

MANFRIED RAUCHENSTEINER

UNDER OBSERVATION

AUSTRIA SINCE 1918





Translated from the German
by Alex J. Kay and Anna Guettel-Bellert

Manfried Rauchensteiner

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Austria since 1918

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Foreword

Otto Dix, one of the great painters and graphic artists of the twentieth century, lent me his eyes. His picture 'To Beauty', which provides the cover of this book with colour and expression, has been reduced to a detail. In the process, the painting is forced into a sort of straitjacket, which allows for a reinterpretation. It is the eyes that count, the stern look of a person whose attention, it appears, nothing can escape. It might be the case that the look also expresses something approaching disapproval. It is a self-portrait. The elegant couple in the background seem to be completely self-absorbed and evidently unaware that they are under observation. Only the present counts. That gives them a timeless quality. And it cannot be identified.

Like the painting, this book is also reduced to a detail. It deals with Austria, and it looks at events over a period of one hundred years. The deliberately stern gaze, seemingly external, is simultaneously a mirror image. The fact that narcissism also plays a role here corresponds to the subject. In the same year that Otto Dix painted 'To Beauty', 1922, Austria threatened to become ungovernable. It lurched between self-abandonment and visions of the future, and it was rescued with the help of the League of Nations. A conglomerate of historical entities, which first had to find a new commonality, was facing an uncertain future. It was no longer that which the Czech historian František Palacký had characterised it as in 1848, something indispensable, a European necessity, but instead a hard to define residue. Austria had gone from being indispensable to being in a quandary. But the country was under observation from day one. And the looks that Austria encountered were not always friendly. Concern, suspicion, pity, mistrust and greed were mixed with indifference, contentment and benevolence.

It was watched by the victorious powers of the First World War, the successor states to the Habsburg Monarchy and the League of Nations. But it was not only the others who watched. The internal gaze also reflected the full range of emotions that could be discerned among neighbours near and far. Austria was not a country in which great emphasis was placed on self-determination. And the will to assert itself emerged only at a late date. The awkwardness remained. Violence dominated. And in the eyes of many observers, contentment could be seen shining forth regarding the calm that descended

on Austria in 1938. 'Thank goodness, Austria is out of the way,' said one British politician. This was followed by the rueful realisation that the disappearance of one problem, Austria, had been swapped for new problems. In 1945, it was as though the reset button had been pressed. Much had changed. Austria was located between two blocs, liked to think of itself as a bridge and played a role in which it experienced a new form of oversight, more direct than anything that had gone before, and ultimately plunged into a time in which general contentment took hold. The country was over the worst. The awkwardness had suddenly become a stabilising factor. Admittedly, one thing did not change: every time something happened in Austria, the land was under observation. And even when nothing happened. Time and again, it was regarded as a problem zone, then as a special case, as a model pupil, and on multiple occasions as a naughty boy, on whom a sharp eye had to be kept.

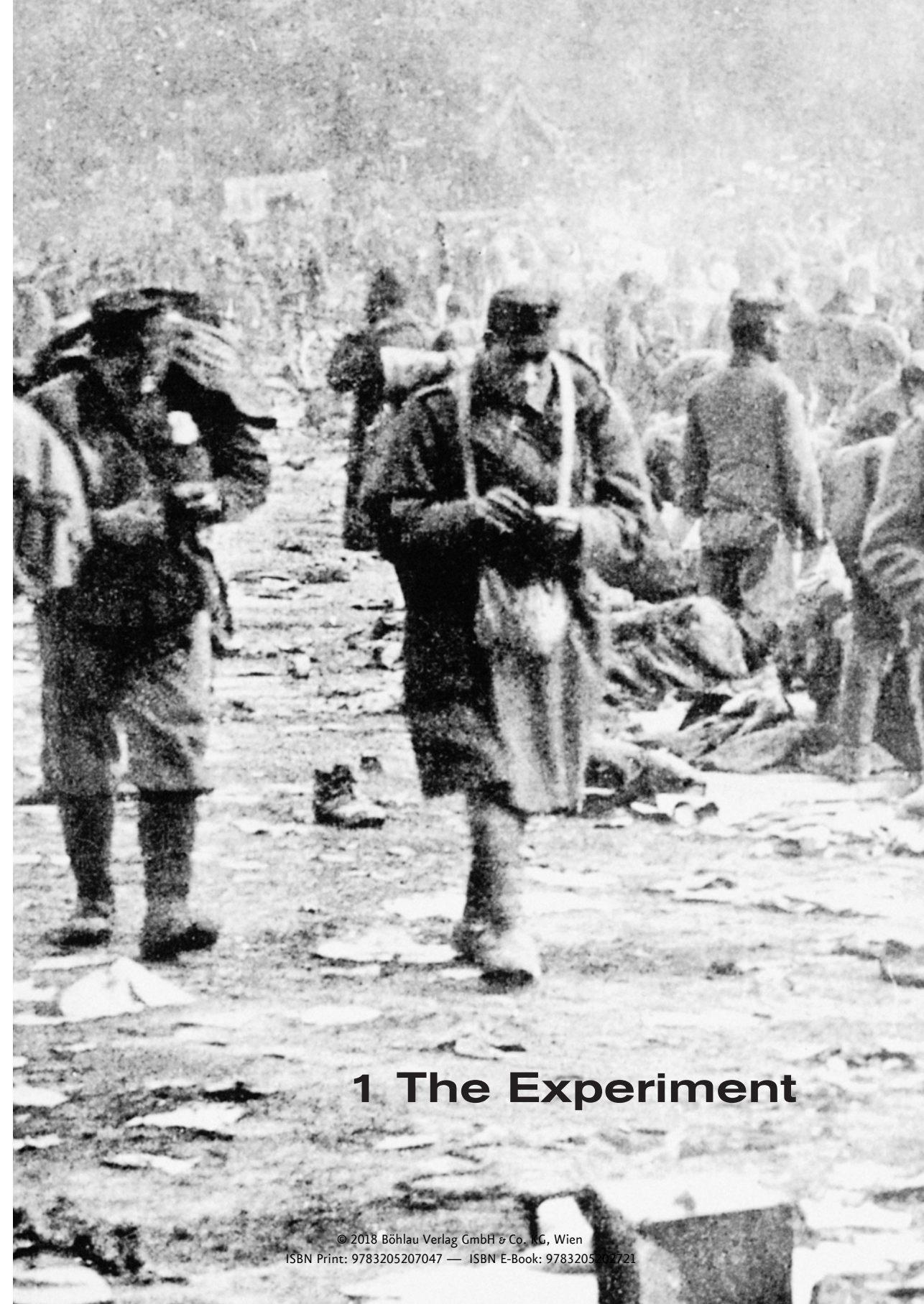
An account of all that cannot be evenly spread out. Likewise, there can be no question of each event and every protagonist being described in all available details. Here and there, we must pause for a moment to make use of the parallelism and the flow of time for the narrative thread. We cannot always rush through the different time periods. One thing should be achieved, however: that the reader understands the history of a country that sometimes does not take itself seriously as important for the overall development of a continent and can admit that it is a stimulating history. It is no less interesting when one attempts to survey a long time period. In the process, some things will have to be brought to light that are already known and others that are unknown, but where the view over a long period of time also offers possibilities for comparison that invite us to stop and think: did not something similar once happen; are events or non-events so unusual that it is impossible to find a precedent? And time and again the question will arise: What would have happened if ...? – If, for example, Ignaz Seipel had acceded to the request of Bavarian authorities and again conferred Austrian citizenship on Adolf Hitler in 1924, if the Dollfuß assassin had missed, if the Allies had agreed in Moscow in 1943 to divide Austria, if the Soviets had reoccupied Austria in 1956, as Marshal Zhukov wished, or if Jörg Haider had not been killed in an accident in 2008? It is not a question of thinking the impossible but of thinking the possible. It is also an invitation to see that which is transient.

When taking a walk through history, one passes many sites. They present themselves with a never-ending willingness. One can take a break in the villa of Senator Giusti near Padua or in Saint-Germain, Geneva, Berlin, Berchtesgaden, Sopron/Ödenburg, Kragujevac, Stalingrad/Volgograd or Prague. Austrian history was written in London, Moscow, Paris and Washington, and has also left its mark there and created sites of remembrance. Ultimately, there is not a single place that would not hide a story, no monument, no cemetery, not even a field or a meadow that could not be linked to an event or a person.

It is frequently the case that stones and hallways divulge their stories only to those who live there and feel just as addressed by the ‘moss on the stones’ (Gerhard Fritsch), the glades and the furrows as those who allow themselves to reflect on monuments, statues or ‘Stolpersteine’ and like to make use of the narrative phrase ‘Once upon a time ...’.

No place exists of which it can be said that events took place there uniformly. And no cemetery exists in which those who one perceives to have been either the ‘good guys’ or the ‘bad guys’ do not lie side by side. Cemeteries, especially, are deeply democratic sites of remembrance, because to them applies most of all the interpretation offered by G. K. Chesterton of the tradition by which ‘the most obscure of all classes’ is given the vote – our ancestors (Chesterton, ‘The Ethics of Elfland’).

All of this is to be found in the history of a century. Towards the end, the narrative becomes slower, more tentative. Nothing will change regarding the awareness of being observed. No more than regarding the necessity to form an opinion ourselves. Nothing is yet concluded; it is in a state of flux. In the well-known stream of time.



1 The Experiment

- 1 The armistice signed in the villa of Senator Giusti del Giardino near Padua on 3 November 1918 ended Austria-Hungary's final war. More than 300,000 soldiers of the Imperial and Royal Army went into Italian captivity. Most of them were interned only for a short time. Some of the prisoners, however, remained in Italian camps until 1921. At that point, Austria (not including Burgenland) still counted around 20,000 prisoners of war and more than 22,000 missing persons. (Photo: Austrian State Archives / War Archives)

The queues in front of shops became ever longer. In 1918, the fifth year of the war, the people of Austria-Hungary were going hungry. At irregular intervals, posters were put up in the larger cities by means of which the people were called upon to collect stinging nettle leaves for textile production, coffee extract for oil extraction or cockchafer as chicken and pig feed. On the exceptional occasion that there was coal, this was also announced, likewise the release of potatoes, flour and milk. Donations were requested for those blinded in the war, war invalids, military widows, orphans and dozens of other groups of people in need. Farmers established watch posts in order to prevent potatoes and turnips being stolen from the fields. The confidence still in evidence in December 1917 to the effect that the war would soon be over, was replaced in January by widespread disappointment. In some large cities and industrial centres of the Habsburg Monarchy, the war was boycotted. Then the people returned to work, briefly renewed their hope and were disappointed once more.

The distress stemmed not only from hunger, however. Most people not only had nothing left to eat, but also scarcely any hope or prospects. They did not know whether Austria-Hungary would continue to exist or whether it was approaching dissolution. The people often did not even know what they should hope for. The speech of American President Woodrow Wilson in Congress in Washington on 8 January 1918 had only made everything more difficult. In announcing his Fourteen Points, Wilson had named as Point Ten: 'The people of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be assured the freest opportunity to autonomous development.' Self-determination thereby became a special topic that was seized upon by all belligerents. The eleven nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy were no exception. The question was merely: did this apply to all peoples?

Between 13 and 15 June 1918, the Austro-Hungarian troops lined up from the Dolomites to the Adriatic for their final offensive. The Allies knew about the timing of the attack and had no difficulty in repelling the oncoming armies. From late June, Austria-Hungary was unimportant as an adversary. Now it was no longer necessary to bring American troop formations to Italy. Instead, they were sent to France. Discipline was as yet still being maintained among the combat troops of the Imperial and Royal Army, but it deteriorated by the day. Aversion and the long-simmering, mutual hatred among the peoples of the Habsburg Monarchy, which arose with increasing regularity, gained ever more ground. In view of the dismal situation at the front and in the rear, Emperor Karl attempted at the last moment to find a solution that might ensure the survival of

his empire. The response of the Slovene Anton Korošec, 'Majesty, it is too late,' basically said it all.¹ The Emperor unilaterally took steps to bring about a peace. The Allies reacted merely with the observation that first Germany had to surrender; only then could Austria-Hungary's wishes be addressed. Another hope had been dashed.

The Dissolution Order

One month later, on 16 October 1918, Emperor Karl issued a so-called 'People's Manifesto', according to which Austria-Hungary should continue to exist as a league of free nations.² The Hungarian government, however, managed to prevent the manifesto from also applying to the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen. But even Hungary could not escape the unavoidable fragmentation of the Empire. Reactions to the manifesto demonstrated, however, like the words of the Slovene Korošec, that it had come too late. It was regarded as *carte blanche*, as a type of dissolution order permitting all the peoples of the Habsburg Monarchy to go their own way. And the enemy powers did everything to encourage the decline. On 24 October, the Italian army commenced the final offensive together with British and French troops. It was the anniversary of the great victory of Austro-Hungarian and German troops over the Italians a year earlier. A counteroffensive was out of the question. The front began to disintegrate after two days.³ One of the last regular holidaymakers to travel to the north was Territorial Infantry Lieutenant Engelbert Dollfuß. He overnighted in Trento (Trient) in the same hotel as the armistice commission, which had been sent to South Tyrol as a precaution and had been waiting since early October to make contact with the Italians. An almost fateful encounter of past and future. Emperor Karl finally made the long-delayed resolution to request an armistice or a special peace, irrespective of Germany. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Gyula Andrássy, declared the alliance with Germany at an end. Austria-Hungary could not do anything else but act unilaterally. Now the time had come. The head of the Austro-Hungarian armistice commission in Trento, General Viktor von Weber, was instructed that he was empowered to conclude an armistice. He was allowed to accept all conditions, aside from those that the army's honour did not permit or that amounted to a complete disenfranchisement.

The Austrian commission was brought to the villa of Senator Giusti del Giardino near Padua, the guesthouse of the Italian Army Command. In the night of 1/2 November, the demands formulated by the Allied Supreme War Council in Paris were handed over. They amounted to an unconditional surrender and did not signal any willingness to compromise. The Habsburg Monarchy was to be crushed to the extent that it did not dissolve itself. There were admittedly some among the victorious powers who championed the retention of the Monarchy, but the Entente had done everything to accelerate

the dissolution and signalled to the Northern and Southern Slavs that they would be recognised as belligerents on the side of the Entente. Italy itself had in any case been in the Allied camp since 1915. Thus, all considerations for retaining a reduced Habsburg Monarchy at least as a rump state were more or less obsolete. And after the real union between Austria and Hungary had been dissolved on 30 October, nothing remained of the Empire but memories.

Half an hour before midnight on 2 November, Emperor Karl empowered General von Weber to conclude the armistice. At the same time, the monarch surrendered supreme command over his troops to Field Marshal Hermann Kövess von Kövesshaza. The armistice demanded:

1. Immediate cessation of hostilities at sea, on land and in the air.
2. Complete demobilisation of Austria-Hungary and the withdrawal of all troops.
3. Withdrawal from all territories occupied since 1914.
4. Freedom of movement for Allied troops on the entire territory of the Habsburg Monarchy.
5. Withdrawal of all German troops from Italy and the Balkan front within 15 days.
6. Immediate repatriation of all prisoners of war and internees.⁴

There were also provisions for the fleet, but it had already been transferred by Emperor Karl at the suggestion of the last Commander of the Fleet, Rear Admiral Miklós von Horthy, to the National Council in Zagreb (Agram) on 31 October. The Allies, therefore, had to agree among themselves what would happen to the fleet. Italy then created a *fait accompli* by sinking the flagship of the Imperial and Royal Navy, the *Viribus Unitis*, in the bay of Pula (Pola) with limpet mines. The dreadnought could not be allowed to fall into Southern Slav hands. And then there was a special inaccuracy in the armistice agreement: it repeatedly mentioned Austria-Hungary and its territory, but only the Italian front featured in the detailed agreements, though not Romania or Serbia, let alone Russia or Ukraine. For the latter, the peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest, concluded in March 1918, were regarded as applicable. Therefore, future developments in the east and the southeast were addressed least of all in the Villa Giusti.

The Imperial and Royal Army High Command ordered the Austro-Hungarian troops early on the morning of 3 November 1918 to cease hostilities, even before the armistice agreement had been signed. Whether this was premature or negligent is contested to this day. Over 300,000 Austro-Hungarian soldiers ended up in Italian captivity. On 3 November 1918, at 3 p.m., the armistice document was signed. Twenty-four hours later, the ceasefire took effect. The war lagged days behind political developments.

The German Delegates

On 21 October, the German delegates of the Austrian Imperial Assembly (Reichsrat) had gathered in the Lower Austrian regional diet (Landtag) on Vienna's Herrengasse to discuss what would happen if the Habsburg Monarchy were really to disintegrate. By way of precaution, they had already been invited to this meeting on 17 October,⁵ and they adhered to the provisions cited in the 'People's Manifesto'. 106 German nationalists from different parties, 65 Christian Socials and 38 Social Democrats, as well as one Free Socialist,⁶ including delegates from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, drew the consequences from the hopeless situation of the Empire and sought a minimum consensus. Earlier that same month, they had already made attempts to explore what options might be available after the approaching end to the war and the probable disintegration of the Monarchy. Representatives of both parties of the masses, the Christian Socials and the Social Democrats, had sketched out two scenarios: in the event of a dissolution of the Monarchy, a loose association of state might emerge, or instead an annexation of the German territories of the Habsburg Monarchy by Germany. The latter could by all means be interpreted as a threat. If the others – the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians, Italians, Southern Slavs – no longer wanted to maintain an alliance, then there would just have to be a Germany enlarged by the German territories of Austria-Hungary. The term 'German-Austria' (Deutschösterreich) was even already used.⁷

For the time being, the German delegates constituted on 21 October as the Provisional National Assembly. It was a step located somewhere between resignation, despair and hope. The chairman of the body, Viktor Waldner, began with the term of salutation 'Valued ethnic comrades' and described the purpose of the gathering. His speech and the contributions of the delegates were repeatedly interrupted by applause and calls of 'Heil', as the minutes of the session demonstrate. In fact, 'Heil' was the most common word of agreement. An executive committee was elected as the core of a future German-Austrian government. Other committees followed. The provisional state chancellor ought to have been the director of the library of the Imperial Assembly, Karl Renner, though it could not have been assumed that the Social Democrats would become the strongest political force. But they had a clear objective in view: the end of the Monarchy.⁸ No one had a drift into isolation in mind, and the leader of the Austrian Social Democrats, delegate Viktor Adler, remarked: if the other states, the Romanian and the Slav, whom he congratulated on their independence, did not want to join Austria, then Austria would attach itself to the German Reich as a special federal state. This was proposed as a motion. The next session was scheduled for 30 October. In the nine days until then, Renner drafted a constitution, in which it still remained open what type of political system would be launched. It could be a monarchy or a republic, independent or part of a new whole.

The time had come on 30 October: the Provisional National Assembly adopted a resolution for the establishment of the state of German-Austria. The German delegates were the last ones to break with the Empire. They evidently feared that the peace would have its price and that most nationalities would blame the two dominant peoples of the Empire up to this time, the Germans of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Hungarians, for the war but also for the mistakes made under the governments of Emperor Franz Joseph I and Karl I. Attempts by Emperor Karl to share responsibility for the past and the future with representatives of the political parties had failed. Above all, the Social Democrat politicians strictly refused to assume government responsibility in an imperial cabinet. Karl Renner would admittedly have done this without further ado, but his party wanted to signalise a type of 'political innocence',⁹ in order to make an attempt at a new start unburdened by the past. Thus, the pacifist and internationally-renowned expert on international law Heinrich Lammasch became the last Imperial Austrian prime minister. But he could only watch how an empire that had also been his was liquidated. The Council of State of German-Austria did everything to make it clear that it did not want to be associated with the past. Thus, its representatives consistently refused to contribute to the conclusion of an armistice. It had not been German-Austria's war, and therefore the 'factor' that had declared war should also be the one to end it. Emperor Karl could only respond by pointing out that he had also not been that factor, but he had to attempt to make the laying down of arms still appear like a sovereign act.

Germany wanted to recognise German-Austria. For the enemies of Austria-Hungary, this was an irrelevant procedure, because they were still at war with the Habsburg Monarchy and needed an adversary in order to be able to dictate a peace, and not a new creation.¹⁰

In order to avoid the necessity of having to elect a head of state – an 'anti-emperor', as it were – and because it was still impossible to predict whether and how Emperor Karl would seal the fate of the Monarchy, the Provisional National Assembly made do with a particularly cumbersome construction: three presidents were elected, or rather chosen, of which one would chair the National Assembly, another would be chairman of the Council of State and the third chairman of the Cabinet Council. The three had to alternate in their functions on a weekly basis. But it was only intended as a provisional measure, just as everything was provisional for the time being.

After the act to establish the state had been adopted, speeches were held in due form. Outside, on Herrengasse, the people were standing shoulder to shoulder. The majority cheered and shouted 'Heil'. Black-red-gold and red flags could be seen. There was some rioting. The Emperor was not mentioned.

A state of limbo existed. While a new statehood emerged and parallel institutions to the Imperial ministries appeared, the latter continued to work. At 7 Herrengasse in Vienna, the Imperial and Royal Prime Minister Heinrich Lammasch held office and, like

the Imperial-Royal ministries of the Austrian half of the Empire, which were spread over the Imperial capital and seat of royal residence, attempted to administer something that no longer existed. Only a few doors down, the German-Austrian Council of State carried out its activities. The three joint ministries of Austria-Hungary continued to exist, which considered themselves responsible for foreign affairs, war and finances of the Habsburg Monarchy and whose heads met on Ballhausplatz in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Not to forget the Imperial Assembly, which was housed in the parliament building on Ringstraße and whose officials – although it had been adjourned – sat in the offices that had once been assigned to them and into which the staff of the Provisional National Assembly of German-Austria now forced themselves.

The new Austrian statehood started with a mistake. The end of the war had been expected in spring 1919, not in November 1918. But that is not what happened. Emperor Karl had hoped that Austria-Hungary would retain some type of commonality, preferably in the form of a league of states – he was mistaken. The German delegates of the Austrian Imperial Assembly feared total chaos as soon as the old political system collapsed and sought advice and assistance one after another from the Imperial and Royal Army Command, the victorious powers and, above all, the leadership of the German Reich. They all said it was not their responsibility. The next and most fundamental mistake was that the German Austrians of the Habsburg Monarchy were under the illusion that their state would not be so small. This had been casually stated on 21 October and could be found nine days later in the (first) state constitution. The territories to which a German Austria laid claim were then counted: German Bohemia, German southern Bohemia (Bohemian Forest Region), German southern Moravia, the German territory around Nová Bystrice (Neubistritz), the Sudetenland and the German linguistic enclaves of Brno (Brünn), Jihlava (Iglau) and Olomouc (Olmütz). This land mass, which was admittedly not contiguous but nonetheless considerable, would in any case possess sufficient resources to grow into an orderly state. And regarding the other peoples of the disintegrated Empire, after disengaging they would surely also search for some sort of commonality. This also proved to be incorrect.

Everyone automatically gave thought to the future and would have gladly undone past events. They could at least be suppressed somewhat. It was therefore least of all the case that they self-critically questioned whether it was above all Austria that bore a greater degree of responsibility for what had happened than others did. And it was then only a few who, like the editor-in-chief of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, Friedrich Austerlitz, made the rhetorically-sounding question of the 'Deserved Fate' the subject of an editorial on 5 November 1918. Not only the victorious powers wanted to saddle Austria and Hungary with a historic guilt, but also those who regarded themselves as 'oppressed nations'. They had ultimately also played their part in events, in the successes and the failures, right up to the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy. But they exclu-

sively blamed the German Austrians and the Hungarians. It was they, therefore, whom the 'deserved fate' should befall.

Who, however, were 'the' Austrians, and where was their place in post-war Europe? Should that which American President Woodrow Wilson had said about the right of all peoples to self-determination not also apply to them? There were good reasons to grant the same status to the entity emerging from the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy – the 'residue' as French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau was said to have briefly and accurately formulated it¹¹ – as to the non-German and non-Hungarian parts of the Empire, which were then simply successor states. An argument against this, however, was not least the sense of self-worth that was especially typical of the German Austrians. They did not regard themselves as a 'residue'. The Habsburg Empire had, after all, emerged from the German core or hereditary lands. Austria had always borne a greater responsibility as well as burden than others, had always been at the centre of things and had identified itself with the Empire to a far greater extent than the other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy. But what was Austria really?

There was broad agreement that German-Austria (South-East Germany, as it was also occasionally called, if one did not want to go so far as to use portmanteau words like 'Ostass', 'Danube-Germania', 'Treuland' or 'Teutheim')¹² should become a democratic republic. This was conditional on having a bourgeois order and a political system comparable to that of the Western democracies. And something else: the 'trench community' of Germans and Austrians, as Karl Renner had described it,¹³ should become a Central European state. It was assumed that this would happen in unison with Germany. For several days in November 1918, it was admittedly unknown whether the forms of government could be reconciled, because whereas German-Austria had made a clear commitment to the democratic republic, Germany was still an empire. Only two days after 9 November, it could be established that the necessary agreement existed. The German Kaiser Wilhelm II fled to the Netherlands and cleared the way for a German republic. Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed the republic in Berlin. Now it was again Austria that had to follow and take the last, decisive step towards a republic.

Initially, it was a question of the person of Emperor Karl. He fought to retain his power, but he no longer had any instruments of power. To the last, he had still claimed that there would be a common future for him as well as for the Habsburg Empire: 'It will be possible,' he said in late October to the General Council of the Austro-Hungarian Bank, Michael Hainisch.¹⁴

The Emperor had even made a concession that was designed to make him acceptable even for the radicals: on 6 November, he amnestied Friedrich Adler, the son of the leader of the Social Democrats, who had been sentenced to death in 1916 after the murder of the Austrian Prime Minister Count Karl Stürgkh and whose sentence had then been commuted to life imprisonment. Should Karl have hoped to have earned

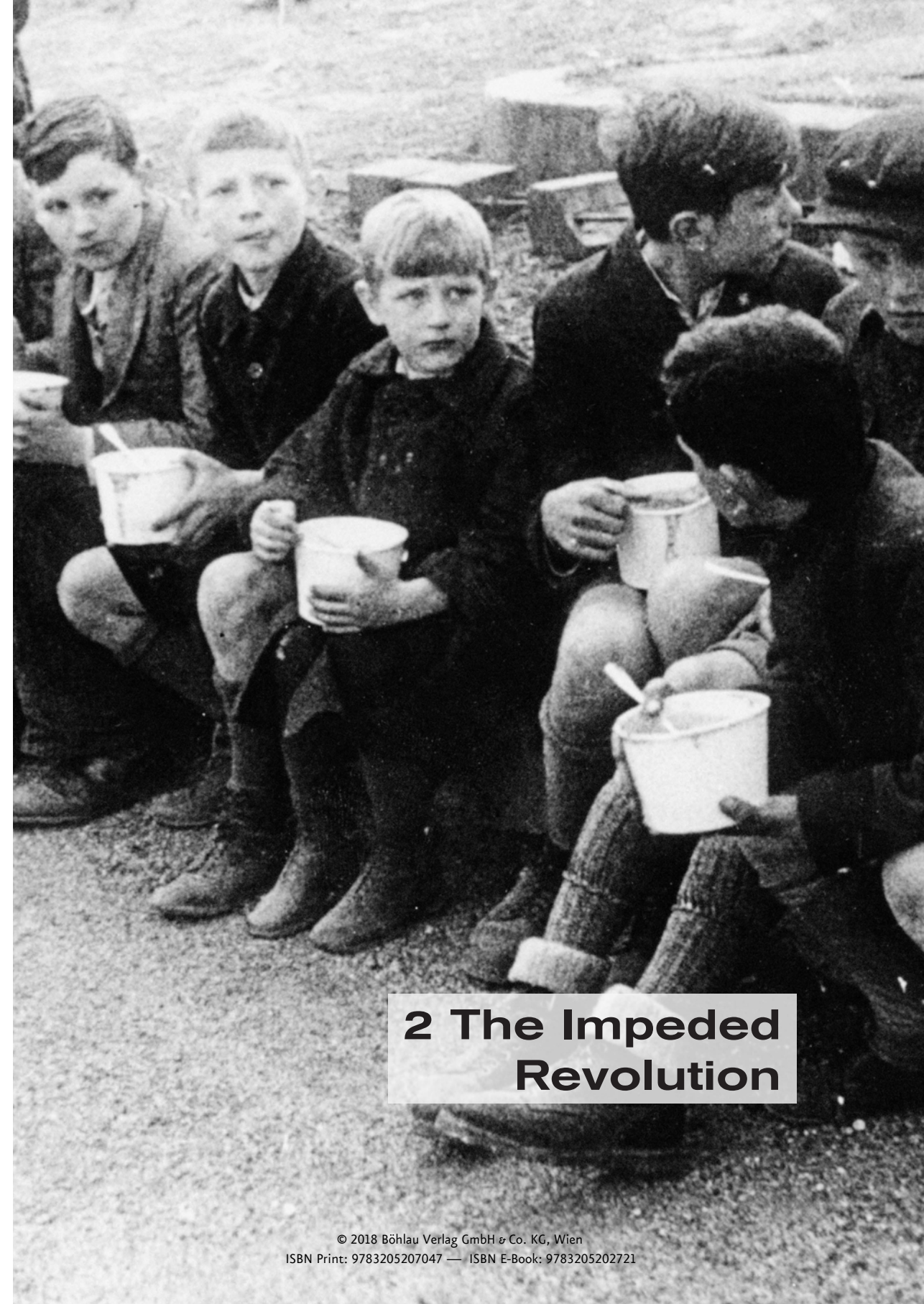
some kind of reward for the release of Friedrich Adler, he was also mistaken. But no one yet wanted to simply ignore him. In spite of his inability to lead Austria out of the war in any other way than via unconditional surrender and as a shattered state, there was still a high degree of loyalty and respect towards the monarch. And the Allies perhaps preferred to negotiate with him than with representatives of the new creation of German-Austria. The monarch should admittedly be removed as a political factor, otherwise the reference to a democratic republic would not enjoy any validity. After lengthy hesitation and many objections, the Emperor consented on 11 November to renounce any claim to participation in the political affairs of German-Austria. The document, which was burned in July 1927, stated: 'I renounce any part in affairs of government.' The Emperor was thus not removed and banished from the country but was instead edited out of events in a very moderate way. He removed the last Imperial government from office, left the Schönbrunn Palace and relocated to the Marchfeld in order to await further developments in Eckartsau Castle. There, on 13 November, he signed a waiver for Hungary, similar to that which he had accepted for Austria two days earlier.

As the Emperor had no power henceforth and the last Imperial government and the Army High Command would only be permitted to liquidate the Empire and its armed power, the question remained as to who would empower the new state. The problem, namely, was that German-Austria only had a chance of making a fresh political start if it also possessed the power to implement the resolutions of the Provisional National Assembly and their legislative acts and earn respect. Therefore, on 30 October 1918, a start was already made on the establishment of a new military institution, the People's Militia (Volkswehr). Banally enough, it was a question of guaranteeing the new state a minimum level of security, because the city commander of Vienna, Major General Baronet Johann von Mossig, had only four companies at his disposal, that is, around 500 men, with which he was able to prevent neither plundering nor the rioting of repatriated soldiers, not to mention a more far-reaching change, a Bolshevik revolution. Returning soldiers were compelled to exchange the Imperial colours on their caps for red cockades. Officers occasionally had their insignia torn off. For several days, the Council of State feared that the government could be overthrown. And Renner is supposed to have said: 'Whenever I now pass a lamppost, I always have a strange feeling.'¹⁵ He openly stated that the coalition of citizens, peasants and workers was a very fragile construction and rejected by the working class.¹⁶ But it was only a few radicals who wanted to use violence. And it was not least they who should be disciplined by means of the People's Militia. The vast majority of the tens of thousands of members of the People's Militia were in any case content to have a roof over their heads and free of the most pressing existential worries. They had no thought of revolution. Before long, the

People's Militia then became far more a social institution rather than actually being called on for military operations.¹⁷ This very soon became clear.

In early November, Slovene troops from the new Southern Slav State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (SHS) began to occupy the southern territories of Carinthia and Styria, which were partially populated by Slovenes. They initially encountered only the resistance of local citizens' militias. An armed conflict was looming. The People's Militia did not play any part in it. Salzburg and Tyrol as far as the Brenner Pass were occupied by Bavarian troops from 6 to 11 November. On 9 November, Italian units began to advance northward, crossed the Brenner Pass and eventually occupied Innsbruck. As one of the victorious powers, Italy was entitled to do this. It remained completely unclear where the frontiers would be drawn in the north and the east. The People's Militia, in any case, was unable to exert any influence on this.

Violence gained ground. Instead of granting the state executive power and solving security problems, the People's Militia became part of the problem. The idealistic assumption that the new state would be able to manage without a military, as advocated, among others, by the last chief of staff of the Isonzo Army, Colonel Theodor von Körner, and reflected in the rhyme 'Ohne Waffen, ohne Pfaffen wird die Jugend sich die Zukunft schaffen' (Without weapons, without papists, the youth will create the future),¹⁸ did not match the reality of the post-war period. Red guards and soldiers' councils were time and again willing to use violence. And they did not want to simply watch how a new state defined itself, in a very orderly and thoughtful fashion, always taking administrative procedures into account, preserving legal continuity and to a certain degree legitimate. A handful of radicals believed that now the time had come to set up councils, like in Russia, and trigger a Bolshevik revolution. In fact, it was still unknown what the state would look like; not even the name was beyond dispute. Both parts of the word German-Austria were unsatisfactory. And once doubts were raised as to whether the victorious powers might understand the term Austria as a cue to saddle this one remaining Austria with the entire war guilt – then no one was satisfied any longer with the official name. Nonetheless, the word continued to be used, not least in the provisional constitution and in the draft law for the political system, in which it was specified that German-Austria was to be a democratic republic. § 2 stated: 'German-Austria is part of the German Republic.' Thus, this was not an expression of intent but rather a pretence that everything was already certain. Only a single delegate hesitated. The Christian Social Wilhelm Miklas would have liked to see the decision regarding the system of government subjected to a popular referendum. But it was decided that the minimum consensus should be preserved; so Miklas relented.



2 The Impeded Revolution

- 2 Free meals for children in Vienna, 1919. In the months after the end of the First World War, the urban population was able to survive only by virtue of foreign aid. At the start of the free meals campaign by the Anglo-American Society of Friends, it was ascertained that in Vienna and Lower Austria 72 per cent of schoolchildren between the ages of six and 14 were poorly or very poorly fed. In order to provide effective assistance, 300,000 free meals were distributed every day during the first years after the war. Half of them were accounted for by Vienna and the rest by the other federal states. In 1919, 40,000 children found foster parents, above all in Switzerland and the Netherlands, who took them for three to six months. Foreign committees, such as New York's Vienna Milk Relief, operated their own childcare institutions. (Photo: Vienna City Library)

It could be one of the more difficult questions in a quiz: on which day did the First Austrian Republic begin, 30 October or 12 November 1918? The answer would perhaps result in a debate. Legal historians could argue that the beginning was marked by the resolution of the Provisional National Assembly on the founding of the state of German-Austria on 30 October 1918.¹⁹ Karl Renner instructed in 1947 for the 'proclamation of the Republic on Herrengasse on 30 October 1918' to be recorded in a painting by Max Frey, which was intended for the Museum of the First and Second Republic, initiated by Renner. A watercolour by Moritz Ledeli records the same scene from a different perspective. The argument that the founding of the state had been executed with the resolution on the basic institutions of state power could be countered by pointing out that the session in the Lower Austrian regional diet (Landtag) was merely a declaration of intent, because on 30 October Austria was still a monarchy. Only after Emperor Karl's renunciation was the path clear for the proclamation of the Republic. The history of the Republic thus began on 12 November 1918 with the resolution of the Provisional National Assembly on the Provisional Constitution and with the proclamation of the Republic before parliament. It's certainly the case that this day has taken hold in historical memory, that the memorial to the founding of the state not far from the parliament building bears this date, that the section of Vienna's Ringstraße between Bellaria and the town hall was called 'Ring of 12 November' from 1919 and 1934, that on 25 April 1919 the Constituent National Assembly declared 12 November to be a national holiday²⁰ and that on 1 May 1934 – the day on which the end of the Republic had come – it was heard that now 'the Austria of 12 November 1918' was being 'carried to its grave'. Accordingly, 12 November 1918 would be the correct answer. This day and the events before parliament were also recorded in a painting by Rudolf Konopa.²¹ The paintings by Frey and Konopa unmistakably carry the designation 'proclamation of the Republic'. Only the places and dates are different. What is correct? Let us abandon the debate.

A State Emerges

The 12 November 1918 did not end so peacefully as it had begun. On the afternoon, it was intended that the Provisional National Assembly adopt the state constitution and that the, as it were, official proclamation of the Republic take place. Everything was

prepared, the individual marching columns, which were supposed to meet in front of parliament, had been given detailed instructions. The crowds were estimated to number 150,000 people. Light rain could not spoil the festive mood. Most people, men and women alike, were well dressed. Hats were worn. When the members of the Provisional State Government stepped on to the ramp of parliament after the adoption of the Provisional Constitution, in order to proclaim the founding of the Republic to a crowd waiting in the falling darkness and the red-white-red flag was raised, which replaced the old black-yellow of the imperial era, a few members of the Red Guards pulled the flag down again. They tore the white of the middle stripe and hoisted the red rags, tied together, as a symbol of the beginning of the revolution. Subsequently, speeches were held and the Workers' Choral Society sang a song. Then, however, a dozen Red Guards attempted to force their way into the parliament building and began a wild shootout. Calm could be restored only with difficulty. But the spectre of the revolution began to take shape. The fact that it did not thrive was only because the future of the country appeared relatively secure in spite of all loans. At the outset, there was no question of Austria's inability to survive. People continued to hope that German-Austria would have a sizeable state territory. In the Law on the Scope and Borders of State Territory from 22 November 1918, those regions and cities were finally named to which territorial sovereignty should extend, and these were primarily areas and linguistic enclaves in which German was spoken but which were also claimed by the Southern Slav SHS state and the new Czechoslovakia or were located in Poland, like Bielsko Biała (Deutsch-Bielitz), for instance. It was unrealistic. In such a way, an artificial construct would have emerged that would have been without any coherence. But the very one-sided declaration with which Vienna decreed what belonged to German-Austria and what should ultimately have a seat and a voice in the intended new parliament with 225 seats had in any case not been reconciled with the other successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy. And they had no intention whatsoever of complying with German-Austria's notions.

In German-Austria's leading economic circles, too, a sense of cautious optimism still prevailed in November 1918. This was based not least on the fact that a type of government of national unity had been formed and gave the impression that all political forces wanted to assist in the construction of a new state. The country was regarded as a state of national unity and not as the wreckage of a great empire. And then they added together everything that this new state would have – always provided that those things would fall to it that it had made a claim on from the start: productive industries, iron, timber, hydropower and above all capital. Vienna had been the banking centre of the Monarchy, and there was still plenty of money. After all, Austria-Hungary had not been bankrupt in November 1918. The company directors in Vienna also believed that the Bohemian industries obtained their loans primarily from German-Austrian institutes. The war profits would have to be invested and the factories adjusted to new products,

and when all this was under way the viability even of a downsized country would not be an issue. As long as the state ensured internal order, the people would surely soon place their trust in it.

Unlike in Germany, there was no seeking of refuge in the myth of the stab-in-the-back to which Austria-Hungary had supposedly fallen victim. Admittedly, as during the war years themselves, the attitude of the Northern and Southern Slavs was regarded as causal for the collapse, but at the same time with a certain satisfaction that one was now free to make decisions. Now there was no need to take consideration of Hungarians, Czechs and other peoples of the Habsburg Empire readily perceived as the 'gravediggers' of the Monarchy; now German-Austria could go its own way, undeterred. Politicians, the public and, not least, the Catholic Church agreed on this, and it was especially the latter who successfully accomplished the transition from a pillar of the Habsburg dynasty to a pillar of the democratic republic comparatively harmlessly. It might be that it remained a 'bloody wound',²² but it could be concealed. The clergy was called on to exhort the faithful from the pulpit to display 'unconditional loyalty towards the now lawfully existing state of German-Austria'.²³

That which had changed and would happen admittedly had to be explained and the children were a good starting point. For this reason, reading material in primary schools stated:

Some of the things the grown-ups are currently talking about, you ultimately cannot yet understand. They are presently saying: our fatherland is now Austria – no, they now call it German-Austria – German-Austria is now a republic and we are republicans. What might that mean? ... We who speak the German language now want to join together and set up house as we please. No individual ought to be able to dictate anything to us; instead, we want to do that which the majority of us regards as good. ... Yes, but we are ten million people in German-Austria. Should they always be asked what they want? Surely not, because that would be too cumbersome. Therefore, the ten million people elect from time to time people whom they trust. These people then get together and make laws, with which we all have to comply. That is how it is done in a republic. ... When you grow up, our beloved German-Austria should be a happy, joyful country again and you should be proud of your fatherland.²⁴

The transition from monarchy to republic appeared to be so natural that, though most people were aware of the caesura, they also experienced it as an experiment, of which they were a part. No one had any experience of democracy. In spite of all indications of a secure future in a democratic state, for the mass of the population existential worries came to the fore and the desire for stability in a world falling to pieces. Union with Germany appeared to be the solution to everything. The Greater German parties and the Austrian Social Democrats advocated this out of complete conviction; the Chris-

Map 1: Intended
Scope and
Borders of the
State Territory of
German-Austria,
November 1918





tian Socials with some hesitation. The Social Democrats expected a complete national unity to bring a swift establishment of a socialist social order. It was for this reason that they claimed – and here the contrast with capital becomes clear – that an independent Austria was not viable.²⁵ Union with Germany was admittedly not completely unquestioned among the Social Democrats, and State Chancellor Renner would have by far preferred a league of independent states with a common central administration. It remained unclear who would belong to the league.²⁶

A little later, the aspiration to combine with Germany was qualified and it had to be acknowledged that Germany was only moderately taken with Austrian advances. Berlin feared above all that the addition of Austria – if at all possible – would be answered by the victorious powers with intensified peace terms. In such a way, Germany would have come out of the war stronger. Therefore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wilhelm Solf, signalled his rejection. However, when it came to drawing up the Weimar constitution, representatives of German-Austria were nevertheless invited to assist in this work.²⁷ Germany was thus not so certain after all and preferred to keep an iron in the fire.

The union issue was something of a political card, however, which was played once and held another time up one's sleeve. Austria's union with Germany would most certainly prevent both a return to the monarchy as well as a Bolshevisation.²⁸ The victorious powers considered the latter to be a real danger, which they wanted to confront, but at the same time they had to admit that they hardly had any options. It was not yet a foregone conclusion that the experiment with the democratic republic would succeed and that radical groups would not capitalise on the expiration of the old Austria and provoke a revolution. The violence that had become so commonplace during the war did not look like abating. The call for the Allied military or at least law enforcement troops could be heard time and again. Admittedly, the British government was not keen on French and Italian plans to send troops to Austria. Eventually, the three powers agreed to install small diplomatic or military missions in Vienna. They wanted at least to be able to observe developments at close quarters. On 30 November 1918, the War Office in London commissioned Lieutenant Colonel Sir Thomas Montgomery-Cuninghame to go to Vienna as the British military plenipotentiary. Montgomery-Cuninghame had been military attaché in Vienna until 1914. Now – almost like old times – he was supposed not only to enforce the will of the Allies in German-Austria but also be responsible for Hungary and regularly report from Czechoslovakia. His first messages from Vienna already sounded alarming. German-Austria was threatened with a catastrophic famine.

As early as late October 1918, the last Imperial Minister of State for Food, Johann Löwenfeld-Russ, had pointed out that it would not be possible to feed Austria in the medium and long term. He would prove to be right. The Allies, namely, left the war-time blockade in place, and in view of the food catastrophe or at least scarcity in many European states there was also little prospect of imports.

The only hope held by Löwenfeld-Russ, who, as minister, had become – without a break – a member of the Provisional State Government of German-Austria, was that Austria might be able to overcome its existential problems with the help of Germany. But in November, Germany cancelled the deliveries it had already agreed to make. It was fighting for its own survival. And then it got worse: in view of the looming quarrel over the affiliation of southern Bohemia and Moravia as well as the German territories of Silesia, the Czechs were no longer prepared to deliver foodstuffs to German-Austria. They were also thoroughly alarmed that German-Austria had simply written into its constitution that it would be part of Germany, because if indeed all those territories claimed by Austria became part of (a Greater) Germany, Czechoslovakia would be positively encircled. This was unimaginable for the Prague government. It responded accordingly. If Austria did not want to starve to death, it would have to, at least temporarily, defer its territorial desires and talk to the Czechs. Löwenfeld-Russ then made unmistakably clear in the session of the Council of State on 8 November: ‘With all due respect to national feeling, the question must be asked: is it possible to force through our national and political desires if we have already starved to death?’ The answer was self-evident. It would prove to be immensely difficult, however, to come together in conversation with the new Czechoslovakia. But there was still a flicker of hope: five days after the conclusion of the armistice in the Villa Giusti, the American government had announced that it would support the ‘liberated peoples of Europe’ with foodstuffs.²⁹ The German-Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Otto Bauer, successor to the suddenly deceased Viktor Adler, therefore notified the Americans not only of the new Austrian creation but also reflected on the American offer. German-Austria was also one of the ‘liberated peoples’, he argued, and would therefore also be supplied with foodstuffs from the USA. President Wilson communicated in his answer that the USA would indeed enable the country to import foodstuffs, but only against payment. Admittedly, the USA did not want to adopt the British-French stance and continue the blockade measures beyond the end of the war. Therefore, Germany was not supplied until March 1919; in the case of Austria, however, an equalisation was silently made with the liberated nations, even if the start of aid deliveries was dramatically delayed. It even took until the end of the year before it was at all possible to speak with the director of the American Relief Administration, Herbert Hoover. Until then, all food it had been somehow possible to rustle up in German-Austria had been exhausted. The people survived from January 1919 with the help of foreign aid. As announced, however, this aid was not free of charge. Instead, payment agreements were concluded – it was a question of indemnities, without which no help could have been expected.

For the willingness of the USA to provide food credit to Austria and in this way ensure its survival, it was ultimately decisive that the looming spectre of Bolshevism was taking on concrete form. It was not a question of generosity, and when the USA

advanced German-Austria money, with which the food deliveries were to be paid, German-Austria had to pledge considerable state revenue to the USA in return and eventually agree in June 1919 to the temporary transfer of the Austrian gold and foreign exchange reserves to Italy.³⁰ The Americans and the French also ultimately persuaded Czechoslovakia to supply Austria with coal for the production of gas.³¹

The daily arrivals of flour and cereals grew significantly. In April, the flour contingent per person was doubled, likewise the fat contingent. Both, however, only reached the (exceedingly modest) quantities of December 1917 and January 1918.³²

Elsewhere, the crisis continued to escalate. Austria's major banks had to sell off their holdings. They were unable to do anything else, because the loss of their solvency loomed. They sold their majority shares to the then Italian shipyards in Trieste (Triest) and Rijeka (Fiume). The Czechs invited French financial institutions to purchase hitherto Austrian shares in the Škoda company. Škoda was then acquired by Schneider-Creuzot. When the Italian Fiat company succeeded with the help of the notorious speculator Camillo Castiglioni in acquiring the share packages of the Austrian Alpine Montan Company (Österreichisch-Alpine Montangesellschaft), another major Austrian enterprise was transferred into foreign hands. It did not make matters any better that the Austrian Ministry of Finance under the short-lived minister Joseph Schumpeter had a finger in the pie. It was precisely such actions, which prevented an emergency nationalisation of large firms, that were grist for the mill of those who regarded economic questions from an ideological viewpoint. And for the Social Democrats, the sell-off amounted to a loss of jobs and could be interpreted in this way from the perspective of the class struggle as the 'West' being imperialist and capitalist, and it by all means allowed for the adoption of the slogans of the Russian October Revolution.

In spite of increasing verbal radicalism, the Social Democrat party leadership of German-Austria attempted repeatedly to provide reassurance. Permanent Secretary for the Army Julius Deutsch also played down the issue when there were several indications that the political leadership might lose control over the People's Militia. Vienna, above all, regarded it already as a veritable scourge, and its strength of more than 15,000 men gave cause for concern. Individual People's Militia squads began not only to search guest houses and shops for foodstuffs and other items they could make use of. Now private apartments were added. There was plundering. The police were powerless. Military intervention still appeared too risky for the Allied military missions. They had only 200 men at their disposal and were thus confronted by far superior numbers.³³

In other respects, too, things did not look good. Slogans in favour of union with Germany were repeatedly sighted. Anti-Semitism, which had already been latent before the war, was increasingly directed against those Galician Jews who had remained in Austria, above all in Vienna, as well as the 'local' Jews. Everywhere, things were threatening to boil over. The government did what it could and attempted to fight off the threat of

revolution with a whole raft of reforms. The coalition voted in the eight-hour day for factory workers and a general 48-hour working week, secured holiday entitlement and unemployment insurance, all things that had already been demanded during the wave of strikes in January 1918. Of course, some desires remained unfulfilled. However, good behaviour was the order of the day until the issues deriving from the peace treaty had been settled. Unrest should be avoided, if at all possible, because it might otherwise be claimed: Austria is becoming communist.

The first general election was announced for 16 February 1919, the first since June 1911, and the first in which women could also exercise their right to vote. The pre-election period naturally brought an additional polarisation and radicalisation. For a time, there were thoughts of simply naming delegates for those German territories of the former Monarchy separated from German-Austria, because they could not take part in the elections, but it was ultimately refrained from doing so. As it turned out, the result of the elections was clear-cut: with 72 parliamentary seats, the Social Democrats obtained a relative majority; the Christian Socials received 69 seats in parliament, which was designated the Constituent National Assembly; German nationalist groups got 26 and splinter parties a further three seats in parliament, which had 170 seats. In fact, only 159 delegates had been elected; eleven were co-opted.³⁴ Karl Renner became state chancellor. The government was established in the form of a grand coalition of Social Democrats and Christian Socials; with 141 delegates, it enjoyed a very comfortable majority. One of the first resolutions of the newly-elected Constituent National Assembly was to confirm the constitution of 12 November 1918. German-Austria was a democratic republic. And German-Austria was an 'integral part of the German Republic'.³⁵ At least on paper.

One Emperor Too Many

The building of the Imperial Assembly (Reichsrat) on Vienna's Ringstraße was vacated by those who no longer had anything to do there. It was also no longer called the building of the Imperial Assembly, but rather the parliament. Only the largest assembly hall retained its name: it was the Reichsrat Assembly Hall. But it was hardly needed. The Constituent National Assembly managed without it. It did, however, have an overflowing agenda. Again, as in November 1918, the main concern was initially the person of the Emperor. He had by no means become a non-person, even if he was accused of many things and verbal attacks were directed in equal measure against him, the aristocracy and, above all, the wartime military leadership. The fact that the Emperor was a type of nuisance factor, however, appeared evident. To the last, he had driven through Vienna in an open-top motor car and been acclaimed, then he had relocated to Eckartsau Castle and waited there for a signal from one of the successor states, welcoming

him. It did not come. Like many, the former Emperor had the Spanish flu. His diet was a little monotonous, as there was game almost every day. And he waited.

It was noticed that the Emperor had not disbanded the armed forces of the Dual Monarchy, which had taken an oath to him, or released them from this oath – in contrast to the last Imperial Austrian government. Was it an omission that just happened or should the fiction of a still extant supreme command be nurtured in this way? No one knew. Karl remained in Eckartsau Castle and his intentions were unclear. A solution had to be found.

After the elections in February, the German-Austrian National Assembly prepared a law on the exile of the Habsburgs. There had already been considerations at the Council of State session on 20 December 1918 to 'outlaw' the Emperor. An obstacle to this was still the idea of involving Emperor Karl in the negotiations for a peace treaty. Renner travelled to Eckartsau, but evidently did not have an opportunity to speak to the former Emperor, because the latter avoided an encounter and Renner had to return home without having achieved anything.³⁶ Karl doubtless felt that he had gone too far with his declaration of renunciation from 11 November and had adopted the view of his wife, Zita, to the effect that a ruler cannot simply abdicate. He could be killed; then another would simply follow in his footsteps.³⁷ But to abdicate: never!

On 12 March, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George addressed the question of war guilt of the Austrian Emperor to the Supreme Allied Council in Paris. The Council decided that Karl was not personally guilty and that they would be grateful if Switzerland were to take him in. In Vienna, however, Karl's refusal to abdicate led to a further escalation. Rumours circulated to the effect that the life of the Emperor was in danger, though they had admittedly been plucked out of thin air. He had become an embarrassment – nothing more. And, unlike Kaiser Wilhelm, he did not want to flee. State Chancellor Renner overtly threatened: if Karl did not abdicate or go into exile, he would be interned. Eventually, the former Emperor did resolve to emigrate after all and was brought to Switzerland by special train on 24 March 1919. Stefan Zweig travelled in the opposite direction. He who had regarded the start of the war in 1914 and the awakening of the masses as 'something magnificent, captivating and even seductive', but had then travelled to Switzerland because he was surplus to requirements, returned to Austria in March 1919, to an Austria 'that now only dozed as an uncertain, grey and lifeless shadow of the former Imperial Monarchy on the map of Europe'. In Feldkirch, Zweig claimed to have come to a standstill exactly next to Emperor Karl's saloon and watched as the latter's train departed:

The officials gazed after him, respectfully. Then they returned to their places of work with the same certain awkwardness that can be observed at burials. ... I knew it was a different Austria, another world to which I was returning.³⁸

Before crossing the frontier, the former Emperor withdrew his waiver of 11 November of the previous year with the explanation that no one, whoever it was, had the right to depose an emperor 'by the grace of God'. 'I continue to believe in the "divine right of kings". I am the legitimate ruler. All anti-kings, even if they are chosen by the grace of the people, are illegitimate and traitors. My Austrian and Hungarian proclamations were imposed on me and are, therefore, invalid.'³⁹ The Republic responded on 3 April 1919 with the unconditional exile of the 'former bearer of the crown' and the expulsion of all members of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine who did not expressly acknowledge the Austrian constitution.⁴⁰ Their civil rights were restricted. The Republic declared itself the owner of all Habsburg property situated on state territory, so far it was not verifiably private property. Oaths taken to the Emperor were to be regarded as 'non-binding'. Aristocratic titles and privileges were abolished.⁴¹ In this way, a problem had been radically solved. Reactions like that of (Count) Adalbert Sternberg are to be regarded as episodic: he had business cards printed on which he annotated his name with 'Ennobled under Karl the Great / disennobled under Karl Renner'.⁴²

Attempted Coups

The law of 3 April 1919 at least made it clear to some extent that German-Austria could also show its revolutionary side. The victory of the radicals in Hungary and the formation of a Communist council government there had doubtlessly contributed to its determination. On 21 March 1919, Béla Kun, who had been radicalised during the Russian Revolution, took over the reins of government in Budapest. Austria also understood this as a signal: the left hoped that the revolution would cross the border; the vast majority of the population, above all in the west of the country, was shocked. The nervousness was increased when the British Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery-Cuninghame returned to Vienna from Budapest in March in an alarmed state and spoke of an immediate danger. The Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Otto Bauer, attempted to provide reassurance: there was also talk in German-Austria about a Communist government, but it was merely an academic discussion. Moreover, developments in Austria did not depend on Hungary but on Germany.⁴³ Precisely this was the problem, however, because on 5 April a council republic was also proclaimed in Munich. Was it the beginning of a Bolshevik revolution in Germany? Would it trigger an 'Austrian Revolution', which had so far failed to materialise and had at most been promulgated?⁴⁴

On 27 March, strikes began on the Southern Railway and the Western Railway. Trains with foodstuffs were halted and redirected. It was once more the People's Militia that was a cause for concern. Minister of Finance Schumpeter strongly advised the Western powers to disarm the People's Militia and suggested to the representatives of

the victorious powers that State Chancellor Karl Renner would also support such a step.⁴⁵ But the Allies were again unable to bring themselves to take any measure other than threats. In Vienna, the hour of the Social Democrats finally struck.

Although the Austrian left had a radical wing and took the class struggle seriously, it rejected the request of the Hungarian Communists for active support. In spite of much sympathy for a left-wing experiment, the Austrian Social Democrats – who sympathised with Béla Kun – did not consider the situation comparable. It was argued above all that a dominant left existed in Vienna but not in the rest of Austria, where the strongholds of the peasantry and the Christian Socials were located, who were vehemently opposed to the call for joint action with the Hungarian Communists.

The possibility of an affiliation of Austria and Hungary, however, set the alarm bells ringing among the victorious powers. They now discussed the option, after all, of transferring troops to eastern Austria. Even a regiment in Vienna would suffice, they argued. The idea suddenly attracted the interest not only of the French but also the Americans and the British. The French wanted to make a start with 500 men. But interventionism had already seen its best days. The militaries continued to make plans to intervene, but the political leaderships in Paris, London and Washington put them off time and again. A contributing factor was the only limited success of Allied intervention in Russia. To saddle themselves with an additional problem in the form of Austria and, potentially, Hungary was not in the interests of the West.

More nuanced was Italy's approach, which did not rule out a French intervention in the Danube region but wanted to safeguard its own interests there. Italy, therefore, advocated an intervention and, should the occasion arise, wanted to see an Austria occupied and controlled by Italy and a Hungary controlled by the French.⁴⁶ The Vatican also desired Allied intervention in Austria. As early as 27 March 1919, however, the victorious powers agreed during the Paris Peace Conference that there would be no intervention. Thus, the plans of Montgomery-Cuninghame and his colleagues in Vienna, the Italian General Roberto Segré and the French diplomat Henri Allizé were definitively rejected. A swift conclusion of peace and resumption of international trade would, in Paris' view, combat the danger far more effectively than a military intervention.⁴⁷

On 8 April, a positively catastrophic mood emerged among the 'Big Four'. The Italian Prime Minister Orlando announced that he had received reliable reports that the proclamation of a Soviet republic in Vienna was planned for 14 April. The British had received similar information.⁴⁸ The day was incorrect, but there was substance to the rumour. The reaction of the Allies, however, was rather odd: the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur James Balfour, said: if the country were to sink into chaos or even become communist, deliveries of foodstuffs would immediately be stopped. And Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery-Cuninghame caused a stir with the remark: 'Unrest ... will be punished with death by starvation.'

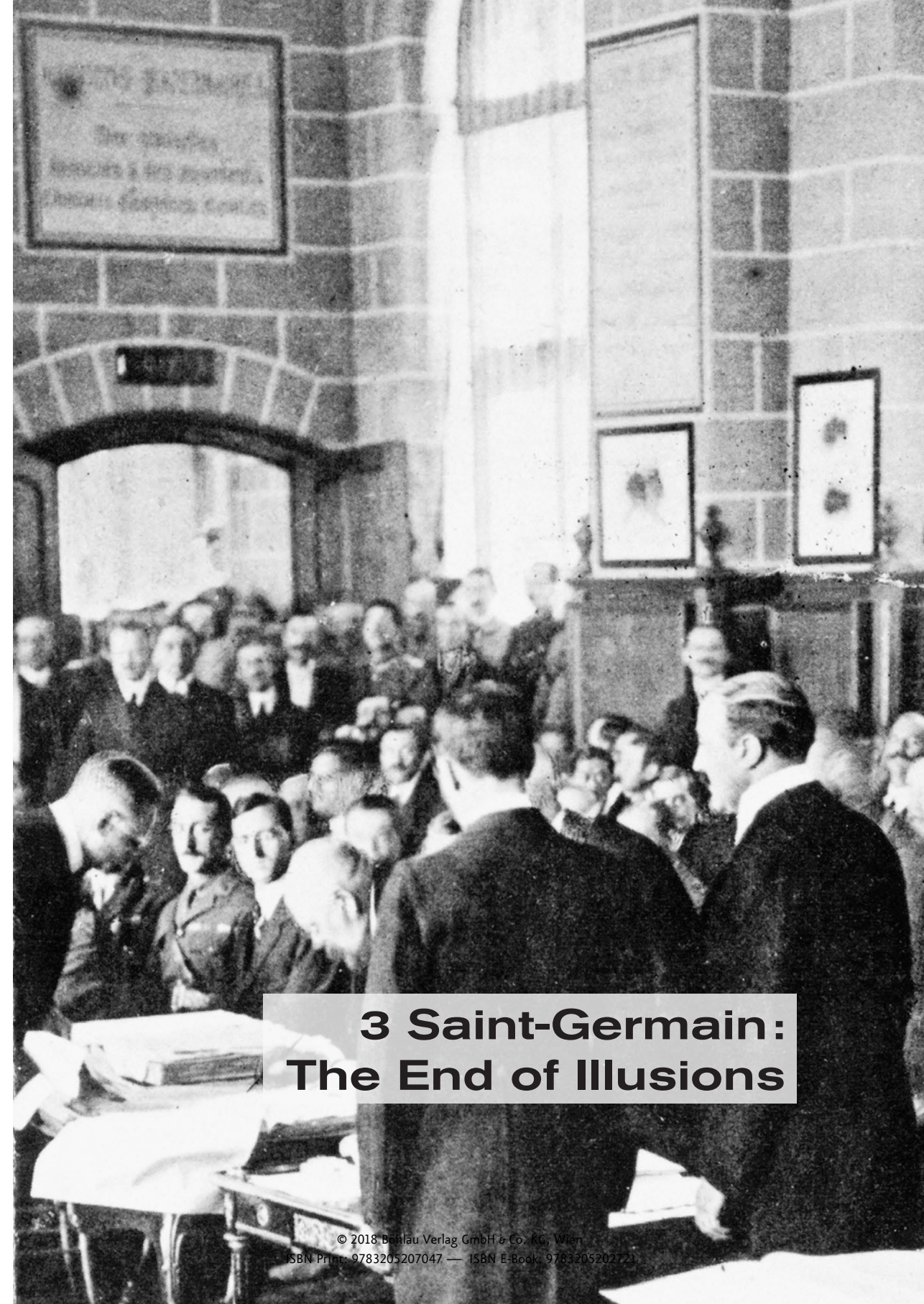
In spite of the aid deliveries sent since January, the existential distress in Austria was still extensive, and because the Austrians were basically given next to nothing for free, it was only the fact that something was delivered at all that was worth pointing out. In March, the Allied blockade against Austria was demonstratively ended. However, Austria was not allowed to export any goods to Germany or Hungary. This, in turn, had a restrictive effect, and unemployment increased. The class struggle became more acute. It was not limited, however, to the radical left and their main ideological adversaries in the Christian Social camp but extended to the antithesis between a Vienna that was regarded as predominantly 'left' and the federal states, which were considered to be mainly Christian Social, or at least not left. But even within the left, the contrasts were tangible. Renner opposed the demand of the radicals for socialisation with the argument that 'one cannot socialise bankruptcy'. Eventually, the majority of Social Democrats distanced themselves from the council movement at a national conference of workers' councils in Linz in spring 1919.⁴⁹

However, this by no means silenced radical expression. And it was not only expressions but time and again acts of violence that fanned the fear. Ever social group sought to shape the state according to their preferences. Bogeyman images were produced accordingly. Those who thought differently were 'class enemies'. In turn, words such as 'Bolsheviks' or 'Judaized' easily crossed the lips of the latter. Everyone believed they had a monopoly on the truth. The spectre of revolution loomed in Vienna. The federal states fought to save their territory. Understanding for the problems of the others could only be described as 'finite'. The escalation of violence could also be perceived, however, as a millionfold answer to the question of the meaning of life and, above all, the meaning of the mass mortality during the war. Was that it? Around half the male Austrians had gained military experience, been to war and survived. The repatriates were accustomed to violence. And violence in politics was commonplace after the war.

The radical left prepared an armed uprising for 17 April, which was also designed to install a council government in German-Austria. The Hungarian Communists placed all their hopes in this operation. Enthusiastic reports in the Hungarian press about the growing Communist movement in Austria increased day by day. Armed men from Hungary infiltrated their neighbour. The Communist regime in Budapest was also prepared to contribute to the cost of revolutionising Austria and sent money. Then came illegal emissaries, even including the People's Commissar for Education, Sándor Szabados, and Ernst Bettelheim as a representative of the Communist International. The first thing he did was to replace the leader of the Austrian Communists, who was too inactive for his taste.⁵⁰ Another brought pre-prepared proclamations, which were supposed to be put up after a successful Communist putsch. The placards bore the date of 16 April.⁵¹ However, it was to be the day after.

Communist agitators exploited a gathering of repatriates and unemployed in Vienna to storm parliament. Sections of the People's Militia intervened on the side of the Communists. The mass of the People's Militia remained loyal to the regime, however, and followed the appeals and orders of Social Democrat politicians, above all those of Minister for the Army Julius Deutsch. A general uprising failed to materialise. The ringleaders were arrested, and it can be said with some justification that the revolutionising of Austria had foundered on the Social Democrats.

Things again became critical in June. There were two reasons for this: the Allies, above all the Italian plenipotentiary for supervising the armistice, General Segré, had issued an ultimatum regarding the reduction of the People's Militia, and the Hungarians – or, rather, the Communists – had put all their eggs into one basket. Money and agitators continued to arrive. The Hungarian envoy played a key role and attempted everything to take advantage of the commotion over the depletion of the People's Militia from more than 50,000 to 12,000 men. However, the chief of police in Vienna, Johann Schober, had 122 Communist functionaries arrested on the eve of the planned operation. The movement was leaderless and the storm on the prison on Rossauer Lände ended on 15 June in Vienna's Hörlgasse in a hail of police bullets. The Bolshevik dream of the rule of workers' and soldiers' councils was over. The radical left had suffered a debacle and henceforth played no further role. Now everyone could concentrate on something other than the Communist threat.



3 Saint-Germain: The End of Illusions

- 3 On 10 September 1919, State Chancellor Karl Renner signed the peace treaty between the Allies and Austria at the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. 'It is a painful peace but it is a peace', said the Chancellor. The Romanian and Yugoslavian delegations did not take part in the signing ceremony, as they had objections to individual provisions. During the ratification debate in the USA, the House of Representatives refused to give its consent to the treaty. As a result, the USA remained officially at war with Austria until 8 November 1921. (Photo: Austrian National Library / Picture Archives)

Since December 1918, intensive thought had been given to what should be settled in the framework of a treaty between the victorious powers and German-Austria. As German-Austria regarded itself as a successor state and not the state that had waged war at the time, it was assumed that the Allies would conclude a state treaty with Austria, rather than a peace treaty. Again, one of the illusions or, rather, misapprehensions that accompanied the path of the Republic. Initially, it was also hoped that everything would be settled fairly quickly, because – as the state constitution declared – German-Austria was to become part of the German Republic. All that was important, therefore, was what the German peace treaty said. But developments wrought havoc with all plans, not to mention all hopes. There was, above all, the greatest uncertainty regarding the frontiers of the territory, which would either exist as an independent state or be incorporated into Germany. A central role was played here by the question of a union with Germany, both for advocates of independence and for those who put the case for incorporation: if German-Austria were to endure, literally every square kilometre had to be fought for; if it were to be consumed by Germany, it was not so important whether peripheral territories were included or not.

The Parts and the Whole

The question of what would happen resulted in territorial issues shifting from the level of the state to that of the provinces, because the federal states regarded themselves as historically evolved entities, and rightly so. They had existed earlier than the state; they were in some cases older than Habsburg rule in the Alpine region. The federal states, therefore, fought with stubborn determination to retain the historical entities and even occasionally questioned affiliation with German-Austria.

In the far west, in Vorarlberg, the right to self-determination was regarded as something that also allowed even small territorial entities the free choice of affiliation. As early as November 1918, a union of the province with Switzerland was touted. Several months later, on 12 March 1919, when the Constituent National Assembly voted on a union with Germany, a Vorarlberg delegate caused a stir when he voted against the motion, because Vorarlberg wanted to decide on its own affiliation, he said: 'Vienna does not know the people of Vorarlberg, and we do not want to know anything about the Vienna Jews,' he succinctly commented.⁵² The President of the National Assembly, Karl

Seitz, remained calm and said that, for the provinces, it would 'prove very unpleasant if they want to segregate themselves from Vienna as one would from a leper', because 'without Vienna's steering power, the provinces would not survive'.⁵³ However, it was also suggested to unite Vorarlberg with Bavaria or Württemberg. In a popular referendum on 11 May 1919, around 80 per cent of the population voted for the union of Vorarlberg with Switzerland. Switzerland was conflicted, but ultimately decided only to accept a union with Vorarlberg in consultation with Vienna. Furthermore: the view prevailed in Bern that one should not start carving up Austria.⁵⁴ The Supreme Allied Council in Paris, which was preparing the judgement of the victors, could only agree.

Tyrol, which had belonged to Austria since 1363, hoped – against its better judgement – that South Tyrol, the territory south of the Brenner Pass as far as Salorno, would remain part of the historical entity. After all, Tyrol was older than the Habsburg Monarchy. It had now long been known that Italy had been awarded Tyrol as far as the Brenner Pass in the Treaty of London in 1915, but the state capital of Innsbruck did not regard that as definitive. Therefore, all possible options were explored for how Tyrol could preserve its integrity. The fact that the province had declared its accession to the state of German-Austria was one thing; the fact that the province might be torn apart was something else. The propaganda for a union was, therefore, very weak in Tyrol and was largely limited to Social Democrat and Greater German circles, whilst the Christian Social majority was split on the issue of the union. All forms of state autonomy were discussed, from a union of Tyrol – as a canton – with Switzerland via the creation of an independent Alpine republic to the neutralisation of Tyrol and its withdrawal from the German-Austrian association of states.⁵⁵

Carinthia, which had become part of Austria in 1335, wanted to belong to the new state of German-Austria at all costs. As the Slovene national government in Ljubljana (Laibach) was anxious to take possession of as much territory as possible and wanted to incorporate Klagenfurt and most of Villach into the new Southern Slave state, Slovene troops began to occupy Carinthian territory north of the Karawanks. They were met with resistance. It was the beginning of the Austro-Slovene conflict in Carinthia. Citizens' militias, which were intended to halt the advance of the Slovenes, were formed from repatriates and volunteers. The Carinthian Provincial Assembly could not and did not want to wait until People's Militia forces enabled an orderly resistance. It decided to act independently: 'The Council of State in Vienna is to be informed immediately of this resolution.'⁵⁶ The defensive measures were in vain.

The Provisional Provincial Assembly in Carinthia eventually had to consent to a demarcation line on 23 November, which ran along the Gail and Drava rivers, that is, right through the middle of Carinthia. However, this did not bring an end to the armed conflicts. After an American academic commission had toured the province from January 1919 onwards, which spoke out against a partition of the Klagenfurt

Basin and wanted to draw the frontier along the main ridge of the Karawanks, the Slovenes sought to bring about a *fait accompli*. They began a large-scale offensive but were thrown back. This time, the People's Militia also played a role. One of the People's Militiamen deployed in Carinthia was Franz Jonas. Italy, which was already engaged at this point in time in a bitter struggle with the SHS state for Istria, Rijeka (Fiume) and the Dalmatian coast, was perfectly content with the Austrian victories. When Serbian troops intervened in the fighting, however, there was nothing left for the Austrian units to do but retreat. Against Entente troops, which also included the Serbians, no resistance could be offered on account of the armistice. Klagenfurt was occupied by SHS troops. The provincial government had to be evacuated to Spittal an der Drau. Until the time of a decision in the context of the peace treaty negotiations, the south of Carinthia remained disputed.⁵⁷

From the outset, southern Styria, Austrian since 1282, with the predominantly German cities of Maribor (Marburg), Celje (Cilli) and Ptuj (Pettau), could not be held. Only for Maribor was a popular referendum considered, but it then did not come about. The SHS state had received massive support from France, and for Italy its own desires carried too much weight for it to risk becoming more than a verbal advocate for German-Austria. As in Carinthia, Slovene and SHS formations also advanced north into southern Styria and occupied Radkersburg, among other places. Despite repeated attempts to force back the SHS troops, the city could not be liberated.

Another territory remained disputed, and indeed for a longer period of time, namely the German-settled parts of western Hungary. Here, Hungarian, Austrian and, not least, Czech interests were at odds. Hungary wanted to retain the territory; Austria wanted to obtain it; and Prague pursued the project of a Slav corridor, which would stretch from Slovakia via the three western Hungarian counties of Moson (Wieselburg), Vasvár (Eisenburg) and Sopron (Ödenburg) as far as Croatia. Until spring 1919, it seemed to be anything but a foregone conclusion that Austria would receive German West Hungary. But then the Béla Kun regime gave Austria the edge in the eyes of the Allies because they were inclined to honour the stance of Austria and ignore both Hungarian and Czech wishes.

Austria demonstrated compliance. Everything that might appreciably provoke the Allies or even its neighbours was eschewed. Although Austria received verbal praise for this, it was more than questionable whether the Allies would take this into account at the negotiations for a peace treaty scheduled near Paris. After all, they did not do it in the case of Germany, whose peace treaty was being discussed in Versailles. Meanwhile, the hope could be buried that there would not be any victor's justice in Paris, as had been the case in 1814/15 in Vienna. The pentarchy of the five European great powers from that time, the Concert of Europe and the old-style conference diplomacy were no longer in demand. Only the idea of a balance of power in Europe still had its advo-

cates. Therefore, it was not only the Liverpool Professor of Modern History, Charles Webster, who took a detailed look at the Congress of Vienna of 1814/15; others did the same. Webster did it in a particularly impressive manner. Within eleven weeks, he wrote his remarkable book *The Congress of Vienna, 1814/15*,⁵⁸ in which he described the Congress as the only meeting that could act as a type of matrix for the forthcoming tasks of the statesmen in the palaces around Paris. However, the British scholar was unable to convince them. In Versailles and Saint-Germain-en-Laye, just as little as in Neuilly-sur-Seine, Trianon and Sèvres, the basic principles of the Congress of Vienna were not applied. The twentieth century had arrived.

In one point, however, Austria was wrong to be sceptical. It was feared that the victorious powers would know nothing about the countries with which they were supposed to conclude a peace. This may have applied to some politicians, but not to the experts who not only had to prepare the foundations for a solution to territorial questions but also discussed every detail of the generally comprehensive studies.⁵⁹ Until March 1919, for instance, the thinking within British institutions revolved time and again around a Danube confederation with Vienna at its centre. It was above all the finance and economics experts who had a type of Swiss model in mind. And they urged haste, because if the economic situation were to deteriorate still further, there would be a revolution in Austria, and in view of the Hungarian example this alarming observation did not seem to be plucked out of thin air. But the experts' problem was, as always, that they did not express a single position, contradicted one another and, in this way, accommodated political decisions to an exceptional degree. Thus, in such cases, it applied more or less across the board that the wishes of the victorious powers were to be considered where at all possible and those of the wartime opponents ignored.

Time of Uncertainty

Renner and the government of German-Austria waited for months for a formal invitation to Paris. Despite intensive preparations, however, they remained uncertain about very critical points. They did not know, above all, whether the union with Germany would be discussed. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Otto Bauer, hoped that the United States and Britain would eventually agree to the union of German-Austria with Germany, after all.⁶⁰ He cherished his own personal illusions, because he must have been aware of the firm 'no' of the French. And it was hopeless from the start to attempt to play the Allies off against each other. The domestic political climate worsened. The Christian Socials were strictly opposed to Otto Bauer being the head of the Austrian delegation, just as Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau – minister in the Foreign Office of the German government that had been based in Weimar since January 1919 – was. The

argument was that Bauer, as an uncompromising advocate of the union and a sympathiser of the Hungarian council system on top of that, would provoke with his stance rather than signalling a willingness to compromise. Furthermore, his Francophobe attitude was a cause for concern. Whether the union with Germany could even still be attractive was questioned once more at this point in time. Thus, the leader of the Christian Social Party, Ignaz Seipel, remarked: 'We will only unite with Germany if it becomes a truly free state. In the Germany of today, in which terror by soldiers' councils and a socialist dictatorship exist ... we have no place.'⁶¹ Bauer, at least, was regarded as unsuitable to represent Austria in Saint-Germain. As no comparable leading representative could be found, State Chancellor Renner ultimately became head of the delegation. This was no doubt a good and sensible choice, because it was hoped that Renner would also find a sympathetic ear at the level of the heads of government and not only that of the ministers.

In mid-May 1919, the Austrian delegation went to Paris. It was interned in Saint-Germain. First of all, Renner was informed that the Austrians were only invited as respondents. They would under no circumstances be allowed to take part in the negotiations. Without beating about the bush, the status of Austria was made plain: Austria had been summoned, like Germany, as a belligerent and was therefore entirely responsible for the war and its consequences. The final illusions disappeared.

The question of legal continuity having passed from the Habsburg Monarchy to Austria had admittedly been discussed by the Allies, and President Wilson, like British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, was against viewing German-Austria as the legal successor. However, the interests of France, Italy and the new allies, above all the Czechs, ultimately counted for more. It was no coincidence that it was argued that the Germans in Austria had always been the bearers of the state idea. Therefore, they now had to accept liability for the war, too. And as far as territory was concerned, things were fairly straightforward: the Habsburg Monarchy had emerged in 1526 from a core of lands to which Austria was now to be reduced again.⁶² Thus, territorial questions caused the Allies the least concern. And the French deleted the word 'German' from the name of the state. The state was simply designated Austria and would also call itself such in the future.

The affiliation of South Tyrol, which was claimed by Italy as far as the Brenner Pass, was not disputed by the victorious powers. It should go to Italy. There were strategic and economic reasons in favour of this. British Prime Minister Lloyd George had most of all been in favour of a departure from the Treaty of London. Ultimately, the British representative on the armistice commission in Vienna, Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery-Cuninghame, had also stated that the Allies would honour in the form of concessions the positive role played by Austria in containing the Bolshevik threat from Hungary. The last word had also not been spoken on the issue of South Tyrol. The

British then also contented themselves to fulfil those parts of the Treaty of London that concerned Austria. The Val Canale was also allocated to Italy without major discussion. This question was thus settled.

The Allies did not want any debates regarding the northern frontier, either. Since June 1918, France had supported the claims of exile Czechs to the so-called historical borders of Czechoslovakia. The other Allies had remained reserved. The Czechs, therefore, did not want to take any risks and, from December, had occupied all the territories claimed by them. It did not bother them here that the recurring historical borders of Bohemia and Moravia must inevitably raise the question of whether the borders of the crown lands that had been in place until the end of the war were not just as historical as the older frontiers of the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Margraviate of Moravia. Wherever a claim went beyond the historical borders, above all in the territory of Gmünd, Valtice (Feldsberg) and Břeclav (Lundenburg), reasons relating to traffic geography were cited.⁶³ At the new frontiers, the dawning of a new era was especially visible. If, until 1918, it had taken less than seven hours to reach Cracow from Vienna by train, the trains now stood for seven hours at Hohenau Station, waiting to be processed.

Prague was still not entirely satisfied. Eventually, President Tomáš Masaryk also addressed those wishes that constituted the real objective: Vienna and a major part of Lower Austria should become Czech. A land bridge would lead from Czechoslovakia to the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs and definitively separate Austria from Hungary. The justification for these demands, however, were merely a construction. Austria promptly protested and was informed by France that, until the peace treaty came into force, the historical borders of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as those of Silesia, would be valid. But when the occupation of the disputed territories by Czechoslovak troops and popular referendums were simultaneously rejected, it was clear that the drawing of borders would be an exclusively political act based on Western interests. It had long since been clear on which side France stood.

Renner, who constantly strove to maintain a good relationship between German-Austria and its northern neighbour, had attempted a very special idea. He proposed a federation to the Czechs. At the head of the league of states would be President Masaryk. The economy would be controlled by means of an instrument modelled on the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, namely an economic parliament based in Bratislava (Pozsony, Preßburg). It was also proposed to settle other matters with consideration of Czech interests. Prime Minister Karel Kramář and Foreign Minister Beneš were not interested. This was also a personal setback for Renner, because his family home in Dolní Dunajovice (Unter Tannowitz) would in the future be located in Czech Moravia.

The Carinthia question and the drawing of borders for Styria threatened to result in complete strife and war. After the occupation of parts of the Klagenfurt Basin by Southern Slav troops, a preliminary decision appeared to have been taken there, too.

But it also applied here that the borders would be drawn in Paris. On 30 May, President Wilson, with the complete agreement of Premier Clemenceau and Prime Minister Lloyd George, stated that a letter should be written to their 'Yugoslavian friends' making it clear that the results of the fighting would have no influence on the drawing of borders.⁶⁴

As Yugoslavia did not want to accept the withdrawal of its troops to a demarcation line south of Klagenfurt and Lake Wörth, the Allies adopted a particularly threatening pose and declared that it had not yet been decided that Croatia and Slovenia were not enemy states, too, and action would be taken accordingly. The Italians even demonstrated this. But for them it was of course primarily a question of Istria and the opposite coast of the Adriatic Sea, and less of Carinthia. Austria had to note, however, that Italy was transforming from an archenemy into its only European partner.⁶⁵ Rome could also be generous, because it seemed that all its own wishes were being fulfilled.

The question of Burgenland proved to be no less problematic. The first draft of peace conditions made no mention, in any case, of Austria receiving western Hungarian territories. At least in this case, the Austrian delegation proved to be persuasive with its arguments, and the German territories of western Hungary were allocated to Austria.

The Moment of Truth

It was against this backdrop that the issues to be solved in the peace treaty were to unfold. Many parts of the treaty were already finished when the German-Austrian delegation arrived in Saint-Germain. Entire sections of the agreement had been adopted from the Covenant of the League of Nations; other sections, above all for the introduction, were already in the Treaty of Versailles for the peace with Germany. Austria – like Germany – was regarded as bearing complete liability for the war; this war guilt provided the basis for imposing obligations on the defeated Austria. Thus, Austria was subjected to some of the hatred that was directed primarily against Germany.

Article 177 of the treaty on Austria was then formulated accordingly, where it stated: 'The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Austria accepts the responsibility of Austria and her Allies for causing the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Austria-Hungary and her Allies.' It was made clear to Austria that it was liable for unleashing the war and for everything that followed, thus also for the wars then declared by others on the Habsburg Monarchy, like, for example, Italy and Romania.

It was almost unavoidable that the victorious powers would edit out their own role in the prehistory of the war and were merely anxious to assign guilt. This was also the