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THE MONARCHY: HERITAGE AND MEMORY

The heritage of the Monarchy is very complex and recollections are variable frequently indicating divergent emphases. For this reason I make no attempt here to show and analyze the entire picture. I prefer to review the items which seem critical to me and which, to some extent, have already been indicated by historiography, but which on the basis of new studies may be shown in a new light.

Becoming Civilized and Middle Class

From the perspective of the heritage the most important factor was that the era of the Monarchy was a period of renewal moving in the direction of becoming middle class and civilized. This means that the life of the people changed and that what we call modernity became a determinant factor in the life of increasing numbers. There now was a system of education and there was also a law prescribing a period of schooling. Hospitals were built and a system of dealing with epidemics was established. There was running water and there were bathrooms. There was a flowering cult of the theater and a vibrant evolution of modern art. A metropolitan feeling evolved and there was freedom of the press. A new network of railroads was built and there was continuing education for women.

What evolved, did so in comparison with the past. What evolved became the principal trend of the era. The trend, with some internal variations, and not quite equally for all, increasingly resembled that area of
Europe which the thinkers of the time regarded as the standard. It was the era of the Monarchy, it became a breakthrough toward civilization.

All the things which gave the civilizing changes a framework and a content can be defined in summary fashion as the evolution of a middle-class lifestyle, its social consolidation and its becoming a norm. Because this so-called embourgeoisement involved almost all areas of everyday existence, it became apparent to all. The artisan worked in the shop wearing a hat and frequently a watch chain, just like the bank officials. The Wiener Schnitzel, called by the poorer classes the Sunday meat because it came to their table only on some Sundays, now appeared on their table every Sunday. Everyone knew that holidays from work were a part of bourgeois existence but not everyone could participate in this form of liberty. Yet it was seen as a norm and all were working toward it. Increasingly large numbers believed that it was proper for a middle-class individual to go for walks, eat pastries and visit the coffee house.

The civilizing developments and the consolidation of the middle-class lifestyle occurred during a relatively long period of peace. Briefly, the means for the major changes were consolidation and the strenuous efforts leading toward consolidation. In the case of Great Britain this seemed a natural progress but in Central Europe it came close to being a miracle. The simultaneous presence of change and of peace becomes a nostalgic memory and in this relationship King Francis Joseph and Queen Victoria seem to be equal partners. In other areas recollections differ.

Along with all the civilizing changes, all the moves toward a middle-class existence, and all the consolidation, by this time everybody detested everybody else in the Habsburg Monarchy. Behind everything there lurked the feeling of detestation. The various nationality movements all complained that the others were oppressing them and these feelings had long-lasting effects on memory. The nationalities created historic heroes whose bravery was manifested against their neighbors. The neighbors felt and acted in the same way. The world viewed through the eyes of the heroes, our heroes, their heroes, became divisive in a way and to the degree of making memory an ego identity.
Europe, Central Europe, Habsburg Monarchy

Different people have different interpretations of the term “Central Europe.” Ever since this concept was used by a wider circle of intellectuals, with the process beginning in the first half of the nineteenth century and ending with the end of the twentieth century, it had various connotations. The history of the term includes the striving for German expansion and for the demands for dominance, just as much as the movement away from the Orthodox variety of Christianity. The term also suggests that Europe included an area which was not equal to the West but was also different from Eastern Europe and from the Balkans.¹

The lack of conceptual clarity led to a peculiar term. After 1990 the term “Europe in between” appeared, suggesting that there was a third identity between two others.²

At the same time, ever since the eighteenth century, there was a trend to view Europe along defined norms as a single unit. It was a unified concept, surpassing differences, which viewed a capitalized Europe as its goal. There have been three experiments in modern times to make the demands of unification into a political reality. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Napoleon wanted a Europe that was anti-feudal and built on the equality of the citizens. The most memorable remnant of his experiment is the Code Napoleon, a code of common

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² The “Europe in between” term appeared in the ad hoc, so-called transitional literature after the regime change. There were also some, like Jaques Rupnik who used the term “the other Europe.” See Jacques Rupnik, The Other Europe (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).
law, which imposed its spirit ineradicably on European progress. He wanted to achieve his goal with the force of bayonets but, as Napoleon’s minister of foreign affairs, Talleyrand had noted, much can be achieved with bayonets but one cannot sit on them.³

The next all-Europe experiment took place more than a hundred years later. This time it was not an experiment for a French hegemony but for a German one. Hitler did not view his all-Europe world as one of equality for all citizens. Just the opposite. His principal idea was the “Übermensch” and the “Herrenvolk” and this is what he tried to establish. Instead of the obsolete bayonets he used other weapons but it was just as impossible to sit on these as it had been in the case of the bayonets. Hitler left a legacy of destruction and loss, the loss of those who perished in the all-Europe experiment based on the Übermensch.⁴

The most recent pan-European experiment started after World War II. This was not based on bayonets or other weapons but the intent was to create a united Europe based on democratic values, economic community, and a consensus of opinions. Today the European Union aspires to become the institutional depository of the ideals of a democratic political community. The principles of legal security and legal equality are the foundations of the union. We can see the direction of the movement but not its final outcome. We have become, and are now, participants but we do not yet know whether the union will ever become a single state.

The one thing which is certain is that the new Europe intends to establish unified norms and in this it reaches back to the premodern European universalism. At that time it was Christianity that represented this general view of the world in which Europe contextualized itself. The monarchs ruled by the “Grace of God” and the structure of society was viewed everywhere as the will of God. Universalism then created a certain universal culture. The Roman style, the Gothic, the Renaissance, and the baroque ruled Europe in distinct periods. The ecclesias-

³ There is an enormous scholarly literature on Napoleon. I wish to refer to one of the best works: Evgeny Tarle, Napoleon (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1939).
⁴ Hitler and his ideas have an enormous literature. One of the newest ones is in Hungarian by Mária Ormos, Hitler (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 1999). For the two volume biography in English, see Ian Kershaw, Hitler (New York: Norton, 1999).
tic system was the same everywhere and the variations in the frescoes in the churches indicated only the varying talents of the painters rather than a difference in a qualitatively different cultural approach. The regional cultures were shown in the quantitative representation of each area in the given all-European style and did not suggest that the various regions created an art that had a significantly different world of form and content.5

According to its intentions the new Europe hopes and expects to be secular and democratic. This means that it will, at least temporarily, admit differences and will not try to suppress the cultural world of the different regions. Frankly, there is not much else it could do. Christian universalism no longer exists. The evolution of secularization, modernity, national cultures and identities, and the individuality which accompanied middle-class development cannot be superseded by any forced, centrally preferred norms. Europe has no choice but to recognize the paradox that different peoples can and do give it unity and the guarantee of unity.

This new Europe cannot and does not want to avoid the past and the diverse histories. Yet the diverse histories mean different cultural emphases and different attitudes.

This brings us back to what we have called and do call Central Europe and its own peculiar history within the great European history, which is then further divided into different histories that take a position somewhere between the individual and the general level. Only a common history generates commonality and only an individual history can serve to distinguish it from others.

The face of Central Europe is very particular. Its own history is not the history of the individual nations, it is not identical with the various cultures of the various nations, but it is also not identical with the history and culture of Europe as a whole. The concept of Central Europe was manifested historically in the form of an empire which over some centuries and with varying effects incorporated the area which is wedged

between the German, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. This is no other than the Habsburg Monarchy. This is the framework of its history.

This leads us immediately to one of the most important and still surviving elements of its heritage, which was a central problem of the Hapsburg Monarchy and which is reflected even today on all of Europe.

The empire had a supranational intent, just like the present European Union. It was confronted with the process which we can call nation-state aspiration. Starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the people living in this area strove at different rates and with varying intensity to create their own national territory or state. For lack of a better term I call this nation-state aspiration, because we are dealing here with an endeavor which took it for granted that there would be significant minorities living under the domination of a given nation and nationality.

The two trends, supranationalism and nationalism, created an area of tension which, during the second half of the nineteenth century caused significant structural stresses. Many believe that this was the principal factor that led to the fall of the Habsburg empire.

Supranationalism and the drive toward national states, present at the same time, was one of the principal problems of the Habsburg Monarchy and today has become one of the principal problems of all of Europe.

Europe defines itself today as being a “unity in diversity.” This is the motto of the European Union. The diversity naturally does not relate to the historic kaleidoscope represented by national cultures and societal subcultures. Unity means that on a political level these nations profess similar, unified basic principles, whose keyword is cooperation, respect for human rights and for the basic values of democracy.

On the other hand, both within and outside of the union, we see that we have arrived at the endpoint of the nation-state movement which began in the nineteenth century, in the sense that the evolution of the nation-states has just now become complete. (When I use the

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6 Claudio Magris is of the same opinion. See, Caudio Magris, Der habsburgische Mythos in der österreichischen Literatur (Salzburg: O Müller, 1966).
term “nation-state” I am not thinking necessarily of a nationally homogenous political structure, but of a state which is dominated by one nationality.) Let us look around! In the 1990s a number of nation-states emerged in the territories of the former Soviet Union, such as the Ukraine which now had a lasting independent status for the first time since the seventeenth century. An equally strong current existed in Yugoslavia and in the Balkans. We have reached the point that among the successor states of the completely destroyed Yugoslavia we can find a second Albanian state, Kosovo. A similar process occurred in the former Czechoslovakia with the components belonging to the European Union. We can also speak of two Romanias, one within the union and the other one, Moldavia, outside.

The above mentioned nation-states have come into existence with a surplus of nationalistic energy mainly because for the creation of a nation-state there has to be a frequently intolerant national sentiment. This is shown well by the example furnished by Yugoslavia where nationalism assumed extreme and inhuman forms to succeed in its endeavors. This is usually referred to as civil war and it was this that cast a shadow over Europe throughout most of the 1990s.

It also means that although in the case of these states regional cooperation, tolerance and unity in diversity would be necessary, in fact everybody hates everybody else and everybody tries to define himself in opposition to everybody else.

This leads me to conclude that there is presently a concept and practice of European Union mindedness and there is also a historic reality that does not even have a nodding acquaintance with the world of the union. There is a supranational language and thinking and there is also a factual historic process which fosters national self-interests.

If there is anything representing the survival of the Monarchy’s historic heritage, this is it.

Multiethnicity, Multiculturalism

The cultures living side by side and intermingling are among the most characteristic features of Central Europe; it is multi-ethnic and multicultural.
Living side by side meant that everybody could follow their religious bent and follow the cultural and national norms derived from their religion. In spite of the fact that the Habsburg Monarchy made the practice of a free interchange of people and ideas a reality, there was no internal colonization in the twentieth century meaning of the term. No national group or religion could impose their language or norms on any other. This was more of an outcome rather than a given because the battles of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the previous centuries had finally come to their end. The liberal breakthrough of a separation between the state and the church had taken place and many examples showed that forceful assimilation did not work.

Intermingling also took place primarily within the framework of metropolitan development and of the evolution of large cities. By the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Vienna and Budapest became true melting pots. The large groups of people coming from the various areas of the Monarchy adapted to each other and, in some cases, changed cultural identity. Germans became Hungarians, deeply religious people became free thinkers, and Czechs became Germans.

Yet, all this could not eliminate the fact that differing religious and cultural identities in many instances defined themselves in opposition to each other and thus there was always an element of strangeness, dislike and spitefulness. The empire was an ideal ground for prejudice. Metternich, the chancellor of the Austrian Empire during the beginning of the nineteenth century, said once that the Balkans began at Vienna’s Karlsplatz. In his view of the world everything east of imperial city was labeled as being of a culturally lower order. This condescending wave, moving from west to east, permeated the national cultures as well. The Czech looked down on the Slovak, the Hungarian looked down on the Romanian, the Croatian on the Serb, the assimilated Jew on the Galician Jew. Defining cultural identity as a concept of opposition is also one of the heirlooms of the Monarchy which is frequently alive among us even today. Living side by side, intermingling, and simultaneous
detestation built on prejudicial contempt became components of the Central European emotional culture. The mixture of harmony and disharmony led to some strange appreciations and perspectives.

The people lived in a state which assured stable institutional frameworks, more or less predictable conditions, and a stable currency and yet which none of them really felt to be a part of. If you scratched a so-called Austrian you found a German. When he was considered to be a German it appeared that he was really an Austrian and not a German. The empire was largely bureaucratic but everybody knew that order and *Schlamperei* (muddle) lived side by side. Behind order there was disorder but the disorder was always kept within bounds by the order. It is not an accident that the bureaucracy theory of Max Weber saw daylight in Germany and not in the Monarchy. By the nature of the dualistic system the Hungarians were always in a controlling position but were always dissatisfied. They served Francis Joseph, but honored and created a cult of his enemy, Lajos Kossuth, the leader of the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Liberation. The Czechs and the Germans squabbled with each other but knew that their economic superiority was due largely to their acting together.

It became a basic cultural norm of the Habsburg empire that nothing whatever was what it appeared to be. In his tragedy, *The Last Days of Mankind*, Karl Kraus mentioned that those wishing to emigrate had to complete a questionnaire which included the question, “Why do you want to leave?” According to Kraus a more appropriate question would have been, “Why would you want to stay here?” The same idea is reflected in the novel of Robert Musil, *Man without Qualities*, while the works of Franz Kafka reflect an even more somber picture.

The “nothing is what it appears to be” experience affects the cultural productions of the area to the present day. The proper response to this manifestation was irony, which gave a perspective and some sense to the absurd and to the ridiculous. According to the world view of Jaroslav Hašek idiocy could be survived only by idiocy. The Central

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8 Hašek became known through his novel, *Good Soldier Švejk*. It is less well known that already in 1906 Hašek was a prophet of political idiocy when he founded the “The Party of Moderate Progress within the Limits of the Law.” His writings on this matter are assembled in Jaroslav Hašek, *Die Partei der massvollen Fortschritts in den Grenzen der Gesetze* (Frankfurt am Mein: Suhrkamp, 1971).
European “certified idiot,” Švejk became a symbolic figure for the entire area even though the Czechs legitimately claim him as their own. In a different form the irony is alive in some of the works of Kálmán Mikszáth and in the works of the Austrian Arthur Schnitzler. Because the later events in the area never disavowed the basic Central European concept that “nothing is what it appears to be,” the Czech movie director Jiří Menzel, the Hungarian writer István Örkény and the Polish Sławomir Mrożek appear as the continuers of a tradition.

There was naturally another cultural consequence. If the rule of appearance is dominant, let us make it complete, let us make the appearance esthetic. The talented architects who architecturally represented the empire burdened by internal tensions designed their creations along classical lines. Huge public buildings were erected but the magnitude of the building was frequently in inverse relationship with the true magnitude of the institutions occupying them. A fine example for this is the Hungarian Parliament.9 These ideas left little evidence on the eighteenth century architecture of Prague because this city was not a capital. Vienna and Budapest faithfully reflect the culture of making appearances esthetic. Private architecture, even further implemented this trend. The façade of the large middle-class apartment houses sprouted gypsum telamons and the secession and the art nouveau already reflected a rebellion: attempting to replace the esthetics of appearance with a different esthetic of appearance.

The harmonizing of the world of appearances became manifest in music as well and in the outstanding works of great composers. The cult of the enchanting waltz, the csárdás and the polka became incorporated, among other things, in the music of Johann Strauss. It was he who gave the Monarchy its gloss. Then there were the operettas which were staged in world class productions. When we watch and listen to Imre Kálmán’s most famous and still popular operetta, the Csárdáskirálynő (Csárdás Queen), we can feel that the fantastic world of

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melody, the subject spanning social differences, and the happy ending give rise in the world only to beauty and to optimism. If we also know that the piece had its first performance in Vienna in 1915 and in Budapest in 1916, we cannot escape from the pressure of placing it in its proper context. By that time masses of dead soldiers in grey uniforms were covering the battle fields of World War I.

The model of Central European multiethnic and multicultural mass symbiosis was manifested most clearly in the area of food. It is here that we find examples of non-forceful, internal colonization as well as of some heroic resistance. The Wiener Schnitzel, citing Vienna in its name, originated in Italy but conquered the Monarchy, i.e. Central Europe. Its power was so great that it reached beyond the borders of the Monarchy all the way to the shores of the New World. The Monarchy was not able to do it but the Wiener Schnitzel colonized much of the world. Hungarian goulash also had an expansive history. The history of the goulash might be the Hungarian success story. If this statement is correct then it is an implicit judgment on the balance of triumphs in Hungarian history. The Czech dumpling (knedliky) resisted heroically. It did not yield and never moved abroad. In contrast, the Czech beer and its Austrian brethren conquered the wine-drinking Hungarian souls and became a quotidian beverage. Pálinka, schnapps, cujka, vodka, slivovice, borovička, and peisachovka preserved pluralism with great dignity. They did not expand at each other’s expense and all made certain that their position was unassailable. (Actually this also shows that nothing is what it appears to be because we might assume that we are dealing with seven different beverages when, in fact, they are all the same.) An organic component of the reincarnation of the middle-class lifestyle after Communism, is the resurrection of the coffee house.10

Today many more people hold the integrational elements which existed in the political environment as a norm of life much higher than they were in the mind of the people at that time. They may well be correct.

10 Gyula Zeke, ed., Budapest a kávéváros [Budapest the Coffee City], special issue, Budapesti Negyed, nos.12–13 (Summer and Autumn 1996).
This is why I suggested that in the case of definite cultural manifestations it would make sense to use the term “monarchicum” which lacks any national restrictions.11

*Reality and Appearance*

The complex structure of the Habsburg Monarchy was apparent in its economic culture. This was an area, just as it is today, where the traditional and the novel, the developed and the nascent were all present at the same time.

To some extent and in some details the Monarchy anticipated the economic perspective of the European Union. The unified monetary system was in place and it was impressive that the same money could be used to pay in Lemberg (Lvov), Innsbruck, Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary), and Abbazia (Opatija). As a result of historical developments and to the greater glory of human evolution this is not the case today. In the four sites listed above one must pay in euro, grivna, korona or kuna. Four currencies instead of one. There were no obstacles to finding a job and the task of those seeking employment was not made difficult by some system. Internal markets were free which meant that there was no duty on any merchandise. The Hungarian Ganz factory could ship just as well as the Czech Škoda or the Austrian Steyr works.12 This also meant that there was a free circulation of workers’ culture. German and Czech skilled laborers took their work and labor practices to different places and spread what became the standards of their professional existence. In places they had not yet reached the workers wore caps instead of hats. To the east of the Monarchy’s hat-wearing workers of the labor movement, there was room left only for the cap-wearing Lenin.13


The economic level varied from place to place. The leading role of Bohemia in Central Europe was lost only during the socialist era. It was at this time that Austria, previously behind Bohemia, surpassed it. The leveling is universal but unequal. It appears that the system of economic power balances established at that time will come to life again, in the twenty-first century, albeit with some modifications. After the homogenizing public life of state socialism, the differences, believed to have disappeared, will reappear.

During the twentieth century Central Europe became the “hot-spot” of Europe and both World Wars erupted in this area. The murder at the southern edge of the Monarchy gave the pretext for starting World War I. World War II began at the German-Polish border, the situation being made worse by the fact that the preliminaries took place in Central Europe. I am thinking of the occupation of Austria and of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. All this shows that the area was able to generate disastrous tensions and create conflicts that went far beyond its borders. It was also here that, after World War II, Europe’s most cruel and bloodiest conflict, the Yugoslav civil war broke out.

Here again we get back to the fundamental cultural heritage that nothing is what it appears like. It leads not only to irony and to the complex problems of esthetics. Other things are derived from it as well. Namely, the tendency toward illusions by which we mean that frequently it is difficult to tell the difference between appearance and the so-called reality. If we are chasing illusions and make very faulty judgments the consequences might be dreadful and catastrophic.

The political culture of appearance and illusion is in some way our most significant and dangerous political cultural heritage. The clearest evidence of its existence is that it is an accepted custom in the area is the belief that one ethnic group is different and better than the other. The German Nazis did not trust the outcome of a free Austrian plebiscite about the Anschluss and marched into Austria. They then held the plebiscite and won it so overwhelmingly that even the Social Democrats supported the Anschluss. Nobody knew precisely what Austria really was or how many Austrians there were. Between the two World Wars Hungary, without an ocean, was ruled by an admiral who made an illusion a matter of power politics in order to recreate historic Hungary. Poland was ruled by a group which cooperated in the dis-
memberment of Czechoslovakia with those who soon thereafter crushed Poland. The Croatians and the Serbs tried to prove their superi-riority to each other until they were both overcome by a third power. In the rivalry between the Czechs and the Slovaks Czechoslovakia came out the loser. The irrationality of self-assessment and the culture of illusion proved very costly for the peoples living in this area.14

This might be the point where I diverge from the picture sketched by Carl Schorske and Péter Hanák which in itself is valid to this day.

Schorske and Hanák emphasized what remained a permanent, high-cultural achievement of the Monarchy from the turn of the century. In my view this picture has become cloudy during the past two or three decades. I could say that today we are much more inclined to view this cultural advancement in its peculiar duality.

We more emphatically appreciate that emotional and cultural soil which had such a significant effect on the mass culture in the twentieth century. In the traditional discussions we hardly ever find the following names: Karl Lueger, Georg Schönerer, Arthur Trebitsch, Hans Hörbiger, Lanz von Liebenfels, or Guido von List. In the context of German racial superiority, List made the swastika and German mythology into a political symbols and taught the concept of the “strong man coming from above” who, by virtue of his being an elect, was always in the right. Lanz von Liebenfels, List’s pupil, proclaimed that it was the priority of the racial concept that made something moral or immoral. Schönerer, also on the basis of German motivation, proclaimed the Führer principle and Lueger made anti-Semitism into a political creed. This group was a cultural precursor of what we could call, from an Austrian history of ideas perspective, Austro-fascism. I must note that the above men exerted a significant influence on the political mass movement of the twentieth century, which was much more important than Austro-fascism, namely Nazism. Yet, while we have very serious and extensive studies on the prehistory of Nazism, the problem of Austro-fascism, at least in Central European and particularly Austrian historiography, is a very poorly discussed

14 For a comprehensive study of the area between the two wars, see Joseph Rotschild, East Central Europe between the Two World Wars (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977).
question.\textsuperscript{15} In Hungary the Katolikus Néppárt (Catholic People’s Party) and the intellectual, political, and cultural milieu attached to it entered the picture in a meaningful fashion. Its intellectual force became manifest during the Horthy era. It took a stand against what we might call in today’s terminology “monarchic globalism” and represented a perspective diametrically opposed to that of the heroes of Viennese modernism. The latter wanted to make human spirituality and accomplishment as universal as possible, the former represented a racist nationalism which adhered to an ultraconservative nationalism and which distanced them from everything represented by the other group.

It seems to me that during the more recent years we can draw a considerably more differentiated version of the cultural map of the turn of the century. A duality seems to appear which projects the picture of our heritage showing a very different intent but is of a high order of culture. From the perspective of research and interpretation we seem to have a productive duality and it seems not only likely but certain that both are derived from the peculiar world of the Monarchy. There is much to do here particularly in two areas. First, the analysis of both Austria and Hungary between the World Wars can be linked to this mass-culture sphere. Secondly, we might ask why the high order of political development of the Monarchy’s elevated culture at the turn of the century could not counterbalance the evolution of a mass culture which had a totally different content and direction? The social scientists so far have not dealt with these questions in their totality. One of the reasons for this might be that such studies would raise some problems which would endanger the national consciousness developed in Austria after 1955 and would also ask some very awkward questions about the politically fixed basic layers of Hungarian nationalism.

The problem area in the interpretation of the empire shows another peculiar duality. Depending upon by whom and how the viability of the Monarchy is assessed either the integrational elements take the forefront or the disintegrational ones. The historiography of the last few decades has emphasized the trend toward disintegration. Following his heroes, Hanák also uses the term “hopelessness of the failing empire.”

\textsuperscript{15} Karl Vöcelka, \textit{Ausztria története} [The History of Austria] (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 2006), p. 120.
In current Austrian historiography it is Karl Vocelka who points out the extent to which research in the integrational aspects has been ignored. In the mainstream of thinking today an image of the Monarchy dominates which views it as a doomed model rushing toward its own destruction. Vocelka draws attention to the idea that perhaps one should not just accept the Monarchy’s high, turn-of-the-century culture which had a lifestyle tending in that direction, but one should also investigate what integrational mechanisms were active at the time. Here we are not talking only about major political integrational elements but also about those which expressed a dual reality. While at the level of politics they appeared as expressions reflecting a disintegrational intent, at the level of society and history they were integrational forces. Let me give you an example. While many seem to assess the spirit of the World War I army of the Monarchy only in the figure of Švejk, this multinational army carried on in the war longer than the Russian army and actually fought one and one half months longer than the better quality, ethnically homogenous German army. This was probably due not only to institutional reasons but also because within the joint army there were none of the intense nationality conflicts which could be seen in the area of politics.

It appears that in understanding the empire we must emphasize the cohesive forces, not only in their institutionalized form but also in those mechanisms which established a real system of linkages between people of different nationalities, social positions, and religious cultures.

The European Union perspective might stimulate the study of the above problem. I have no doubt that sooner or later, precisely because of the reality of the union, national historians will be forced to interpret the Habsburg empire on the basis of cultural standards and historical movements, which will place it in the European integrational context which is currently being experienced.

In my view this might assist the development of a new perspective in two areas.

One of them is that the European Union points in the direction of the evolution of a linguistic culture which will make the national rhetoric of historiography very difficult. We are the witnesses of a slow linguistic change in which the contextual structure traditionally used by national historians will no longer be considered to be an untouchable taboo.
The motto of the union: “Unity in Diversity” is not so far removed from the imperial motto of Francis Joseph: “Viribus Unitis” (with united forces). This is the second important factor. The reality of the union is linked not only to the renewal of a linguistic culture, but also to making us more sensitive towards all those integrational elements which characterized the world of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. I am thinking here not only of the economic unity, the common currency, the common rules and the common market, but also of the similar social consumption standards which existed in the Monarchy. This will help us in reassessing the Habsburg empire through the perspective of the European Union and placing it in a context which in many ways could be seen as a precursor to the union. This might also help us to find those points which represented real and difficult problems for it.

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I know that it is difficult to discuss and describe the cultural characteristics of the Monarchy’s heritage in which it differed from other areas and in which it resembled them. Yet, if somebody were to ask me how I could best describe the essence of the Monarchy’s heritage, I would mention three names, emphasizing that the three together are real but separately stand for very different things.

I would mention that there was once a person, who was born in Braunau in Austria in 1889 and who left the Monarchy when he was twenty-four-years old. He served in the German army and rose to become a corporal. He painted in Austria, was interested in architecture and music and read authors who believed in mystic symbols, like the swastika, the superiority of the Aryan race and the identity of Austria with Germany. He represented the racial-nationalistic version of the Central European logic of making enemies. He came from the Monarchy but reaped success in Germany. President Hindenburg, for

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incomprehensible reasons, appointed him chancellor, even though he always referred to him as that Bohemian corporal. At the end of his lost war he committed suicide. His name was Adolf Hitler.

I would mention a second man. He was born in Hungary at Nagyszentmiklós (now Sannicolau Mare, in Romania), eight years before the above mentioned Austrian, in 1881. Interested in music from his early youth, he was influenced greatly by Richard Strauss. At age twenty-five he began to collect folk music and from there he turned, as a composer, toward the idea of “people becoming brothers.” He was also very successful as a speaker and in his theatrical works he proclaimed humanistic ideals. His most famous works, the *Cantata Profana*, the *Concerto*, and the Second Violin Concerto are performed worldwide. Because of the above mentioned Austrian, he left Hungary in 1940. Late in life he discovered that Franz Liszt was his true artistic model. He believed that the cultures of the Central European peoples could exist only as a unit and could be interpreted only in their effect on each other. He died in New York in 1945, surviving the suicidal Austrian by five months. He was Béla Bartók.

And there was one other one. He was born in Bohemia probably about the same time as the other two. In fact he is ageless and never existed. During World War I he was a private and never even became a corporal. He served in the army of the Monarchy and had numerous adventures. Because he is ageless he may well be alive even today. He was either an idiot or he was so clever that he could convince everybody that he was an idiot. He is the Central European little guy, who knows that one can survive everything, one must survive everything and one is allowed to survive everything. So far as he was concerned the ruler might be a monster or the representative of the noblest ideals. He knows what he knows, narrow-mindedness protects, the absence of reflex responses in stupidity immunize against everything.

I believe that these three together, incompletely and imperfectly, represent Central Europe and the heritage of the Monarchy.

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The area and its culture can be justifiably hated and justifiably loved. It produced filth and also the purest values. And it also produced the little guy who can endure and survive the simultaneous presence of the two.

The empire has died, its heritage is here in a new and renovated context. Both the beautiful and the ugly.