VINTAGE

THE RED PRINCE

TIMOTHY SNYDER

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About the Book

Wilhelm von Habsburg wore the uniform of an Austrian officer, the court regalia of a Habsburg archduke, the simple suit of a Parisian exile, the decorations of the Order of the Golden Fleece and, every so often, a dress. He spoke the Italian of his archduke mother, the German of his archduke father, the English of his British royal friends, the Polish of the country his father wished to rule and the Ukrainian of the land Wilhelm wished to rule himself.

Timothy Snyder's masterful biography is not only a reconstruction of the life of this extraordinary man – a man who remained loyal to his Ukrainian dreams even after the country's dissolution in 1921 – but also charts the final collapse of the *ancien regime* in Europe and the rise of a new world order.

About the Author

Timothy Snyder is Professor of History at Yale University. He was a British Marshall Scholar at Oxford and has held fellowships in Paris and Vienna, as well as an Academy Scholarship at Harvard. He has written and edited a number of critically acclaimed books about twentieth-century European history, including *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*, which won awards from The American Historical Association, The American Association for Ukrainian Studies and Przeglad Wschodni, and *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine*, winner of the Pro Historia Polonorum award. He is currently at work on a history of political atrocity in Eastern Europe from 1933 to 1953, and a family history of nationalism. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in modern East European political history at Yale University.

Also by Timothy Snyder

Nationalism, Marxism, and Modern Central Europe: A Biography of Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz
The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999
Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine

For I. K., for T. H., for B. E.,
for those that came before,
and those that may come after.

TIMOTHY SNYDER

The Red Prince

The Fall of a Dynasty and the Rise of Modern Europe

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

This life, your eternal life!

NIETZSCHE

Prologue

ONCE UPON A Time, a lovely young princess named Maria Krystyna lived in a castle, where she read books from the end to the beginning. Then came the Nazis, and after them, the Stalinists. This book is the story of her family, and so it begins with an ending.

An hour before midnight on the eighteenth of August 1948, a Ukrainian colonel lay dead in a Soviet prison in Kiev. He had been a spy in Vienna, working first against Hitler during the Second World War and then against Stalin in the early cold war. He had eluded the Gestapo, but not Soviet counterintelligence. One day the Ukrainian colonel told colleagues that he was going out for lunch, and he was never seen in Vienna again. He was kidnapped by Red Army soldiers, flown to the Soviet Union, and interrogated beyond endurance. He died in the prison hospital and was buried in an unmarked grave.

The Ukrainian colonel had an older brother. He too was a colonel, he too had resisted the Nazis. For his courage, he had spent the war in German prisons and camps. The torturers of the Gestapo had left half of his body paralyzed and one of his eyes useless. Returning home after the Second World War, he tried to claim the family estate. The property was in Poland, and the older brother was Polish.

Having been seized by the Nazis in 1939, the estate was confiscated again by the communists in 1945. Knowing that his family had a German background, his Nazi interrogators had wanted him to admit that he was racially German. This he had refused to do. Now he heard the same argument from the new communist regime. He was racially a German, they said, and so had no right to land in the new Poland. What the Nazis had taken, the communists would keep.

Meanwhile, the Polish colonel's children were having problems adapting to the new communist order. In applications to medical school, his daughter had to define the family's social class. The options included working class, peasantry, and intelligentsia—the standard categories of a Marxist bureaucracy. After a long hesitation, the puzzled young lady wrote "Habsburg." This was true. The medical school applicant was the young princess, Maria Krystyna Habsburg. Her father, the Polish colonel, and her uncle, the Ukrainian colonel, were Habsburg princes, descendants of emperors, members of Europe's grandest family.

Born at the end of the nineteenth century, her father Albrecht and her uncle Wilhelm came of age in a world of empires. At the time, their family still ruled the Habsburg monarchy, Europe's proudest and oldest realm. Stretching from the mountains of Ukraine in the north to the warm water of the Adriatic Sea in the south, the Habsburg monarchy embraced a dozen European peoples and recalled six hundred years of uninterrupted power. The Ukrainian colonel and the Polish colonel, Wilhelm and Albrecht, were raised to protect and enlarge the family empire in an age of nationalism. They were to become Polish and Ukrainian princes, loyal to the larger monarchy and subordinate to the Habsburg emperor.

This royal nationalism was their father Stefan's idea. It was he who abandoned the traditional cosmopolitanism of the imperial family to become Polish, hoping to become a regent or prince of Poland. Albrecht, his oldest son, was his loyal heir; Wilhelm, his youngest, was the rebel, the boy who chose another nation. Both sons, though, accepted their father's basic premise. Nationalism was inevitable, he thought, but the destruction of empires was not.

Making a state for every nation would not liberate national minorities. Instead, he foresaw, it would make of Europe an unseemly assemblage of weak states dependent upon stronger ones to survive. Europeans, Stefan believed, would be better served if they could reconcile their national aspirations to a higher loyalty to an empire—to the Habsburg monarchy, in particular. In an imperfect Europe, the Habsburg monarchy was a better theater for national drama than any of the alternatives. Let national politics go on, thought Stefan, within the comfortable confines of a tolerant empire, with a free press and a parliament.

The First World War was thus a tragedy for Stefan's branch of the Habsburg family, as for the dynasty itself. Over the course of the war, the Habsburgs' enemies, the Russians, the British, the French, and the Americans, turned national feeling against the imperial family. At war's end, the Habsburg monarchy was dismembered and disemboweled, and nationalism reigned supreme in Europe. The tragedy of the defeat of 1918 was greatest for Wilhelm, the youngest son, the Ukrainian. Before the First World War, Ukrainian lands had been divided between the Habsburg and Russian empires. Thus arose the national question that Wilhelm had posed for himself. Could Ukraine be unified and joined to the Habsburg monarchy? Could he rule Ukraine for the Habsburgs, just as his father had

wished to rule Poland? For a long moment, it seemed that he could.

Wilhelm became the Ukrainian Habsburg, learning the language, commanding Ukrainian troops in the First World War, binding himself closely to his chosen nation. His chance for glory came when the Bolshevik Revolution destroyed the Russian Empire in 1917, opening Ukraine to conquest. Dispatched by the Habsburg emperor to the Ukrainian steppe in 1918, Wilhelm worked to build national consciousness among the peasantry and helped the poor keep the land they had taken from the rich. He became a legend across the country—the Habsburg who spoke Ukrainian, the archduke who loved the common people, the Red Prince.

Wilhelm von Habsburg, the Red Prince, wore the uniform of an Austrian officer, the court regalia of a Habsburg archduke, the simple suit of a Parisian exile, the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and, every so often, a dress. He could handle a saber, a pistol, a rudder, or a golf club; he handled women by necessity and men for pleasure. He spoke the Italian of his archduchess mother, the German of his archduke father, the English of his British royal friends, the Polish of the country his father wished to rule, and the Ukrainian of the land he wished to rule himself. He was no innocent, but then again, innocents cannot found nations. Every national revolution, like every bout of lovemaking, owes something to the one that came before. Every founding father has sown some wild oats. In matters of political loyalty and sexual candor alike, Wilhelm exhibited true shamelessness. It did not occur to him that someone else could define his loyalties or curb his desires. Yet this very insouciance conceals a certain ethical premise. It denies, if only by the whiff of perfume in a Parisian hotel room or a smudge of forger’s ink on an

Austrian passport, the power of the state to define the individual.

At this most essential level, Wilhelm's attitude to identity was not so different from his brother Albrecht's. Albrecht was a family man, loyal to Poland, the good son of their father. In the age of totalitarianism, both brothers, in perfect ignorance of each other's actions, behaved in much the same way. Both knew that nationality was subject to change, but refused to make changes under threat. Albrecht denied to Nazi interrogators that he was German. Although his family had ruled German lands for centuries, he rejected the Nazi idea of race, that his origin defined his nation. He chose Poland. Wilhelm took great risks to spy against the Soviet Union in the hope that the western powers could protect Ukraine. During his months of interrogation by the Soviet secret police, he chose to speak Ukrainian. Neither brother recovered from their treatment at the hands of totalitarian powers, nor, indeed, has the Europe they represented. Both Nazis and Soviets treated the nation as expressing unchangeable facts about the past rather than human volition in the present. Because they ruled so much of Europe with so much violence, that idea of race remains with us—the undead hand of history as it did not happen.

These Habsburgs had a more lively notion of history. Dynasties can last forever, and rare is the dynasty that believes it deserves anything less. Stalin ruled for a quarter of a century; Hitler for only an eighth. The Habsburgs ruled for hundreds of years. Stefan and his sons, Albrecht and Wilhelm, children of the nineteenth century, had no reason to believe that the twentieth would be their family's last. What was nationalism, after all, to a family of Holy Roman Emperors that had survived the destruction of the Holy Roman Empire, a family of Catholic rulers who had survived the Reformation, a family of dynastic conservatives who had survived the French Revolution and

the Napoleonic Wars? In the years before the First World War, the Habsburgs adjusted to modern ideas, but rather as a sailor tacks to an unexpected wind. The journey would continue, on a slightly different course. When Stefan and his sons engaged the nation, it was not with a sense of historical inevitability, with the premonition that nations had to come and to conquer, that empires had to shudder and fall. They thought that freedom for Poland and Ukraine could be reconciled to the expansion of Habsburg rule in Europe. Their own sense of time was one of eternal possibility, of life as composed of moments full of incipient rays of glory, like a drop of dew awaiting the morning sun to release a spectrum of color.

Does it matter that the dewdrop ends up on the black sole of a jackboot? These Habsburgs lost their wars and failed to liberate their nations in their own lifetimes; they, like their chosen nations, were overcome by the Nazis and the Stalinists. Yet the totalitarians who judged and sentenced them have passed, too. The horrors of Nazi and communist rule make it impossible to regard the European history of the twentieth century as a forward march to a greater good. For much the same reason, it is difficult to see the fall of the Habsburgs in 1918 as the beginning of an era of liberation. How, then, to speak of contemporary European history? Perhaps these Habsburgs, with their weary sense of eternity and their hopeful appreciation of the color of the moment, have something to offer. Each moment of the past, after all, is full of what did not happen and what will probably never happen, like a Ukrainian monarchy or a Habsburg restoration. It also contains what seemed impossible but proved possible, like a unified Ukrainian state or a free Poland in a unifying Europe. And if this is true of these moments of the past, it is true of the present moment as well.

Today, after long exile, Maria Krystyna lives again in the castle of her youth, in Poland. Her father's Polish cause has been won. Even her uncle's exotic dream of an independent Ukraine has been realized. Poland has joined the European Union. Ukrainian democrats, protesting for free elections in their own country, wave the European flag. Her grandfather's idea that patriotism can be reconciled to a higher European loyalty seems oddly prescient.

In the year 2008, Maria Krystyna sits in her grandfather's castle and tells tales from the end to the beginning. The story of her uncle, the Red Prince, is one that she does not know, or will not tell. It ends with a death in Kiev in 1948. It begins earlier, before her birth, with her uncle Wilhelm's rebellion against her grandfather's Polish plan and his choice of Ukraine rather than Poland. Or earlier still, with the long reign of the emperor Franz Josef von Habsburg over a multinational empire that allowed Poles and Ukrainians alike to imagine a future of national liberation. Franz Josef was in power when Stefan was born in 1860, and still in power when Wilhelm was born in 1895. He reigned when Stefan decided to make the family Polish, and reigned still when Wilhelm chose Ukraine. So the story might begin a century ago, in 1908, as Stefan settled his family in a Polish castle, Wilhelm began dreaming of a national kingdom of his own, and Franz Josef celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of his own imperial rule.

GOLD

The Emperor's Dream

NO EUROPEAN DYNASTY had ruled as long as the Habsburgs, and no Habsburg had ruled as long as Emperor Franz Josef. On the second day of December, 1908, the highest society of his empire gathered in his Court Opera in Vienna to celebrate the sixtieth jubilee of his rule. The nobles and the princes, the officers and the officials, the bishops and the politicians came to celebrate the durability of a man who ruled over them by the grace of God. The meeting place, a house of music, was also a temple of timelessness. Like the other grand edifices constructed in Vienna under Franz Josef, the Court Opera was in the historical style, referring to the Renaissance, yet faced the most beautiful of Europe's modern avenues. It was one of the gems of the Ring, the circular avenue laid down during the reign of Franz Josef to define the inner city. Then, as now, the humble and the grand could mount a tramway and ride around the Ring, endlessly, with a ticket to eternity in hand.

The celebration of the emperor had begun the night before. The Viennese, around the Ring and around the city, lit a single candle in their windows, casting a dim gold glow through the black of the evening. This custom had begun in

Vienna sixty years before, when Franz Josef ascended the Habsburg thrones amidst revolution and war, and had spread throughout the empire during his long reign. Not only in Vienna but in Prague, Cracow, Lviv, Trieste, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Ljubljana, Maribor, Brno, Chernivtsi, Budapest, Sarajevo, and countless other cities, towns, and villages throughout central and eastern Europe, loyal Habsburg subjects paid their respects and demonstrated their devotion. After six decades, Franz Josef was the only ruler the vast majority of his millions of subjects—Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Czechs, Croatians, Slovenians, Slovaks, Hungarians, Romanians—had ever known. Yet in Vienna the golden glow was not one of nostalgia. In the center of the city, the thousands of flickering candles were outshone by millions of electric light bulbs. All of the grand buildings of the Ring were illuminated by thousands of bulbs. Squares and intersections were decorated with giant electric stars. The emperor's palace itself, the Hofburg, was covered with lights. A million people came out to see the spectacle.

On the morning of the second of December, in the Hofburg, the imperial palace on the Ring, Emperor Franz Josef received the homage of the archdukes and archduchesses: princes and princesses of the blood, heirs like himself to Habsburg emperors of the past. Though most of them had palaces in Vienna, they came from across the empire, from their various refuges from court life, or their various seats of ambition. Archduke Stefan, for example, had two palaces in the imperial south by the Adriatic Sea and two castles in the north in a Galician valley. Stefan and his wife Maria Theresia brought their six children to the Hofburg that morning to pay their respects to the emperor. Their youngest son, Willy, was thirteen, just old enough according to the court ceremonial to take part. Willy, raised by the blue sea, found himself surrounded by the gilded display of his family's power and longevity. It

was one of the rare occasions when he saw his father, Stefan, in full ceremonial dress. Around his neck he wore the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, the insignia of that most exalted of chivalrous societies. Willy seems to have kept a certain distance from the grandeur. While he did take the opportunity to inspect the imperial treasury, where the thrones and jewels were kept, he remembered the master of ceremony as a golden rooster.

In the evening, at the Court Opera, the emperor and the archdukes met again, this time before an audience. By six o'clock the other guests had arrived and taken their places. At just before seven o'clock, the archdukes and archduchesses, including Stefan, Maria Theresia, and their children, awaited their cue. At the proper moment, the archdukes and archduchesses made their grand appearance in the hall and strode together to their loges. Stefan, Willy, and the family took places in a box on the left side, and remained standing. Only then did Emperor Franz Josef himself appear, a man of seventy-eight years of age and six decades of power, stooped but strong, wearing imposing side whiskers and an impenetrable expression. He acknowledged the applause of the gallery. He stood for a moment. Franz Josef was known for standing: he stood at all engagements, thus keeping them blessedly short. He was also known for withstanding: he had survived the violent deaths of his brother, his wife, and his only son. He outlasted people, he outlasted generations, he seemed able to outlast time itself. Yet now, at precisely seven o'clock, he took a seat, and everyone else could as well, and another performance could begin.

When the curtain rose, the audience's gaze shifted from the emperor of the present to an emperor of the past. *The Emperor's Dream*, a one-act play written to celebrate the jubilee, took as its hero the very first Habsburg emperor,

Rudolf. The audience recognized Rudolf as the Habsburg who, in the thirteenth century, had made the Habsburg family the ruling dynasty it had been ever since. He was the first Habsburg elected by his fellow princes to be Holy Roman Emperor, in 1273. Though this title had limited power in a medieval Europe of hundreds of smaller and larger sovereignties, its bearer claimed the legacy of the defunct Roman Empire as well as the leadership of the entire Christian world. It was Rudolf, too, who had seized by war the lands of Austria from the fearsome Czech king Ottokar in 1278. They became the core of a hereditary domain that Rudolf would pass on to his sons, and they to all of the Habsburgs thereafter, down to Franz Josef himself.

On stage, Emperor Rudolf begins to worry aloud about the fate of these Austrian lands. His conquests behind him, his cares are of the future. What will happen to the territories he will bequeath to his sons? Will they be worthy successors? And what of the Habsburgs to follow? Rudolf, a towering, lean, and rather cruel figure in life, was played by a short, plump, and endearing actor. A man of brutal action in reality, on stage he becomes a winsome fellow who needs a nap. He goes to sleep on his throne. A spirit of the Future rises from behind him and tells him of the glories of the House of Habsburg in the centuries to come. As gentle music begins, Rudolf asks Future to be his guide. Future then presents to him five dream pictures, meant to reassure him that what he has won will be cherished and protected.[1]

The first dream picture is of a wedding pact made between two great royal houses. In 1515, the Habsburgs took a gamble with the Jagiellonians, the rulers of Poland and the leading family of eastern Europe. By arranging a double marriage, they put their own crownlands at risk against the possibility of gaining those of the Jagiellonians. Louis the Jagiellonian was king of Poland, Hungary, and

Bohemia when he led his armies against the Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Mohács in 1526. His forces defeated, he died as he fled, in a river and under a horse. As a result of the wedding pact, his wife was a Habsburg; after his death, her brother claimed the Bohemian and Hungarian crowns. Bohemia and Hungary became Habsburg crownlands, claimed by all succeeding Habsburg rulers, down to Franz Josef himself. The Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus had written in the fifteenth century, “Let others fight wars! Thou Happy Austria marry. What Mars gives to others, Venus bestows on thee.” He was referring to the acquisition of Spain, when a Habsburg had married a girl who was sixth in line to the throne and then watched as the other five obligingly died. His own Hungarian kingdom had followed.

Yet mastery of Hungary was not so simple, as Future explains to Rudolf. War raged between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. In 1683 the Ottomans marched on Vienna itself with one hundred thousand soldiers. Across the Habsburg domains, church bells rang and fell silent, sending the alarm before their towns fell to the Turks. Vienna was besieged and the Habsburgs entrapped. The Habsburgs got help from their northern neighbor and fellow Catholic realm, Poland. The Polish king sped south with his fearsome cavalry and made camp on a hill just above the city. His knights stormed the Ottoman camps, as a Muslim chronicler recalled, like a flood of black pitch that consumed everything it touched. Vienna was free. In the second dream picture, Future shows Rudolf the meeting of the Habsburg emperor and the Polish king. The Ottomans were vanquished, and the Habsburgs became the undisputed rulers of Hungary and central Europe.

Having won a war, the Habsburgs now had trouble with marriage. As Future explains to Rudolf, they faced crises of succession. The Habsburgs ruled much of Europe and the world as two lines of the same family, one producing the

lords of Spain and its far-flung colonial possessions, the other Holy Roman Emperors and masters of central Europe. In 1700 the Spanish line of the family died out, and the central European branch fought, without success, for control of Spain and its empire. This branch, too, had no male heir to take up the succession. The solution to this problem was the Pragmatic Sanction, portrayed in Future's third dream picture. In the picture, the emperor proclaimed, in the presence of the eight-year-old Archduchess Maria Theresia, that she would be his successor. She ascended to the Habsburg thrones in 1740 to become the most famous of all Habsburg rulers. Future assures Rudolf that Maria Theresia ruled with a firm hand.

Empress Maria Theresia took the family principle of nuptial imperialism to its logical extreme, as Future reveals to Rudolf in the fourth dream picture. It displayed Maria Theresia and her family in 1763, applauding the young Mozart at the piano. In the picture were Maria Theresia's sixteen children. The reference to Mozart was a nice way of suggesting that the Habsburgs were civilized rulers and patrons of the arts, but the picture's central message was that Maria Theresia had extended the family's power in Europe with her womb and her wits. She groomed the eldest son to rule and then ruled with him, and she married as many daughters as she could to the monarchs of Europe. The eldest son was Josef, an enlightened absolutist who, like his mother, wished to transform the sprawling territories of the Habsburg monarchy into a well-administered state. The youngest daughter was Maria Antonia, better remembered under her French name, Marie Antoinette, as the villain of the French Revolution.

When Maria Theresia dispatched her daughter to marry the French crown prince, this was a typical example of Habsburg marital diplomacy. France was a traditional enemy of the Habsburgs. Although both France and the Habsburg monarchy were Catholic countries, France had

supported the Islamic Ottomans as they marched on Vienna. A French diplomat had even tried to prevent the Polish intervention by distributing bribes. During the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, France supported Protestant princes against the Habsburgs. The French dynasty, the Bourbons, were the main rival of the Habsburgs for power on the continent of Europe. The French invented modern diplomacy, with its axiom of the superiority of the interests of the state to all other concerns, during their long confrontation with the Habsburgs. Against this ruthlessness, the Habsburgs sent a girl to disrobe. When the fourteen-year-old Maria Antonia was separated from her clothing at the River Rhine in 1773, she was transformed symbolically into the French princess Marie Antoinette, confirming the legitimacy of the old order by taking part in a marriage pact between its two greatest houses.

Sixteen years after Maria Theresia tried to tame the enmity of the Bourbons with the gift of her daughter, that royal house was overthrown in the French Revolution. Marie Antoinette, deposed as queen of France, found herself a simple citizen facing charges of treason and worse. The guillotine touched the necks of people she had known and loved. In prison in 1792, she was asked to kiss the lips of the severed head of a princess who had been, according to rumor, her lesbian lover. In 1793, she was convicted of hindering the revolution and sexually abusing her son. She was guillotined at the Place de Révolution.[2]

As the French Revolution careened into terror and then dictatorship in the 1790s, Napoleon Bonaparte and his grand armies tried to overturn the old order in all of Europe. He brought a new kind of politics, rule by monarchs who claimed to represent peoples rather than a divine hierarchy. Having crowned himself emperor of the French in 1804, Napoleon placed relatives upon the thrones of new kingdoms created from the lands he took

from the Habsburgs and other rivals. In 1810, the Habsburgs tried marriage again, offering the daughter of their emperor to Napoleon as his bride. The deal was struck by a clever Habsburg diplomat, Klemens von Metternich. The two were indeed married and were a happy couple. With the Habsburgs neutral, Napoleon marched on Moscow in 1812. The doomed invasion of the Russian Empire was the disaster that turned the tide. In 1813 the Habsburgs joined a victorious coalition against Napoleon, and he was finally defeated.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars were prelude to the fifth dream image that Future presents to Rudolf: the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815. In a second-story room, with three windows affording views of the imperial capital, four grates in the ceilings for Metternich's spies, and five doors for the negotiating parties, peace was made in Europe. The guiding principles were the rule of law, that dynasts should rule monarchies; and the balance of power, that no one state should disrupt the rest of the continent. This, the last dream picture that Future shows Rudolf, is a hopeful one. The Habsburgs had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars not only victorious but pivotal, the power with an interest in stability in Europe, and the power whose stability was in the interest of the other European powers. Their allies in the final coalition, the British, Russians, and Prussians, all endorsed this outcome. France, its monarchy restored, returned to its previous position as a European power.

All is right with the world as Future concludes. Rudolf's domain, built of his cunning and violence, is sustained and enlarged by lucky marriage, female power, and tactful diplomacy. As the play nears its end, Rudolf endorses this soft story of his dynasty, saying that he himself is tired of war and is glad to see the making of peace.

The author of the play, a countess aided by a government commission, sidestepped the issue of lost glory by emphasizing the theme of peace. The Habsburgs had done well at the Congress of Vienna, confirming claims to old Polish lands in the north and the Adriatic Sea in the south, but their realm, even thus enlarged, was still nothing more than a central European empire.

As the audience knew, emperors between Rudolf and Franz Josef had pressed far broader claims, and ruled far greater domains. Several emperors had claimed the entire world, or indeed more. Karl von Habsburg, on whose empire in the Old and New Worlds the sun never set, chose as his personal motto “Plus ultra,” or “Beyond and beyond.” His son Philip coined a medallion inscribed “Orbis non sufficit,” or “The world is not enough.” Enduringly resonant, too, was Friedrich von Habsburg’s famous deciphering of the vowels AEIOU: in the Latin of his fifteenth century, “Austriae est imperare orbi universo”; in the German of centuries to come, “Alle Erdreich ist Österreich untertan”; or in the universal language of our own age, “Austria’s empire is our universe.”

Another translation of AEIOU was perhaps closest to Franz Josef’s heart: “Austria erit in orbe ultima”—“Austria will outlast all others,” or “Austria will endure until the end of the world.” This motto was the favorite of Franz Josef’s own father, and one that had been prominently recalled by his own son, named Rudolf in homage to the first Habsburg emperor. Twenty years earlier, in 1888, Crown Prince Rudolf had passionately criticized his father for abandoning the glory of the imperial past in favor of a mediocre destiny as a second-rate European power. As Rudolf argued, it was hard to reconcile traditional visions of endless ambition with a history that ends in diplomatic compromise. That frustration was one of the reasons why the modern Rudolf, Franz Josef’s son and heir, shot himself in the head in 1889.[3]

Perhaps Franz Josef could accept the renunciation of glory. Perhaps, paradoxically, that was the key to his greatness. Even so, Franz Josef must have noticed something else about the play. This was a piece written to celebrate him. Nevertheless, none of the dream pictures concerned the sixty years of his reign. Indeed, the action of *The Emperor's Dream* ends in 1815, fifteen years before his birth. He himself had been edited out, along with all the events and achievements of his long life.

Franz Josef was born along with the age of nationalism, in 1830, the year revolution broke out in Paris against the restored monarchy, and the year Polish rebels almost broke the hold of the Russian Empire. The Habsburgs, having enlarged their domains at the Congress of Vienna, found themselves confronting Italian, German, Polish, and south Slav (or Yugoslav) national questions.

Jonathan Wyss, Topaz Maps

These national questions were parting gifts from Napoleon. He had called himself king of Italy. He had dissolved the Holy Roman Empire and dozens of petty German states, thus preparing the way for German unification. He had created a Kingdom of Illyria, a name for the lands of the south Slavs, peoples who would later be known as Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. He had partially restored Poland, removed from the map by imperial partition in the late eighteenth century, as a Duchy of Warsaw. Having destroyed these Napoleonic entities, the

Habsburgs and their allies treated nationalism as a revolutionary idea to be stifled throughout Europe. Metternich, now chancellor, ordered his police to arrest conspirators and his censors to excise suspicious passages from newspapers and books. The Habsburg monarchy of Franz Josef's youth was a police state.[4]

While Franz Josef was educated to rule a conservative empire in the 1830s and 1840s, patriots painted a blurry map of a future Europe where local color bled through the black boundaries of empires. In February 1848, another revolution broke out in Paris. Within the Habsburg domains, nations with proud histories and large noble classes—Germans, Poles, Italians, and Hungarians—seized the occasion to challenge the Habsburgs with protests and uprisings. They cloaked the traditional demands of the nobility for greater local authority in the new rhetoric of national freedom for the people. Chancellor Metternich had to escape from Vienna in a laundry cart.

Franz Josef was brought to the throne at the tender age of eighteen. Against the rebellious noble nations, he turned for help to others, to the Romanians, Croats, Ukrainians, and Czechs. Some nations rebelled against their emperor, others remained loyal to him, but either way all had declared their existence. So even as rebellious nations were defeated on the battlefield, the principle of nationalism was generalized and confirmed. What was more, the new emperor had begun a quiet social revolution. To gain the support of the peasant nations, he had liberated the peasantry from its traditional obligations to landlords. Children and grandchildren of the peasants would become prosperous farmers, or even townsmen. Peoples without historical noble classes would come to see themselves as nations deserving of rights.

In 1848, patriotic ideas found great resonance, but revealed their practical contradictions. The nations capable of fighting against their emperor in the name of national

liberation all wished to oppress other nations: the Hungarians the Slovaks, the Poles the Ukrainians, the Italians the Croatians, and so on. In this situation, Franz Josef could navigate among enmities and chart a course back to supreme power. The nation that could raise the most impressive army, the Hungarians, were defeated in the end by officers and soldiers loyal to the monarchy (although Franz Josef, humiliatingly, also had to call in the army of the neighboring Russian Empire for help). National questions could be raised by writers and pressed by rebels, but they could not be answered without monarchs and generals.

The revolutions of 1848, remembered as the springtime of nations, were a lesson for kings and emperors. After 1848 the monarchs understood the risks and opportunities of nationalism, and began a new kind of rivalry among themselves. Nations had failed to choose their rulers, so now rulers would chose their nations. The prize was Germany, thirty-odd states that, when combined, would be the richest and most powerful country in Europe. In the 1850s, Franz Josef tried and failed to unite all of the German states beneath his sceptre by asking for the submission of inferior rulers.

Germany was unified without the Habsburgs. It was Prussia, a nimble young German kingdom, that found the way to unite dynastic rule with German nationalism. Prussia was a large German monarchy, with a capital in Berlin, ruled by the Hohenzollern dynasty. The Hohenzollerns, once subordinate to the Habsburgs, had become their rivals. When the Habsburgs needed votes to remain Holy Roman Emperors, Hohenzollerns got favors. When the Habsburgs needed support during the war for the Spanish succession, they agreed to grant the Hohenzollerns a royal title. The greatest Hohenzollern ruler, Friedrich Wilhelm, established the two pillars of state power, finances and an army. In 1683, as the Habsburgs

were melting sacred objects for the gold they needed to defend their capital from the Ottoman siege, Prussia was establishing a taxation system. In 1740, Prussia denied the validity of the Pragmatic Sanction, challenged Maria Theresia's right to rule, and attacked the Habsburg monarchy, eventually seizing most of the rich province of Silesia. The Hohenzollerns were now not only a royal house, but a great power that had defeated the Habsburgs on the battlefield.[5]

In 1866 the Prussia of King Wilhelm I attacked the Habsburg monarchy of Franz Josef. At Sadova, numerically inferior Prussian forces won a decisive victory thanks to superior weaponry and organization. The troops might have pressed on to Vienna, but the Prussian chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, had no wish to destroy the Habsburgs. He wished to keep their monarchy as a barrier to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, while himself uniting the remaining German lands into a national monarchy. Once Bismarck provoked and won a war against France in 1870, he had succeeded. That war brought many of the smaller German states to his side, and the victory made Prussia the greatest military power in Europe. German unification was proclaimed at the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles in January 1871. A great Prussian general had once said that the security of the throne was poetry. The greatest of German poets, Friedrich Schiller, believed that Germany would be a nation when it had a national theater. As it turned out, war abroad was the national theater. The pen is mightier with the sword.

The defeat of 1866 and the exclusion of the Habsburgs from Germany exerted a profound influence on the next generation of the Habsburg family. Archduke Stefan, born in 1860, was a child of Bismarck's age of national unification. In the war of 1866, the Prussian army drove quickly through his home province of Moravia, where the peace was signed. As Stefan was educated in Moravia in