ *MI*, K2069, 11628.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *MI*, K2069, 10101.

⁴¹⁶ *The Zentralstellen.*

⁴¹⁷ *MI*, K2069, 10101; 11628.

⁴¹⁸ *MI*, K2069, 10101; *MRP*, K306, 3056.

⁴¹⁹ *MI*, K2069, 10101.

⁴²⁰ *MI*, K2069, 11628.

egalitarian, moderate democracy, were in thrall to an “unhealthy, all-destructive socialism”, epitomized by their violent criticism of the authorities and of the rich. They concluded ominously: “the population is in a state of easy irritability and the preconditions for the next stage are set.”⁴²¹ What is more, contrary to the solidarity between classes and nations which had developed among soldiers on the front, the hinterland revealed frequent symptoms of intensified conflicts between individual social strata, while petty epistolary attacks against the non-German nations were not uncommon.⁴²² Nevertheless, the question of self-determination of individual nations was scarcely discussed.⁴²³

Not unusually, the censors also remarked on the particular discontent of the Czechs. Indeed, in contrast to the mostly moderate declarations prevalent in German correspondence, Czech letters revealed a “decidedly harsher tone”.⁴²⁴ Czech peasants, for example, had similar grievances to their counterparts throughout Cisleithania but appeared “more irritated and rebellious”. Officials observed a tendency to sensationalize and to exaggerate reported news, yet the anger was real: “In places, a seething undertone asserts itself in threats to wreck and to smash everything to pieces soon.” Moreover, unlike the Germans, who feared the censors, many Czechs threw caution to the wind, and not a few taunted officials with sentences such as: “The gentlemen are welcome to read this just so they know in what high esteem we hold them.” This reflected the specific despair and resignation of the Czechs, who awaited the future with pessimism and tended to believe that the whole world was against them. Most considered it impossible to hold out any longer, and many thought of drowning themselves with their starving children. Politics appeared to offer little hope, and politicians inspired but contempt. The Russian Revolution was discussed only occasionally, and even then with mixed feelings in its implications for peace; some writers simply condemned it. In any case, comparisons with Austria were very timid.⁴²⁵

The Czechs were undeniably the angriest and most restless nationality in Cisleithania. Conditions had worsened considerably since late February, but despite the

⁴²¹ *MI*, K2069, 10101.

⁴²² *Ibid.*; 11628.

⁴²³ *MI*, K2069, 10101.

⁴²⁴ *MI*, K2069, 11628.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

galvanizing effect of the Russian Revolution, the increased social unrest and hankering for peace, as well as the rise in subversive activities, the political and national radicalization of the Czech masses had remained limited. Even in May, the police noted in its intelligence reports that there was no enthusiasm among them for the slogans of democratization; it added that these were being used in Czech political circles merely because they coincided with their national strivings.⁴²⁶ Indeed, the population's heightened state of despair and irritation made it more susceptible to radical national watchwords. The electoral successes of the National Socials, and the emergence of a nationally minded wing in the Social Democratic Party, had previously shown that parts of the Czech masses were amenable to nationalist ideology; the middle classes had always been less equivocal on the issue, and their indigence and embitterment⁴²⁷ guaranteed corresponding radicalization. As elsewhere, grievances were directed against the authorities and the state, but in the Bohemian lands they began to take on a pronounced ethnic and national dimension. Anti-Semitism was a habitual feature of Czech protests, but anti-German feelings manifested themselves with increasing frequency. These were reinforced by the animosity towards the German Reich, and the sense of isolation and persecution many Czechs experienced. As the reopening of parliament drew nearer, they looked to their deputies to defend their interests. The stance of the Czech Union in the coming *Reichsrat* session became the object of growing interest, fuelled by reports and speculation in the press and intensified by the singularly influential Writers' Manifesto. Thereafter, the Adler trial, the industrial strikes in Vienna and the wave of unrest in Bohemia, combined with the dwindling influence of the moderate Social Democrats, completed the preconditions for the "next stage" of which the censor had warned. Kestřanek had previously worried that mass movements with purely social aims could be hijacked by nationalists: and indeed, nationally radicalized politicians in the Czech Union, confident of popular support and in many cases egged on by the *Maffie*, now made the final push to impose their views.

⁴²⁶ *PMV/R*, K192, 9220; 10186. *PDP*, 13.5; 22.5.1917.

⁴²⁷ *PMV/R*, K192, 10186, 22.5.1917.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

The final push

Švehla, whose task it was to bring about the adoption of the Czech Union's definitive *Reichsrat* proclamation, had conducted a cautious policy at the helm of the Agrarians, keeping two irons in the fire throughout. While the party filled one of its newspapers with attacks against the leading activists in the union, it used the other to endorse the organization's policies.¹ Švehla himself encapsulated this opportunism. In the second week of May, in the expectancy of an imperial visit to Prague, he had asked the historian and university professor Josef Pekař – a conservative Austrophile and staunch believer in the realization of state rights within the Habsburg Empire – to produce an address for the occasion;² when the academic presented his draft on 18 May, he noted that Švehla still contemplated a traditional state-rights proclamation for the opening of the *Reichsrat*.³ Yet a month earlier, on 17 April, as news of the octroi's demise appeared, he had told Přemysl Šámal that he wished to influence Czech deputies into making a “declaration for the independence of the Czech nation” in parliament. To this end, he had requested the help of writers and scholars from the head of the *Maffie*, who, in turn, had intensified preparations for the authors' action.⁴ In addition, at the end of April, he had met the Slovak politician Vavro Šrobár in Prague, who had exposed the plight of his nation and pleaded for its inclusion in the Czech Union's declaration.⁵ The bleakness of his depiction – he predicted that within twenty to thirty years the Slovaks would all but succumb to Magyarization – and his insistence that the entire Slovak intelligentsia supported the formation of a state with the Czech nation persuaded Švehla to promise him that his people would feature in the address.⁶ Švehla was, therefore, under the triple influence of Šrobár's appeal, of the Writers' Manifesto and of recent developments abroad when he began to prepare

¹ Tobolka, IV, p.243.

² Tobolka, IV, p.240; Paulová, *Tajný*, p.223; *NS*, II, p.166; Pekař, “K českému boji státoprávnímu za války”, *Český časopis historický*, XXXVI (1930), pp.520-551.

³ Tobolka, IV, p.243; Pekař, pp.521-528.

⁴ From Šámal's stenographic notes in: Paulová, *Tajný*, pp.223-224.

⁵ Šrobár, pp.53-55.

⁶ *Ibid.*

his draft for the forthcoming general meeting.⁷ In the week leading up to the conference, however, the *Maffie* approached several deputies of his party sympathetic to their cause, namely Rychtera, Zahradník and Prášek (who had a personal grudge against him);⁸ in conjunction with the last-named, *Maffie* agent Bedřich Štěpánek produced a draft proclamation for parliament which demanded the establishment of an independent, democratic Czech state including Slovakia, and which spoke of neither dynasty nor monarchy.⁹ On 24 May, the proposal was handed over to Švehla, who was strongly encouraged to accept it – Rychtera told Šámal that they had “put a pistol to his head”.¹⁰ They were confident that he would comply.¹¹

But despite this pressure and the visible influence of the *Maffie* draft on his own, the text Švehla presented at the meeting of the Union executive and party delegates in Prague on 27 May demanded, on the basis of both the natural right to self-determination and historic rights, the establishment of a democratic Czech state incorporating the Slovaks within a federalized Habsburg Monarchy consisting of free and equal nations.¹² Worries that the declaration abandoned historic state rights, that the Catholic majority in Slovakia did not support attachment to the Czechs and that the Magyars would come down even harder on the Slovaks, eventually receded.¹³ In the end, the brevity, clarity and popular appeal of the address won over the majority.¹⁴ Stránský, as the representative of the Czech Union executive, had no objections – the proposed draft mirrored his own views.¹⁵ As Tobolka wrote, the proclamation “testified to the fight against dualism, centralism and its supporters, the Germans and the Magyars, in particular the Germans in the Bohemian lands”.¹⁶ And, for the first time, the Union spoke of a “Czechoslovak nation”.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the opinion prevailed that it was not yet opportune to request the reorganization of the Czech state outside the framework of the Empire.¹⁸ It seemed that the matter had finally been settled.

⁷ Soukup, I, p.404.

⁸ Šámal's notes in: Paulová, *Tajný*, pp.228-229; Tobolka, IV, p.244.

⁹ Tobolka, IV, p.244; Hajšman, p.69; draft in: *NR*, II, p.183-184.

¹⁰ Šámal's notes, op. cit.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; *FŠ*, K18, S139, meetings of 29.5.1917 (incomplete and erroneously marked 28.5).

¹² Soukup, I, p.405; Tobolka, IV, p.242.

¹³ *NR*, II, p.182.

¹⁴ Soukup, I, p.405; *NR*, II, p.182.

¹⁵ *NR*, II, p.182.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.182-183.

¹⁷ Tobolka, IV, p.242.

¹⁸ Soukup, I, p.405; *NR*, II, p.182.

However, when members of the Czech Union travelled to Vienna the following day, it became clear on the train that the chosen text was not universally popular. Objections arose from those who believed the addition of Slovakia to be a tactical mistake, as well as those who felt that the rejection of the compromise draft undermined the Czech Union, but they chiefly came from those who had hoped that the declaration would eschew any mention of the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁹ The main proponent of this secessionist view, Prášek, resuscitated his *Maffie*-inspired draft, for which he persistently tried to gain acceptance, in the carriages and at the subsequent meetings in Vienna.²⁰ Concomitantly, the *Maffie* produced a text which promoted the realization of its maximum aims (Prášek's draft was only the minimum).²¹ This document was submitted during the journey by Zahradník, who claimed to have received it anonymously, and it resurfaced on the chairman's table during the plenum.²² This proclamation accepted the *émigrés*' programme in its entirety, siding with the Entente against the Central Powers and expecting an international settlement of the Czech question;²³ when it reappeared again the following day, it was as Kalina's opening declaration to parliament.²⁴

On 29 May, Czech deputies convened from early morning to late evening in the *Reichsrat* building in order to reach a final decision on the Union's proclamation.²⁵ The prospects for compromise appeared slim, but the organization had no choice but to agree on a declaration by the end of the day. Three drafts were up for consideration: Švehla's, Prášek's and Zahradník's. The third was disqualified by its unknown authorship, while Prášek suffered a major setback when his proposal was rejected by his own party club.²⁶ Journalists at the scene heard that talks were failing on account of Prášek's and Šmeral's intransigence, and that the deputies were split into two camps;²⁷ certainly, during the meetings, Prášek was adamant that no political agreement would ever be possible with the Germans.²⁸ Stříbrný, for his part, insisted "fanatically" that the words concerning dynasty and monarchy be dropped

¹⁹ *NR*, II, p.183.

²⁰ Draft in: *NR*, II, pp.183-184.

²¹ Šámal's notes, op. cit., pp.228-230.

²² *NR*, II, p.183.

²³ Draft in: *NR*, II, pp.184-187.

²⁴ *NR*, II, p.188.

²⁵ *FŠ*, K18, S139, 29.5; *NFPM*, 30.5.1917, p.6; Hajšman, p.72. The Union's executive, plenum and parliamentary commission all met, as did the various clubs.

²⁶ *NR*, II, pp.184, 187.

²⁷ Hajšman, p.72.

²⁸ *FŠ*, K18, S139, 29.5.1917.

and that the programme of the exiles be proclaimed.²⁹ Quickly, news spread among the Germans that the Union was about to break up,³⁰ but the Czechs were not willing to see it collapse. Stránský made a passionate plea for unity and for a unanimous address.³¹ Moreover, support for the Prague draft was still strong. Udržal spoke out in its favour, as did Tobolka, whose party comrades eventually acquiesced; Tusar considered that the matter had been settled two days earlier, and could not understand that negotiations were continuing so close to the deadline. Meanwhile, Šmeral denounced the radical standpoint. In addition, the Clericals finally acceded to the Prague resolution on the condition that the proclamation declare that Czech demands were “in the interest of the whole Empire and of the dynasty”.³² The highly contentious inclusion of the Slovaks was eventually accepted after the Agrarians announced that they would take full responsibility for everything that occurred in Slovakia after the proclamation.³³ (Udržal revealed that the maverick Hungarian politician Count Mihály Károlyi had told him in the summer of 1916 that the Hungarians fully expected the Czechs to seek union with the Slovaks.)³⁴ In the end, the plenum of the Union adopted a very slightly modified version of the proclamation agreed upon in Prague.³⁵ Five deputies, however, refused to give their approval due to their fundamental opposition to Habsburg sovereignty: Prášek, and the National Socials Baxa, Konečný, Slavíček and Stříbrný.³⁶

As the meeting ended, Šmeral approached the journalists gathered in the building; red as a crayfish, wiping the sweat from his brow, his eyes filled with joy and satisfaction, he announced: “Well, it’s done! That was quite some work! Yet I did it!”³⁷ Other deputies soon arrived; Zahradník looked indignant but Prášek was smiling.³⁸ Arguably, he had greater cause for contentment than Šmeral. The Social Democratic leader was relieved to have kept the declaration within the framework of Austria-Hungary, yet this had not even been in doubt a fortnight before. The first three Union drafts submitted on 11 May had all reckoned with the dynasty and the

²⁹ Soukup, I, p.406.

³⁰ Hajšman, p.72.

³¹ *FŠ*, K18, S139, 29.5.1917.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Šrobár, p.55. According to the information later Šrobár received.

³⁴ *FŠ*, K18, S139, 29.5.1917.

³⁵ *NR*, II, p.187; changes, including the Clericals’ request, noted in: Beneš, III, 93, pp.291-292.

³⁶ Tobolka, IV, p.245; Soukup, I, p.406.

³⁷ Hajšman, p.74.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Empire (and had all omitted Slovakia). The radical current, let loose by the Writers' Manifesto, was evidently in the ascendancy. On the last day of negotiations, Prášek's draft had been supported by sixteen members of the plenum, and had only narrowly been voted down in the Agrarian Club.³⁹ (The radicals could also count in their ranks the two State-Rights Progressive deputies outside the Union.) What is more, although the Czech Union had originally succeeded in amending Švehla's text, by specifying that the future Czech state should come about "within the framework of the Empire", these words were subsequently deleted from the final version agreed upon in Vienna.⁴⁰ This was likely the result of Prášek's pressure.⁴¹ Tobolka considered the final document a disavowal of the *émigrés*, because it nevertheless recognized the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty, but Hajšman, the *Maffie* agent posing as a reporter in parliament, appeared pleased enough with the draft, especially with the inclusion of the Slovaks, which he considered "a success, a breakthrough".⁴² Indeed, in less than two weeks, the Czech Union had come close to aligning itself with the *émigré* programme. And, most likely, several deputies who supported it ideologically had not endorsed it for purely tactical reasons. Therefore, the proclamation, though nominally loyal to Austria-Hungary, in fact concealed the true extent of Czech radicalization.

The German journalists present were nevertheless baffled by its content. In particular they could not understand the passage concerning the Slovaks. They asked Šmeral: "How can you really mean that? You do not have state rights in Hungary! Why are you needlessly provoking the Magyars when this cannot be realized? Do you want to wage war with the Magyars?"⁴³ German nationalist circles were, of course, dismayed that the Czechs should make a state-rights declaration at all, and protested that they were exposing an already difficult parliamentary situation to even greater danger. As a result, they decided that German deputies from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia would give a corresponding counter-declaration.⁴⁴ Parliament had not yet opened, but the age-old feud was in full swing.

³⁹ *NR*, II, p.184; *FŠ*, K18, S139, 29.5.1917.

⁴⁰ Beneš, III, 93, pp.291-292. The addition on the typed copy of Švehla's draft was in Tusar's handwriting, and was subsequently crossed out.

⁴¹ Hajšman, p.69.

⁴² Tobolka, IV, p.242; Hajšman, p.74. He thought it "not bad" until the mention of the Monarchy.

⁴³ Hajšman, p.74.

⁴⁴ *NFPM*, 30.5.1917, p.6. The German Radical Union, with Hummer, Wolf and Pacher.

There was little consolation elsewhere for the government. The South Slavs had followed the Czech example since March, though they remained less organized and less radicalized. In late April, the presidium and the parliamentary commission of the Croat–Slovene Club had denounced the one-sided position of the government on the nationality question for being in conflict with the Austrian state idea,⁴⁵ and Clam had done nothing since to dispel this notion. And, as with the Czechs, the Austrian South Slavs were aggrieved by the treatment of their brethren on the other side of the Leitha.⁴⁶ The idea of unifying all branches of the nation within the Empire combined with the new slogan of self-determination presaged the content of the South Slavs' opening declaration to parliament. With this in mind, on 29 May, Slovene and Cisleithanian Croat deputies united in a South Slav Club, or *Jugoslovanski Klub*, under the leadership of Korošec, and adopted a unanimous resolution on the South Slav question.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, contrary to optimistic predictions, the refractory Poles evinced no tendencies towards moderation. Quite the opposite: the police in Cracow and in Lwów reported violent agitation throughout Galicia fomented in order to drum up support for Tetmajer's resolution, and thus influence the Polish Club towards a policy of unification of all Polish areas into one independent state.⁴⁸ Throughout the province, thousands of signatures were gathered, demanding that his motion be adopted.⁴⁹ The National Democrats, the People's Party and the Socialists were at the forefront of these campaigns. Propaganda also appeared in the press and in numerous lithographed appeals and leaflets. Some of these identified and denounced the deputies who had voted against Tetmajer's text.⁵⁰ In Cracow, where riots had continued and political agitation was particularly fierce, the municipal council announced its full endorsement of the Vienna resolutions.⁵¹ Shortly after, several political rallies took place in the city to maintain pressure on the Polish Club. On 25

⁴⁵ *NFPM*, 28.4.1917, p.3. They did, however, praise Karl's efforts towards peace.

⁴⁶ Redlich, pp.65, 69.

⁴⁷ *NFPM*, 30.5, p.7. For the emergence of the Yugoslav Declaration, see: Paulová, *Tajný výbor*, Chapter XXVI, pp.235-246. The recollections of Korošec (in: "Koroščevo predavanje", pp.221-222) are vague: he and Krek first spoke of the need for a declaration. Evgen Jarc wrote the first draft, which was then amended after objections by the Dalmatian deputies Melko Čingrija and Josef Smodlaka. In the end, the third draft was selected. The Czechs and Ukrainians were then informed of its content.

⁴⁸ *MI*, K2117, 9438, 9995, police reports, Lwów, 21.5; Cracow, 26.5; 30.5.1917.

⁴⁹ *MI*, K2117, 9438.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *MI*, K2117, 9438; 9995. On 21.5.1917.

May, a gathering of all parties and of various non-political groups, organized at the initiative of the Socialists, passed several resolutions, almost all unanimously, welcoming the decisions of 16 May, requesting appropriate leadership and demanding that Polish deputies declare before the *Reichsrat* that “only an independent, united and free Poland would satisfy the wishes of the Polish nation”.⁵² The same feelings were also vented at a large meeting of the Cracow Citizens’ Committee organized by the National Democrats. The congregation declared that Tetmajer’s resolution corresponded “to the feelings, endeavours, rights, will and dignity of the Polish nation” and should form the basis of Polish policy. It denounced those who had opposed it and expressed the conviction that the Polish Club would listen to the voice and desire of the people.⁵³ The scene was set for the decisive final round of meetings. Bobrzyński had not waited for these and had tendered his resignation on 24 May, though Karl did not accept it immediately.⁵⁴

Though the same split emerged from the conferences of individual parties, it had obviously become less pronounced. On the one hand, the National Democrats, the People’s Party and the Socialists insisted that Tetmajer’s wording or a similar one had to be adopted without commentary or ambiguity; on the other hand, the Conservatives and the Democrats, though they were willing to declare that the Poles strove for independence and unification, wished to adapt Tetmajer’s text to the prevailing political conditions, and to stick to the Two Emperors’ Manifesto.⁵⁵ When the Polish Club met on 27 May, acting chairman Ludomił German reported on his audience with the emperor two days earlier,⁵⁶ revealing that Karl wanted to retain Bobrzyński and was adamant that, should he resign, he would not appoint another minister for Galicia until the end of the war. This threat had no impact on the debate, however, and the moderates did not succeed in forcing a compromise. In the end, a resolution submitted by Stanisław Łazarski was passed, recommending the adoption of Tetmajer’s draft by the plenary gathering of all *Reichsrat* and diet members.⁵⁷ It was also unanimously agreed to reapply the original statutes of the Club according to which a presidium of four men, rather than a single leader, was entitled to negotiate with the government

⁵² *MI*, K2117, 9438.

⁵³ *MI*, K2117, 9438; *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.6. On 26.5 according to the latter, 27.5 for the former.

⁵⁴ *NFPM*, 25.5.1917, p.6.

⁵⁵ *MI*, K2117, 9438.

⁵⁶ *NFPM*, 26.5.1917, p.4.

⁵⁷ *MI*, K2117, 9438; *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.6.

and other parties of the House. This was of considerable significance, since the National Democrats and the Socialists would now be represented.⁵⁸

The following day, as the plenary meeting approached, Cracow was in ferment. The local citizens' committee had organized a solemn service in the Church of Saint Anne, from where a large crowd proceeded to the university to thank its academics for the supportive memorandum they had sent to the Polish Club. There, three speakers, including Tetmajer, briefly addressed the masses and pointed to the historic significance of the moment. Later, the throng also heard short speeches from representatives of the National Democrats, the Socialists, the People's Party, *Piast* and the Progressive Democrats.⁵⁹ The street demonstrations – apparently organized by the National Democrats and Socialists – were attended by thousands, who cheered the deputies and sang patriotic and anti-German songs.⁶⁰ As the *Neue Freie Presse* reported: "Whit Monday turned into an imposing national demonstration".⁶¹ The authorities, who described the population as "extremely excited by political agitation and by the latest food supply measures", refrained from intervening.⁶² The congress itself, which brought together in the town hall 150 parliamentarians from both Houses of the *Reichsrat* and the provincial diet, started late due to last-ditch attempts to win over the Conservatives.⁶³ The only issue on the agenda was the Polish question, as it was now accepted that the Polish Club would not support the government. Tetmajer therefore briefly defended his resolution, arguing that it heeded the mood of the masses and formulated clearly the wishes of the Polish nation; he then read out a stylistically modified version of his draft, whereupon, chairman Juliusz Leo asked the assembly to eschew debating in order to give the resolution greater weight.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the aged Conservative spokesman Count Stanisław Tarnowski, though agreeing with the proposal, put forward amendments in the name of his party, notably a passage stating: "The Club sees in Emperor Karl, who each day shows proof of his political recognition of Polish interests, a benevolent and powerful champion and advocate of the just Polish cause and, counting on his support with the utmost gratitude, the Club looks to the future with confidence." However, the Socialist

⁵⁸ *MI*, K2117, 9438.

⁵⁹ *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.6.

⁶⁰ *MI*, K2117, 9438.

⁶¹ *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.6.

⁶² *MI*, K2117, 9438.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.6.

⁶⁴ *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.6.

Daszyński insisted that, since the Two Emperors' Manifesto, the Russian Revolution and the American entry into the war (along with Wilson's declarations) had transformed the Polish question, as Russia had ceased to be a mortal enemy and Washington would have a decisive voice at the peace conference. Germany, he added, had no friends among the Poles, and only insane or venal elements could serve her. He therefore warned the Conservatives that by ignoring Polish public opinion, they risked being swept away by violent currents. Visibly marked by his words, they withdrew for consultation during the following speech. When they returned, Tarnowski declared that, in light of the need for unanimous action and solidarity in this moment of destiny, his party had decided to renounce any amendments and to accept Tetmajer's motion.⁶⁵ This triggered long, uninterrupted applause; the remaining speakers forsook their addresses and the gathering voted unanimously in favour of the resolution. The news, announced from the balcony, was welcomed with jubilation by the crowd assembled outside.⁶⁶ Much like the Czechs, the Poles now had both political unity and popular support to back their radical national demands.

Having belatedly realized that Polish support was unattainable, Clam had rushed to win back the Ukrainians. Receiving representatives from both Houses on 28 May, he reassured them that no territorial cessions whatsoever were being considered in eastern Galicia or the Bukovina, since the Monarchy desired an honourable peace which preserved its territorial integrity.⁶⁷ Moreover, he praised the "numerous cases of exemplary patriotic self-sacrifice of the Ukrainian population of these areas" and the success of their national organizations in fighting machinations against the state. He added that the government considered the rebuilding of the land to be a "holy duty". Finally, he gave assurances that in the coming reorganization of the Empire, the government would take into account the requirements of the Ukrainian nation with regard to its development, and that no obstacle would prevent the fulfilment of its demand for equal treatment in all spheres of public life.⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, these desperate last-gasp promises had little effect.

⁶⁵ *MI*, K2117, 9438.

⁶⁶ *NFPN*, 29.5.1917, p.6.

⁶⁷ *NFPM*, 30.5.1917, p.1.

⁶⁸ *NFPM*, 30.5.1917, p.1.

Karl can only have been disappointed by political developments since recalling the *Reichsrat*. His hopes for national reconciliation and, at the very least, parliamentary support for his government, had not materialized. He himself had failed to impose the course he professed to favour. Throughout May, he had remained a peripheral figure and, like his prime minister, his chief efforts had been directed at the irreconcilable Poles. He also worked to appease the German nationalists, but his domestic political activity was otherwise scant. Certainly, his energies were monopolized by his quest for peace; further, as a soldier, he was more comfortable visiting the front than the hinterland, all the more so in light of the endemic popular unrest. Crucially, though, he had believed that Clam was a competent and suitable personality to preside over the reopening of parliament after a three-year adjournment, under trying and exceptional circumstances. The run-up to 30 May probably shook this conviction, but it was too late to part with him. And as long as he maintained him and his discredited cabinet, he could not alter the course of events. In Hungary, however, Karl had long realized that Tisza represented an insuperable obstacle to the fulfilment of his aims. Bound by his oath to the Hungarian crown, he had sought to initiate change through electoral reform, in the hope of securing the support of the disenfranchised masses and nationalities. Rumours of Tisza's removal had already circulated at the end of 1916 and it was known in late March that Karl had fallen out with him and wished to be rid of him at the earliest opportunity.⁶⁹ He had subsequently fashioned such a chance on 28 April, by requesting in a handwritten letter the extension of the electoral franchise.⁷⁰ When Tisza dragged his feet and proposed only nugatory changes, Karl lost patience and forced his resignation, which ensued on 23 May.⁷¹ He had thereby removed the last of the men who had gone to war in July 1914. But his hands were still tied – willingly so. In May, he had finally discovered the contents of Brosch's programme for Franz Ferdinand's accession to the throne, but had told Polzer: "The matter is very interesting, but it has no significance for me. I have taken my coronation oath and I will keep it as long as I live."⁷² Tisza in any case retained a majority in parliament and remained the most powerful man in Hungary.⁷³ His young

⁶⁹ *NS*, K6, 28.12, 30.12.1916; *RT*, II, 25.3, p.286; *Ö70*, 51, Wedel-Bethmann, 30.3.1917.

⁷⁰ *NFPM*, 29.4.1917, p.1.

⁷¹ *NFPN*, 30.4, p.2; *NFPM*, 24.5.1917, p.1.

⁷² Polzer, p.291.

⁷³ Polzer, pp.119, 298.

and feeble successor Móric Esterházy was unable to overcome this opposition and resigned after just over two months.⁷⁴

In Austria, meanwhile, Karl's failure to cashier Clam confirmed the various nationalities in their distrust of the government and, by extension, of the system and of the Monarchy. Young, charming and untainted, Karl was still a popular figure. (The Prague police thought it particularly noteworthy that, since his accession, no cases of injury to his honour had been reported.)⁷⁵ Yet he mistakenly believed that this personal goodwill stretched to all he symbolized. Since the overthrow of the tsar, his main worry had been the outbreak of social revolution, but the loyal attitude of the Social Democrats, the untroubled May Day and the sympathy of the masses towards him helped allay his fears. On the other hand, he scarcely considered the possibility of national revolutions and remained confident of his subjects' Austrian patriotism. In May, what he heard and saw in the national politics of Cisleithania undoubtedly frustrated him; yet what he did not hear or see – or perhaps did not want to hear or see – would have horrified him.

Parliament recalled

On 30 May, in stifling heat, the *Reichsrat* finally reconvened.⁷⁶ Clam, informed of the intentions of the Czechs and South Slavs, pleaded with them beforehand to refrain from going ahead with their declarations, for both domestic and foreign political reasons.⁷⁷ Without even discussing the matter among themselves, they refused to comply.⁷⁸ In the House, Staněk fired the first shot: "The deputation of the Czech nation, convinced that the present dualist system has led to the creation of dominant and dominated nations, to the obvious detriment of the general interest, believes that, in order to eliminate all national privilege and to safeguard the all-round development of each nation in the interest of the whole Empire and of the dynasty, it is absolutely necessary to transform the Habsburg-Lorraine Monarchy into a federal state of free and equal nations. Relying, in this historic moment, on the natural rights of nations to self-determination and free development, reinforced, in our case, by inalienable

⁷⁴ *PLLA*, 15.6, p.1; 20.8.1917, p.1.

⁷⁵ *PMV/R*, K192, 10186, *PDP*, 22.5.1917. "Ehrfurchtverletzung".

⁷⁶ *RT*, II, 30.5.1917, p.300.

⁷⁷ *NFPA*, 30.5.1917, p.3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; "Koroščevo predavanje", p.222.

historical rights [...], we will demand, at the helm of our people, the unification of all branches of the Czechoslovak nation in a democratic state; what is more, we cannot forget the Slovak branch, which lives contiguously to the historic Czech lands.”⁷⁹ Korošec then followed: “The deputies united in the Yugoslav Club declare that, on the basis of the nationality principle and of Croatian state rights, they demand the unification of all areas of the Monarchy inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in an autonomous state body,⁸⁰ free of all foreign dominance, on a democratic basis, under the sceptre of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty”.⁸¹ Kalina then read out his openly secessionist declaration.⁸² Then came the Ukrainian Yevhen Petruszewycz, who denounced the artificiality of the crownland of Galicia and demanded the separation of its Ukrainians areas, before concluding: “The representatives of the Ukrainians of Austria welcome most sincerely the strivings of the Ukrainians of Russia for the obtainment of the constitutional right to self-determination, and declare that they too in Austria will not give up the fight, so that the great Ukrainian nation can rightly acquire its whole national territory.”⁸³ Pacher, thereafter, expressed the unanimous indignation of the *Nationalverband* and of the Christian Socials,⁸⁴ before Łazarski reiterated the Polish Club’s commitment to the Cracow Resolution and thus to a united, independent Poland.⁸⁵ By any measure, this first day of parliament had been a disaster for Karl and his government – indeed, for the Dual Monarchy.

These declarations proved seminal. In the Bohemian lands – simultaneously hit by a huge wave of strikes and demonstrations, particularly in Prague and Pilsen – the Czech Union’s address was immediately picked up by the masses in a variety of locations.⁸⁶ Thereafter, it remained a key point of reference, as social movements took on an increasingly nationalist hue. Similarly, in southern Slav – particularly Slovene – territories, the words of the Yugoslav Club became the basis of the so-called

⁷⁹ SPA, 22nd session, 1st sitting, 30.5.1917, p.34; *Beneš*, III, 93, pp.291-292. The German version of the declaration recorded in the official protocols, however, contains the term “Czechoslav”, rather than “Czechoslovak”. Several other minor differences also occur.

⁸⁰ Janko Pleterski, “The Southern Slav Question”, in: Cornwall (ed.), p.141. As Pleterski points out, this was the first joint programme in the Habsburg Monarchy to treat the Croats, Serbs and Slovenes on an equal basis.

⁸¹ SPA, op. cit.

⁸² Ibid, pp.34-36.

⁸³ Ibid, p.36.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.37.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ MRP/R, K74, 3488; K75, 3880; SH, 1950, 1957, pp.245-246; MKSM, K1305, 28-2/10-4; 28-2/10-7 ad I.

“Declaration Movement”, which began that autumn.⁸⁷ Polish crowds, for their part, had not waited for parliament to reopen to endorse openly the strivings of their political representatives. Karl had, unwittingly, made this tide harder to stem in his desire to ease repression. As the interior minister pointed out to him in early August, “neither the activity of the censor nor the preventive police measures of the authorities can be as far-reaching as in recent years, [therefore] it will be ever more difficult to maintain the peace”.⁸⁸ Unsurprisingly, moderate, activist and loyalist politicians disappeared from positions of power, making way for radicals, whose views aligned with those of their exiled compatriots. Šmeral was the most prominent casualty of this purge. Yet even before his demise, the Czech Union had defiantly refused to take part in the parliamentary subcommittee set up to redraft the constitution. Not even the amnesty for political prisoners hastily proclaimed by Karl on 2 July⁸⁹ – which saw the release of Kramář, Rašín, Klofáč and others, and which the Union had made a precondition of its support – could sway it. The road to November 1918 was still sinuous but, after May 1917, the Czech Union, the Yugoslav Club, not to mention the Polish Club, never truly looked back.

On 31 May, Karl delivered his speech from the throne to members of both Houses of Parliament. He repeated his sincere commitment to constitutional rule, while explaining his motives for avoiding the oath on the constitution until the establishment of “the foundations of the new, strong, happy Austria”. This, he announced, required “the reorganization of the constitutional and administrative basis [of the] state, as well as the individual crownlands and provinces, particularly Bohemia”. He also reiterated his commitment to Galician autonomy, as per Franz Joseph’s handwritten letter. He urged the deputies to unite with him in creating the preconditions “within the framework of the unity of the state [...] for the free national and cultural development of peoples with equal rights”.⁹⁰ This address, of course, had been prepared by the government without knowledge of the speeches uttered the

⁸⁷ Koroščevo predavanje”, p.222; Pleterski, in: Cornwall (ed.), p.143; Cornwall, in: Cornwall (ed.), p.189.

⁸⁸ *MI*, K2070, 15456, interior minister report to Karl, 8.8.1917.

⁸⁹ *MKS*, K1395, 85-3/1 ex918. It became known by its numerous enemies as the “Czech amnesty”. 719 Czechs had indeed been released, as well as 262 Ukrainians, 235 Italians, 211 South Slavs, 106 Germans, 70 Poles and 37 foreigners – a total of 1,640 people. However, by percentage of population, the Italians had benefited the most.

⁹⁰ *SPA*, 22nd session, appendix 1, speech from the throne, 31.5.1917, pp.1-5.

previous day. As a result, it was woefully inadequate – and incongruous. (It also had stressed the unbreakable alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary’s readiness to fight until the bitter end.) And, as Polzer remarked, it “indicated the direction [...] reform was to take about as clearly as the Delphic oracles.”⁹¹

Clam took nearly two weeks to respond to the declarations of the opening sitting. When he finally did, on 12 June, he announced tritely: “The programme of the government is Austria!”⁹² Ten days later, Karl finally dismissed him.⁹³ In his place, he temporarily appointed his trusted acquaintance, the civil servant Ernst Seidler von Feuchtenegg⁹⁴ and, in the following weeks, sought a permanent prime minister capable of inaugurating a new course. Although he considered a number of distinguished candidates, such as Beck, Redlich and Lammasch,⁹⁵ he finally reverted to Seidler. This politically inexperienced, unimaginative, German-minded jurist and agricultural expert quickly proved unable to form a coalition of national unity or even a parliamentary government, and stuck with his cabinet of functionaries, which plodded on for almost a year. In Hungary, meanwhile, Karl appointed the veteran Sándor Wekerle, an uncompromising stalwart of dualism who stayed in his post until late October 1918.

⁹¹ Polzer, p.287.

⁹² SPA, 22nd session, 4th sitting, 12.6.1917, p.120.

⁹³ WZ, 23.6.1917, p.1.

⁹⁴ NFPA, 23.6.1917, p.1.

⁹⁵ Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, *Ministerpräsident Baron Beck, Ein Staatsmann des alten Österreichs* (Vienna, 1956), pp.269-276; Polzer, pp.342-349; RT, II, 5.7.1917, pp.310-313.

CONCLUSION

By August 1917, Karl could look back on eight months of failure in his two main aims: to secure peace at home, and peace abroad.¹ Both were, in fact, further away than they had been upon his accession to the throne. Austria-Hungary's military fortunes were, however, in the ascendancy. The counter-attack against the Kerensky Offensive swiftly liberated Galicia and the Bukovina, while dealing a decisive blow to the Russian army.² The continuation of war now seemed a less daunting prospect. On 2 August, the eve of the deliverance of Czernowitz, the interior minister, on Karl's instructions, asked the governors of Cisleithania whether the population could endure another winter, and hold out beyond spring without large-scale striking or rioting. Their answers, though cautious and conditional, were broadly positive (although the governors of Bohemia and Moravia warned of the possibility of further political radicalization among the Czechs).³ In addition, in late October, after the resounding Austro-German breakthrough at Caporetto, Karl received assurances from Arz that the army, too, could survive another winter – in fact, the chief of general staff painted a highly favourable picture of his forces which, he believed, would improve by spring.⁴ And although secret diplomatic negotiations continued,⁵ the American declaration of war on Austria-Hungary in early December⁶ convinced Karl of the impossibility of a rapid general peace.⁷ But, in the first months of 1918, the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest, the preparation of a decisive attack against a seemingly broken Italy, and the Ludendorff Offensive, offered the realistic possibility of a final victory for the Central Powers.

These developments abroad, combined with the failure of the revolutionary danger to materialize at home, continually offered Karl a reprieve from the gargantuan task of restructuring his Empire. His most serious contemplation of constitutional reform occurred in moments of panic, notably in April and May 1917

¹ *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, p.605. Karl wrote that these had been his two aims upon his accession.

² *Arz*, pp.162-164.

³ *MI*, K2070, 14850, interior minister to all provincial chiefs (except Tyrol and Bukovina), 2.8; 15456, governor of Lower Austria to interior minister, 3.8; Upper Austria, 3.8; Bohemia, 3.8; Moravia, 4.8; Littoral, 4.8; Galicia, 4.8; Salzburg, 4.8; Carniola, 4.8; Carinthia, 4.8; Styria, 4.8; Silesia, 4.8; interior minister report to Karl, 8.8; 16265, Dalmatia, 11.8.1917.

⁴ *Arz*, pp.197-198, 28.10.1917.

⁵ Most notably the Armand-Revertera and Smuts-Mensdorff talks.

⁶ *NFPM*, 7.12.1917, p.1.

⁷ *Arz*, p.201.

after the Russian Revolution and the American declaration of war on Germany, and in October 1918, leading to the proclamation of his derisory, last-gasp manifesto. On these occasions,⁸ his motivation was the conclusion of peace, which – sincere humanitarian concerns aside – he hoped would save his throne and his empire. In quieter times, he muddled along. Certainly, he desired to set his country on healthier foundations,⁹ but his resolve always collapsed at the first hurdle. His lack of willpower – of “moral courage”¹⁰ – resulted in a considerable disparity between his words and his actions. As heir, he had plainly recognized the dangers of Germanization and Magyarization,¹¹ yet, within weeks of coming to power, he had acceded to a German course and been crowned in Budapest. In exile, he blamed the failure of domestic peace on the “boundlessly stupid behaviour of the Germans and Hungarians”,¹² but he had done little to confront it. In fact, he had encouraged it. In fits and starts, he showed some inclination to reorganize Cisleithania, but, until the bitter end, he stuck unwaveringly – indeed, obstinately – to his Hungarian oath.¹³ Karl was an opponent of dualism paradoxically committed to upholding it. (The same stubbornness and misplaced sense of honour prevented him from abandoning the alliance with Germany, despite the frequent temptation to do so. His fear of a German invasion,¹⁴ however, was probably justified.) In his defence, the situation was uniquely unpropitious for embarking on a collision course with the “master nations”. Undoubtedly, many Germans and Magyars would rather have seen the Empire collapse than submit to any constitutional overhaul which abolished their predominance.

Despite the mythology later developed and cultivated by his supporters, Karl was, prior to his fall, as unconvincing a federalist as Franz Ferdinand. (The concept is noticeably absent from the vision for the future which he drew up in December 1914.

⁸ Helmut Rumpler, *Das Volkermanifest Kaiser Karls vom 16 Oktober 1918. Letzter Versuch zur Rettung des Habsburgerreiches* (Munich, 1966), pp.62-63.

⁹ Polzer, p.277.

¹⁰ Glaise, p.14.

¹¹ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, pp.78-80.

¹² *UR*, II, 213, 8.9.1920, pp.605, 610. He added: “This stupid German policy towards other nations, supported from Berlin, is the *leitmotiv*, disastrous and obstructive of any reform, of all politics of the years 1917 and 1918.” The failure of external peace he blamed on the “insatiable Italians”.

¹³ Polzer, p.116. Polzer claimed that the people in Hungary would not have been disturbed by its postponement.

¹⁴ Brook-Shepherd, p.150.

Unsurprisingly, however, it features prominently in his post-war reflections.)¹⁵ Domestic unrest, the Russian Revolution, slogans of self-determination and Allied threats to liberate the “oppressed” nations of Europe put him under pressure to avow himself as one. Yet, until the Empire was in its death throes, he never did so publicly. Even then, his commitment was questionable.

Expectations had originally been high but, in the early days of his reign, he was coy about his plans for reform. Despite their promises of change, both his accession manifesto and his speech from the throne were distinctly vague. Unfortunately for Karl, these few months represented his only realistic opportunity – if there was one at all – for rebuilding the Empire, or at least Cisleithania, on a relatively consensual basis.¹⁶ By the time he took to the throne, the manifold hardships of war, not least the reckless actions of the military, had sorely tried the endurance of the Slav population and eroded the loyalty of a number of its political representatives. The speed with which many Czech politicians subsequently radicalized suggests that their disillusionment with the Empire was already advanced. But they were certainly not too far gone. Nor, aside from the Poles, was any other nation of Austria-Hungary.

Although it was not unreasonable, in light of past experiences, to settle certain matters by imperial decree, Karl’s initial endorsement of a unilaterally pro-German policy was a gamble from which the country did not recover. His appointment of the tormented and embittered Clam, whose behaviour towards the Czechs was nothing short of egregious, was particularly fateful. That said, having committed to this course of action, Karl should either have stuck to it or killed it off after his – or rather, Czernin’s – epiphany. The middle path onto which he eventually drifted proved catastrophic: alienating then cajoling supporters of the octroi, while failing to win back its opponents, over whom the measure continued to hang like the sword of Damocles. A year later, in May 1918, it finally fell. Disheartened by his failures, his velleities for reform through parliamentary compromise and national reconciliation long gone, Karl again nailed his colours to the German mast. He openly admitted to Czech politicians that, since they had rejected every opportunity for negotiation and had answered his amnesty with intensified opposition, he had now resolved to “try

¹⁵ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914; 213, 8.9.1920.

¹⁶ Cornwall, “Disintegration”, in: Cornwall (ed.), p.187. Cornwall agrees.

other ways”.¹⁷ Shortly after, on 19 May, the future division of Bohemia into twelve circles – inheriting previous gubernatorial powers – was decreed.¹⁸ On 30 July, a circle court was erected in Trautenau,¹⁹ thus fulfilling a 25-year-old German demand.²⁰

Not without reason, perhaps, Karl had never been sympathetic to Bohemian state rights. He thought that his coronation as King of Bohemia would be largely sufficient to placate the Czechs. This ceremony, however, was more than just folklore – in its obituary for the ex-emperor, the *Národní listy* claimed that it had represented “the greatest danger for the Czech nation”.²¹ Certainly, such a powerful, symbolic gesture would have complicated the task of the anti-Habsburg *émigrés* and domestic radicals, while providing a boost for the activists. Yet, again, Karl was easily deterred. After the war, Staněk claimed that, in April 1917, Karl had received him alone and offered the Czechs the independence of the lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia on the condition that they declare themselves for the Empire and for the dynasty. Staněk allegedly replied that the Czechs did not want anything, that they would never forsake the Slovaks and would simply wait for the end of the war; thereupon, Karl had apparently dismissed him, categorically rejecting the inclusion of Slovakia by virtue of his oath to the Hungarian crown, adding that it would immediately prompt the Magyars and the Germans to start a revolution. Karl’s reaction is in character, but his offer seems highly implausible – indeed, the story is almost certainly apocryphal.²² Not only was Karl indifferent to Bohemian state rights and fearful of German opposition, he was always more preoccupied with the resolution of the South Slav question, though here too he showed neither urgency nor volition. Furthermore, his

¹⁷ *NW*, K1, 11.5.1918.

¹⁸ *RGBl. 1918*, Nr.175, 19.5.1918, pp.453-455. The establishment of the circles was to begin at the latest on 1.1.1919.

¹⁹ *RGBl. 1918*, Nr.279, 30.7.1918, p.709.

²⁰ *PTA*, 1.8.1918, p.1; *RT*, II, 7.2.1918, p.377. Seidler had already given a written guarantee to Wolf in February.

²¹ *NFPN*, 3.1.1922, p.3.

²² Staněk, pp.167-168; *TD*, April, pp.334-335. Staněk told nobody, and first mentioned this episode in an article in 1920, although he claimed that the story had got out at the time and caused a sensation in Bohemia. There is, however, no evidence for this. The homage to Staněk edited by Marcha in 1927 included, as proof, the photograph of a telegram from Karl’s private office, summoning Staněk to an audience in Baden on “Saturday 12th”. This combination only occurred three times during Karl’s reign: May 1917, January and October 1918. The last is by far the most likely, since the telegram contains the inscription 11/10 and since Staněk was received in Baden on 12.10.1918 with all other party representatives (*NFPA*, 12.10.1918, p.2). Staněk – who urged the sceptical Tobolka to include this story in his writings – was undoubtedly trying to make up for his ambiguous behaviour at the helm of the Czech Union.

(purely theoretical) trialist designs did not include the Slovenes,²³ and could not therefore satisfy any Yugoslav aspirations. Just how far Karl was from reconciling the South Slavs and the Czechs with the Dual Monarchy is shown by the fact that his October 1918 manifesto failed even to meet the demands which they had made in their opening declarations to parliament in May 1917. And although Karl was aware that the Poles were striving for unification and independence, he never quite gave up the hope of keeping them under his sceptre, expending considerable time and energy to this end. This, in turn, made a successful Ukrainian policy impossible.

Even Koerber was forced to admit that Karl had “found a wreck upon his accession to the throne”, although he added that he had nevertheless “swiftly and irretrievably made it sink through his behaviour”.²⁴ This severe, but largely correct, judgement is particularly apt for his first six months in power. His endorsement of the octroi, his recall of parliament and his disastrous amnesty – which yielded no political goodwill and estranged many of the Empire’s most loyal subjects – were all rash choices with irreparable consequences. Even taking no action at all would have done less damage.²⁵ (These failures were, of course, relative. As Czernin wrote to Baernreither in 1922: “Whether the octroi was made or not, whether parliament met or not, whether the amnesty succeeded or not, was not – as important as it was – decisive. What was decisive was the abortive attempts at peace at the time when the author [Baernreither] was in government.”)²⁶

Despite his above-average intelligence, his quick understanding and his often penetrating insights, Karl was a poor decision-maker, simultaneously irresolute and impulsive. In this respect, he resembled Franz Ferdinand. In 1913, Brosch had remarked about the then heir: “He shares the peculiarity of all Habsburgs of not immediately taking unpleasant or serious decisions, but instead waiting to see if some miracle emerges to offer a way out”.²⁷ Unlike his uncle, however, Karl was popular, charming, empathetic, conciliatory and politically untainted. Unfortunately, he was unable to exploit any of these assets.

²³ *UR*, II, 3, 24.12.1914, p.74. Or, it seems, Dalmatia.

²⁴ Melbourn (ed.), p.22.

²⁵ *Kann*, II, p.235. *Kann* also makes this point.

²⁶ *NB*, K12, 22.2.1922.

²⁷ *Chlumecky*, p.357.

Furthermore, an unmistakable and consistent degree of superficiality pervaded Karl's thoughts on the reform of Austria-Hungary. As he admitted to Polzer, he had little time for documents and details.²⁸ It seems that this characteristic had been taken into account by his educators.²⁹ Perhaps as a result, Karl lacked rigour and depth. The plans he sketched in late 1914 were ordinary and already out of date, and barely evolved during the rest of his heirship or, indeed, during his reign. (Curiously, he showed very little interest in the work of his late uncle and his advisers.) Karl also appears to have been quite extraordinarily ignorant of the scholarship on the topic. Karl Renner, one of the most distinguished theorists of the nationality problem for nearly two decades,³⁰ was received in audience by Karl in early 1917 in his capacity as one of the directors of the food office,³¹ and managed to steer the conversation onto this subject. When, thereupon, he gave Karl a copy of his compiled essays entitled "Austria's Renewal",³² the latter put it on the table and declared with some surprise: "You have also written books..."³³ Karl's military service, his long and frequent travels,³⁴ his busy family life and his considerable workload were certainly not conducive to further research or to the maturation of his thoughts.

These limitations – of which he was partly conscious – made Karl's choice of advisers all the more crucial. His selections proved most unfortunate. Contrary to the cliché,³⁵ Karl had several statesmen of stature and brilliant minds at his disposal, such as Beck, Koerber, Lammasch, Redlich, Adler, or Renner. But Karl had his prejudices, particularly against men of the old guard, Jews,³⁶ socialists and alleged freemasons.

²⁸ Polzer, pp.64-65.

²⁹ Fichtner, "Charles I (IV)", pp.75-81; Anonymous, pp.134-135; *NWT*, 23.11.1916, pp.2-4. By Wallis, Polzer and his university professors.

³⁰ First under the pseudonyms "Synopticus" and Rudolf Springer, later under his own name.

³¹ *AZM*, 1.12.1916, p.6.

³² Karl Renner, *Österreichs Erneuerung. Politisch-programmatische Aufsätze* (Vienna, 1916).

³³ *Ibid.*, "Kaiser Karl hat Angst vor meinen Mordplänen", *Bunte Woche*, 25.12.1932, p.8.

³⁴ *NMö*, K1, 1-4, p.394. In mid-August 1917, the press revealed that, since the beginning of the war, Karl had spent 450 nights in the imperial train and had covered over 110,100 kilometres.

³⁵ *SM*, p.156; Rieder, p.37. Spitzmüller himself thought only he was up to the task.

³⁶ *NFF*, Karl-Franz Ferdinand, undated letter (doubtless written on 27.2.1911); *UR*, II, 2b), Karl-Zita, 20.6.1911, pp.41-42; 213, 8.9.1920, pp.615, 635; *KA*, *NMö*, 1, II, p.266; Seeckt, p.582; *NBT*, K5, 26.1.1918; Károlyi, pp.163, 405-408; *RT*, II, 17.1.1917, p.261. In February 1911, he described Budapest as a "nest of Jews" in a letter to Franz Ferdinand. In June that year, while in London, he wrote to Zita that the embassy staff contained "nothing but Jews". In June 1917, he told Seeckt of his concern about having sworn in Vilmos Vázsonyi – a Jew – as Hungarian minister of justice on the Virgin Mary and Saint Stephen. In January 1918, Berchtold noted in his diary: "The emperor finds the presence of three Hebrews in the [Hungarian] cabinet not very pleasing but says that, since they are accompanied by seven "respectable" men, the percentage is not so bad after all!!!" Károlyi – who thought Karl anti-Semitic – noted that, when Karl made him prime minister on 27 October 1918, the emperor was so gloomy and exhausted that "he did not even ask if his future ministers were to be Jews

This ruled out most of the above. Renner, surprised by Karl's timidity and self-consciousness during their aforementioned meeting, later asked the court official who had announced him for an explanation. He was told that Karl had been frightened since, as a freemason and a socialist, Renner could have been preparing an assassination attempt.³⁷ (Renner later commented somewhat dramatically: "There was nothing left to do but prepare for the reshaping of the world.")³⁸ And although Karl had conferred extensively with Redlich in July 1917 with a view to handing him the premiership, just over a year later, he told Leopold von Chlumecky, who had recommended Redlich: "I know him, he has already been here. But tell me, he is a sugar industrialist, is he not? And is he completely reliable?"³⁹ Beck, for his part, lost Karl's confidence after having defended Sieghart during his audience.⁴⁰ As for Lammasch, Karl interpreted his modesty as irresolution and dismissed him as a possible candidate.⁴¹ This is not to say that any of these men could have secured Austria's future or saved Karl's throne. But they would, at least, have come closer to establishing whether this was at all possible.

Karl's reputation has been unjustly glorified and unjustly sullied.⁴² Yet he cannot escape a substantial degree of blame in the collapse of Austria-Hungary. Until the very end, however, he seems not to have realized entirely the gravity of his predicament, blinded by his natural *insouciance*, his unwillingness to hear bad news and his overestimation of his subjects' loyalty.⁴³ On 27 September 1918, long past the eleventh hour, Karl called Eichhoff and asked him: "You worked on these questions

or not, a question he rarely failed to put." A colleague of Möller's handled a Hughes conversation between Karl and Czernin in April 1918, in which the emperor described Ludendorff's wife as a "filthy Jewess". Koerber commented to Redlich that Karl seemed to have little sympathy for Jews. In his reminiscences, Karl himself mused that popularity was like a soap bubble and that, no sooner had the public started to idolize its ruler than it withdrew its love, "influenced by the short-sighted Jewish hacks and other vermin". He also rued the bad blood caused by the central food offices, which were "so harmful because they were staffed only by Jews, who made colossal business".

³⁷ Renner, *Bunte Woche*, 25.12.1932, pp.7-8; "Vom 12. November und den Jahren vorher und nachher", *AZM*, 11.11.1928, p.4. This was in Laxenburg according to the 1932 version, but in Hetzendorf according to the 1928 one (which mentions only freemasonry).

³⁸ Renner, *Bunte Woche*, 25.12.1932, p.8.

³⁹ *RT*, II, 27.8.1918, p.428.

⁴⁰ Polzer, pp.342-343.

⁴¹ Polzer, pp.344-345.

⁴² Auffenberg, pp.175, 487; Bethmann, II, p.200; Conrad, *Aufzeichnungen*, p.265; Gina, p.157; Pomiankowski, p.279. Seeckt, p.555; Sieghart, p.244; Margutti, p.85; Anonymous, pp.138-139; Polzer, p.228; Arz, p.130; *Ö86 Nr.1*, 21, Wedel-Bethmann, 25.4.1917. His vulnerability to female influences – in particular to Zita's – is unfailingly highlighted by his critics. Her involvement was perhaps unusual in certain respects but, since she and Karl were of one mind on most issues, this reproach does not hold water.

⁴³ Melbourn (ed.), p.22; *NW*, K1, 2.5.1918; 3.5.1918. Karl remained oblivious to the fact that some of the displays of public jubilation he witnessed were manufactured.

for Archduke Franz back then; how did he envisage the new constitution?" Taken aback, Eichhoff dared not utter the answer on the tip of his tongue: "Your Majesty is asking me a little late".⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *NE*, 150, pp.36, 42-43.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Auswärtiges Amt</i>
A-H	<i>Austro-Hungaricus, Kaiser und König Karl, Kaiserin Zita, Der Kronprinz</i>
AHY	<i>Austrian History Yearbook</i>
AOK	<i>Armeeoberkommando</i>
AR	<i>Administrative Registratur</i>
AVA	<i>Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv</i>
AZ	<i>Arbeiter-Zeitung</i>
BC	<i>Archiv der Burg Clam</i>
BH	<i>Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv</i>
ČSSD	<i>Archiv československé sociální demokracie</i>
D	<i>Deutschland (in PAAA)</i>
DZM	<i>Die Zeit, Morgenblatt</i>
DZA	<i>Die Zeit, Abendblatt</i>
FBM	<i>Fremden-Blatt, Morgen-Ausgabe</i>
FBA	<i>Fremden-Blatt, Abend-Ausgabe</i>
FJ	<i>Heinrich Friedjung, Geschichte in Gesprächen, Aufzeichnungen 1898-1919, eds. Franz Adlgasser and Margret Friedrich, 2 vols</i>
FŠ	<i>Fond Bohumír Šmeral</i>
FSS	<i>Fond Stjepan Sarkotić</i>
G	<i>Geheim (in PAAA)</i>
GH	<i>Ein General im Zwielficht. Die Erinnerungen Edmund Glaises von Horstenau, ed. Peter Broucek, 3 vols</i>
HDA	<i>Hrvatski državni arhiv</i>
HHStA	<i>Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv</i>
HL	<i>Ernst Deuerlein (ed.), Briefwechsel Hertling-Lerchenfeld 1912-1917, 2 vols</i>
KA	<i>Kriegsarchiv</i>
KBA	<i>Kabinettsarchiv</i>
KM	<i>Kriegsministerium</i>
KGJ	<i>Gedächtnis-Jahrbuch. Dem Andenken an Karl von Österreich gewidmet</i>
KÜA	<i>Kriegsüberwachungsamt</i>
MD	<i>Walter Görlitz (ed.), The Kaiser and his Court, The Diaries, Note Books and Letters of Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller, Chief of the Naval Cabinet 1914-1918</i>
MI	<i>Ministerium des Innern Präsidium</i>
MKP	<i>Militärkommando in Prag</i>
MKPSB	<i>Militärkommando in Prag, Stimmungsbericht</i>
MKSM	<i>Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät</i>
MMP	<i>Moravské mistodržitelství presidium</i>
MRP	<i>Ministerratspräsidium</i>
MRP/R	<i>Ministerská rada presidium/Rakousko</i>
MZA	<i>Moravský zemský archiv v Brně</i>
NA	<i>Národní archiv</i>
NAL	<i>The National Archives</i>
NB	<i>Nachlass Baernreither</i>

NBG	<i>Nachlass Brougier</i>
NBT	<i>Nachlass Berchtold</i>
NE	<i>Nachlass Eichhoff</i>
NFF	<i>Nachlass Franz Ferdinand</i>
NFPM	<i>Neue Freie Presse, Morgenblatt</i>
NFPN	<i>Neue Freie Presse, Nachmittagblatt</i>
NFPA	<i>Neue Freie Presse, Abendblatt</i>
NGG	<i>Nachlass Groß</i>
NMö	<i>Nachlass Möller</i>
NK	<i>Nachlass Kundmann</i>
NM	<i>Nachlass Marterer</i>
NPH	<i>Nachlass Polzer-Hoditz</i>
NR	Jaroslav Werstadt (ed.), <i>Naše Revoluce, čtvrtletní historický sborník</i>
NS	<i>Nachlass Schlitter</i>
NSE	<i>Nachlass Schager-Eckartsau</i>
NW	<i>Nachlass Wieser</i>
NWT	<i>Neues Wiener Tagblatt</i>
Ö	<i>Österreich (in PAAA)</i>
ÖIZ	<i>Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung, Kaiser-Huldigungsnummer, 21 November 1917</i>
OpAbt	<i>Operationsabteilung</i>
PA	<i>Politisches Archiv (in HHStA)</i>
PAAA	<i>Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts</i>
PB	<i>Präsidialbureau</i>
PDP	<i>Polizeidirektion Prag</i>
PDW	<i>Polizeidirektion Wien</i>
PL	<i>Právo lidu</i>
PLLM	<i>Pester Lloyd, Morgenblatt</i>
PLLA	<i>Pester Lloyd, Abendblatt</i>
PM1911-1920	<i>Presidium pražského místodržitelství 1911-1920</i>
PMV/R	<i>Presídium ministerstva vnitra/Rakousko</i>
PQ	<i>Personalunterlagen, Qualifikationslisten</i>
PTA	<i>Prager Tagblatt, Morgen-Ausgabe</i>
PTA	<i>Prager Tagblatt, Abend-Ausgabe</i>
RB	Fritz Fellner (ed.), <i>Dichter und Gelehrter. Hermann Bahr und Josef Redlich in ihren Briefen 1898-1934</i>
RGBl.	<i>Reichsgesetzblatt</i>
RP	<i>Reichspost</i>
RPM	<i>Reichspost, Morgenblatt</i>
RPMT	<i>Reichspost, Mittagsausgabe</i>
RPN	<i>Reichspost, Nachmittagsausgabe</i>
RT	Fritz Fellner and Doris A. Corradini (eds.), <i>Schicksalsjahre Österreichs 1869-1936: Die Erinnerungen und Tagebücher Josef Redlichs, 3 vols</i>
SH	Libuše Otáhalová, <i>Souhrnná hlášení presidia pražského místodržitelství o protistátní, protirakouské a protiválečné činnosti v Čechách 1915-1918</i>
SM	Carvel de Bussy (ed.), <i>Memoirs of Alexander Spitzmüller Freiherr von Harmersbach</i>
TD	Zdeněk V. Tobolka, <i>Můj deník z první světové války</i>

USDS	United States Department of State, <i>Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
UR	Elisabeth Kovács, <i>Untergang oder Rettung der Donaumonarchie?</i> , 2 vols
V-I	Vogelsang-Institut
VGA	Verein für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung
VS	<i>Rukopisna ostavšina Vjekoslava Spinčića</i>
W	<i>Weltkrieg</i> (in PAAA)
WA	<i>Wiener Abendpost</i>
WZ	<i>Wiener Zeitung</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitungsarchiv</i>

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