

## Austrian Theorists of Central European Integration

Nadja EL BEHEIRI – Annemarie FENZL – Anita ZIEGERHOFER

### ABSTRACT

The figures discussed in this chapter were forward-looking thinkers who were able to adapt to the needs of their times. All of them in one way or another were steeped in the Christian tradition and can be characterised as the forefathers of a United Europe. They were able to set aside their own preferences when a broader ideal required it. Ignaz Seipel was able to negotiate with representatives of the socialist party; although he personally preferred the state form of Monarchy, he played a decisive role in the enactment of the constitution of the Republic of Austria. In the context of his time, he can be considered extraordinarily open minded, not only concerning his political agreements but also, for instance, his friendship with Hildegard Burjan. Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi was an early visionary of European unification in the face of non-European world powers. He saw Pan-America, East Asia, the Russian Empire, the British Empire, and Europe as the five planetary force fields that made up the world. The pathway to strike a balance in this system would have been the founding of the United States of Europe. In 1925, he founded the 'Paneuropa Union' with its headquarters in the Vienna Hofburg and with the support of the Ignaz Seipel. The situation in Europe changed significantly after World War II, and Coudenhove-Kalergi adapted his programme to the new geopolitical situation. Until the end of his life, he struggled for the unification of Europe as a guarantee for peace. Otto von Habsburg, son of the last emperor of the Monarchy, can be considered one of the most outstanding supporters of a United Europe. He realised his political activity as successor of Coudenhove-Kalergi as President of the Paneuropean movement and from 1979 as a deputy to the European Parliament. He based his idea of European unification on the principles of democracy, federalism, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Cardinal Franz König advocated for the development of understanding between diverse people and religions. He believed that a United Europe must include both the Eastern and western halves of the continent and should be implemented to uphold peace. He was convinced that promoting Christian unity played a significant role in the progress of this unification and played a significant role in bridging the gap between Eastern and Western Europeans during the Iron Curtain era. Erhard Busek commendably combined his engagement as a local and federal politician with his commitment to the countries of Eastern Europe. In Busek's view, the Danube should serve as a second river of unification after the Rhine. He further believed that economic cooperation, education, and intensive collaboration should play a preeminent role in the unification process. Busek served as a representative of Austria in the process of the enlargement of the European Union. He also held the position of chairman of the Institute for the 'Danube Region and Central Europe'.

### KEYWORDS

European federation, social, state, Pan-European movement, collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, nations beyond the Iron Curtain, European federation, enlargement of the European

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Union, Danube federation, Central Europe, Ignaz Seipel, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, Kardinal Franz König, Otto von Habsburg, Erhard Busek.

## **Introduction**

After World War I and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, numerous proposals for European unification emerged, all of which were directed at fostering mutual understanding and peace as well as economic cooperation. The concept of European Unification opposed Pan-German ideas, as Friedrich Naumann expressed on an academic level in 1915. European Unification also intended to protect the nations in question against potential threats arising from Russia. A cornerstone of unification within Europe was the reconciliation of Germany and France. Although Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi had already vocalized support for this process, it was not completed until after World War II. With the rapprochement between Germany and France, the gaze turned to the countries beyond the Iron Curtain. From the immediate post-World War I period (Ignaz Seipel) until the era of the European Union's enlargement (Erhard Busek), Austria was meant to serve as a mediator within the unification process. Austria, with its experience as a multi-ethnic and multicultural state, offered the conditions necessary for cultivating mutual understanding and building a framework for peaceful coexistence. The personalities presented in this chapter share several traits despite the disparities brought about by their various circumstances. They were all open minded and capable of adjusting to the demands of their times. All of them in one way or another were rooted within the Christian tradition and can be characterised as the forefathers of a United Europe. They were able to set aside their own preferences when a broader ideal required it. Ignaz Seipel was able to negotiate with representatives of the socialist party; although he personally preferred the state form of Monarchy, he played a decisive role in the enactment of the constitution of the Republic of Austria. Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi adapted the programme he developed after World War I to the needs of the post-World War II era. Otto von Habsburg, the son of the last emperor of the Monarchy, transformed himself into a politician within a republic order. Cardinal Franz König advocated for the development of understanding between diverse people and religions. Erhard Busek commendably combined his engagement as a local and federal politician with his commitment to the countries of Eastern Europe. These figures can provide inspiration for all those facing new challenges related to the great ideal of European integration.

## 1. Ignaz Seipel (1876–1932)<sup>1</sup>

Nadja EL BEHEIRI

### 1.1. Life Data and Political Career

Ignaz Seipel was born on 19 July 1876. His father, a trained gilder, came from the artisan milieu but began his career as a cab driver (Fiaker), a highly honourable occupation that would eventually become synonymous with Vienna. He started working at the 'Fürstentheater' in the Vienna Prater in 1887 as a porter. The future chancellor's mother passed away when he was just three years old. Seipel attended the 'Staatsgymnasium Wien Meidling' and graduated from high school in 1895. Little is known about his childhood and adolescence. He enrolled in the seminary and began studying theology at the



University of Vienna the same year. On 23 July 1899, he was ordained as a priest. He served in several pastoral roles from 1903 to 1909 while working on a doctoral thesis on the Holy Trinity, which he successfully completed in 1903. His mentor was Franz Martin Schindler, one of the key thinkers within the Christian Social Movement. Schindler also had an impact on Pope Leo XIII's first encyclical on social issues, *Rerum Novarum*, which was published in 1891. Thus, Schindler's encouragement of the young researcher to write a 'Habilitationsschrift' on the Church's social philosophy was not unexpected.<sup>2</sup> Seipel was awarded the *venia legendi* for moral theology with his thesis 'Die wirtschaftsethischen Lehren der Kirchenväter'.<sup>3</sup> From 1909 until 1917, he worked as a professor of moral theology at the University of Salzburg. During his time in the city that was often called the 'German Rome', he led an extraordinarily intense academic life. It was also in Salzburg that he published his study 'Nation und Staat'.<sup>4</sup> Written amid the commotion of the First World War,

1 Ignaz Seipel, Austrian Roman Catholic priest, theologian and politician of the Christian Social Party, Wenzl Weis – Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria, Inventarnr. 167.982 – D, public domain, source of the picture: [https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz\\_Seipel#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Wenzl\\_Weis\\_-\\_Ignaz\\_Seipel.jpg](https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Seipel#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Wenzl_Weis_-_Ignaz_Seipel.jpg).

2 Concerning Seipel's work and life, two works remain fundamental today: one was written by Friedrich Rennhofer and the other by Klemens von Klemperer. While Rennhofer's book presents a rich documentation of his life, Klemperer attempts an interpretation against the background of world-historical events.

3 Seipel, 1907. A review to the volume was written in 1910 by Anton Koch. Cf. Koch, 1910. The author notes that Seipel did not approach the task chronologically but rather systematically.

4 Seipel, 1916. Cf. the review by Heinrich Otto Meisner. Meisner, 1917, pp. 448–451.

the book can be considered a manifestation of his convictions regarding the new organisation of Europe. In 1917, Seipel succeeded his mentor Schindler as chair of moral theology at the University of Vienna. However, his life was soon to take a turn. A year later, Heinrich Lammasch was appointed prime minister and invited his friend Seipel to take the job of Minister of Social Welfare. Although his time as minister was cut short by the fall of the Monarchy (the state of German-Austria was established on 30 October), this appointment marked the beginning of his transition from academia to politics.<sup>5</sup> Seipel contributed to the formulation of the emperor's abdication declaration, which stated that he renounced any involvement in public affairs.<sup>6</sup> This formulation was difficult to interpret and avoided expressing a formal abdication of the throne.<sup>7</sup> With the end of the Monarchy, members of the emperor's government also had to resign. Seipel was given the honorific title of a Privy Councillor and was granted a more than sufficient pension.<sup>8</sup>

He intended to return to academic life but was once more persuaded to become involved in political matters. In 1919, he was elected as a member of the Constituent National Assembly. Within the National Assembly, he served as a reporter for the constitutional subcommittee, the head of which was the socialist politician Otto Bauer. According to Hans Kelsen, who is considered the 'architect' of the Austrian Constitution from a political perspective, it was mainly due to Bauer and Seipel that the Constitution was able to come into existence.<sup>9</sup>

Simultaneously, as he collaborated on the construction of the new order within the Republic of Austria, he delivered a number of lectures about the social teachings of the Church. He rose to authority within the Christian Social Party and was elected as Austria's federal chancellor, serving in office from 1922 to 1924. His most significant achievement during this time was the League of Nations loan Austria obtained, which prevented the country's economy from collapsing. In order to receive the loan, he had to persuade the international board representatives as well as prominent Austrian politicians.<sup>10</sup> In 1924, Seipel was the victim of an assassination attempt in which he was seriously injured. A few months later, he renounced his position as Federal Chancellor and planned again to return to the university. In 1926, a Constitutional amendment was passed that strengthened the rights of the president of the Republic and the principle of the separation of powers.<sup>11</sup> Seipel was persuaded to again assume the position of Chancellor.<sup>12</sup> In 1929, he resigned again as Federal Chancellor and planned to return to the academic sphere. However, he

5 Klemperer, 2015, pp. 82–85.

6 Ibid. p. 90.

7 A similar wording was also used in the declaration of Eckartsau regarding the abdication of the Emperor from participation in the affairs of state in the Hungarian part of the monarchy.

8 Klemperer, 2015, p. 93.

9 Ibid. p. 139. In relation to Seipel's involvement with the Constitutional Committee cf. Olechowski, 2012, pp. 317–335.

10 Höbelt, 2022.

11 On the amendment cf. Brauner, 1989, p. 215.

12 Cf. Von Klemperer, 2015, p. 251.

was unable to due to his poor health. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Vienna in 1931. He was able to travel to Greece, Egypt, and the Holy Land in the beginning of 1932. His state of health then deteriorated and he passed away in August 1932 at the age of 56.

### ***1.2. An intellectual and political portrait: Priest and politician***

Seipel saw himself, first, as a priest of the Catholic Church. The two-time chancellor experienced his political activity as a divine calling. His faith in God gave rise to his faith in Austria's ability to survive after the collapse of the Monarchy. Austria's mission was to be understood as a Catholic, humanitarian, occidental, and German nation. The union of Catholic faith and political activity characterised Seipel. He did not only want to be seen as a politician who helped restore Austria's finances, he wanted to renovate the country's soul. The future Chancellor saw his turn from priesthood to active political life as an exception. When the state is in good condition, it can be governed by politicians and officials; in times of crisis, however, everyone must be ready to take responsibility. When he assumed office as a minister in the last Imperial Cabinet, Seipel wrote to his colleagues that his decision was motivated, above all, by his belief in Austria.<sup>13</sup> It is remarkable that the priest-politician also remained completely identified with his priesthood during his time as Chancellor of Austria. He always wore simple clergyman's clothing and tried to maintain his life of piety by celebrating Holy Mass, receiving and performing the sacraments, and praying the liturgy of the hours. Until his death, he held office as spiritual director in two charity organisations, one of which was Caritas Socialis, founded by Hildegard Burjan. Burjan converted from Judaism to Catholicism and became the first female member of the Austrian Parliament in 1919. She was married and had one daughter. Seipel supported her social activities and the founding of the religious community 'Caritas Socialis'. Of the many similarities between Seipel and Burjan, the most remarkable of which is that both combined religious dedication with engagement in politics. At a time when male and female friendship was still uncommon, their friendship is likewise extraordinary.

Scholars generally draw a direct line from Seipel to Engelbert Dollfuss and the self-elimination of the Austrian Parliament in 1933. Both politicians are seen as representative of political Catholicism and corporatism. They are sometimes accused of harbouring anti-democratic views and are somehow held accountable for the fratricide conflict that broke out in Austria in 1934. To understand Seipel's position, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Austrian chancellor had no experience with democratic tradition as politicians coming from the Anglo-Saxon area might have had, where parliamentarians enjoy a history that goes back centuries. His point of reference was and remained first and foremost the Habsburg Monarchy. From a historical perspective, he focused on the experience of the ancient Roman Republic. He believed that one of the most important reasons for the end of the Roman

| 13 Rennhofer, 1978, p. 147. |

Republic was the fact that Rome's democratic system was not prepared to be used in the government of a world empire. In this situation, it was the emperor who was supposed to provide protection for the common people. From Charlemagne onwards, the emperor – as Seipel emphasised – was also the protector of the Church.<sup>14</sup> Seipel conceived the Roman emperor as a magistrate of emergency and believed that the emperor was responsible for establishing peace in society. It is also noteworthy that – according to Seipel – in Rome, the ever-increasing expansion of the empire led to the suspension of the supposedly democratic system. In Austria, on the contrary, it was the fact that Austria was limited to a minimal territory after the collapse of the Monarchy that led to the creation of emergency solutions. The heart of the future chancellor of the Republic of Austria continued beating for the Monarchy, but he recognised the signs of the time and asserted that reason proposed '*democracy as being desirable and the only possible solution in the future*'.<sup>15</sup> As a scholar, he based his political view on his dissertation on the Church's social thought and clearly favoured private property but denounced the wrong use of property, which had been an experience of the old regime.<sup>16</sup> The priest-politician supported universal suffrage but asserted that democratic institutions should ideally be rooted in the family and estates (Berufsstände).<sup>17</sup> For a system with an absolutisation of the individual within the democratic order, Seipel coined the term 'atomistic' state. In contrast, he termed a democratic society based on family and estates an 'organic system'.<sup>18</sup> For Seipel, the democratic element was mainly directed to nations that, through free democratic choice, should join the bigger unity of the state. Regarding the electoral system, he preferred electoral groups like that of the family or professional associations (Berufsstand) to a universal and individual system.<sup>19</sup>

Seipel also rejected both materialistic socialism and liberal ideology. With this perspective, the politician-priest could be seen as a precursor to the 1931 encyclical *Quadregesimo anno*. Klemens von Klemperer summarises Seipel's attitude towards the end of the Monarchy and states:

While the conservatives in Germany with their narrow, dynastic view of legitimacy of the kind which Seipel dismissed as 'useless', became disaffected with the Republic and weakened its foundation, Seipel opened up the possibility of a constructive conservative function within the new Austrian Republic.<sup>20</sup>

14 Cf. Olechowski, 2012, p. 321.

15 Klemperer, 2015, p. 107.

16 Ibid. p. 106.

17 Cf. the notion of 'Berufsstand' also in connection with Ignaz Seipel. Kustatscher, 2016, p. 157.

18 Klemperer, 2015, p. 107.

19 Seipel, 1918, no. 535.

20 Ibid. p. 109.

It is important to discuss anti-Semitism when examining Ignaz Seipel, as he was frequently charged with holding anti-Semitic views. He was frank about the anti-Semitic tendencies of the Christian Socialist Party. There was mention of a *'predominance of the decomposing Jewish influence'* in the Christian Socialist programme. Seipel clarified the phrase's meaning by pointing out that it was not meant to disparage Jews or the influence that they wielded in the intellectual and business worlds. Jews were expected to have a significant role in socialism, communism, and secularism, which the Austrian politician fought against.<sup>21</sup> In this regard, Seipel's attitude corresponded to the view of the majority of the members of the Church's hierarchy. Although every form of racism was rejected as incompatible with the Christian message, Jews were seen as the originators and representatives of harmful materialistic and liberal ideologies. The generally accepted opinion within Catholic theology seems to have been an ethical and defensive form of Christian antisemitism. Like many of the leading Catholics of his time, Seipel's views were still far from that defended from the Second Vatican Council onwards.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, it is remarkable that Seipel wanted to grant Jews a minority status.<sup>23</sup>

### ***1.3. Thinking and feeling European***

At the same time that Seipel was convinced that despite all its economic and political difficulties, Austria had an important role to play within Europe, he was persuaded that the future of the country had to be conceived within a unified European Community. Seipel formed his ideas around the research he carried out in the academic sphere. As a scholar, he was fully aware of the fact that times were changing. In the book *'Nation und Staat'*, he wrote that *'the old empire is dead and will not rise again, but its idea lives. The modern form in which it must be realised [...] can probably only consist in a system of a federation [...] of national, economic or other nature'*.<sup>24</sup> This statement, written in 1916, shows clearly that Seipel's concept of Europe was closely linked to the nations of the Monarchy. Within this federation, he believed that Austria had an outstanding role to fulfil. His conviction that the future lied in a federation, combined with his strong sense of duty regarding Austria, made him a committed opponent of the Pan-German movement. Seipel asserted that if

21 Ibid. p. 256.

22 Johannes Oesterreicher (1904–1993) can be cited as an impressive example of a figure who condemned all forms of anti-Semitism as early as the 1930s. As a priest, he held numerous sermons against hostility towards Jews. Oesterreicher also took part in the wording of the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council regarding Jews in the Document *Nostra aetate* no. 4. The Council states solemnly that *'in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone'*. On the approach of the Catholic Church towards Jews in the inter-war period cf. Rhonheimer, 2004, p. 18.

23 Klemperer, 2015, p. 256.

24 Seipel, 1916, p. 140.

the German part of Austria joined the German Empire, Germany would gain a few million more citizens, but the loss for Europe would be immense.<sup>25</sup>

In ‘Nation und Staat’, Seipel argues for the maintenance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. From Seipel’s perspective, the adherence of the different nations to Austria was a guarantor for their freedom. Without the empire, only individual small states would remain, which – if they wanted to prevail – would have to adhere themselves in one way or another to other more powerful states. For Seipel, therefore, the change should not have affected their belonging to the Austrian state but only the way that this affiliation was carried out. Seipel was not restricting these ideas to some form of Danubian Federation, but he wanted to apply them to a unified Europe. This project brought him closer to the Pan-European movement linked to Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi. In fact, Seipel unconditionally supported the movement in Austria. He delivered the opening address at the movement’s first congress in Vienna and held the presidency for the Austrian branch of the Pan-European movement.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Seipel gave Coudenhove-Kalergi an office in one of the Hofburg’s buildings.

A key element of his vision of federation was the distinction between nation and state. The scholar understood ‘nation’ as a group of similar people – or at least those able to reach a certain level of similarity – bound together from destiny to a cultural and linguistic unity.<sup>27</sup> A nation in this sense could be divided into smaller unities: Seipel mentions tribes and people (Volk). At the end of this chain stands the family. A specific characteristic of the family is authority. As the authority of the family is not sufficient to meet all of its members’ needs, a bigger entity is required to cover them. This, according to Seipel, is the reason why different, smaller unities group themselves into states.<sup>28</sup> He defines the state as a community of interest, in which singular members surrender themselves to an authority that unifies their forces on behalf of the common good of all members and that has at its disposal the means necessary for achieving its aim.<sup>29</sup> Seipel states that the members of a state – the people – are like a wheel on a machine: they participate in its movement but do not determine it. Seipel makes this statement in connection with the re-establishment of communication between warring parties. If the leaders of a state are no longer in a position to maintain friendly relations, they can be substituted by others. As the members of a nation act individually and not through their leaders, a mutual understanding must also be constructed through the single members of the nation.<sup>30</sup> Post-war projects should thus concentrate on rebuilding the understanding between nations. A state that comprises different nations should provide the framework for such efforts. In 1926, exactly ten years

25 Cf. Bulloch, 2002, p. 47.

26 Seipel, 1926, p. 3.

27 Seipel, 1916, p. 6.

28 Ibid. p. 50.

29 Ibid. p. 78.

30 Ibid. p. 145.



after the collapse of the Monarchy and his first term as Chancellor, Seipel held the opening speech of the first congress of the Pan-Europe movement in Vienna. On this occasion, he quoted the French politician Aristide Briand, who had recently been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Briand had stated that in order to understand each other despite the different languages they speak, people in Europe first had to think and feel in a European way. Thinking in a European way meant, for the president of the Austrian branch of the movement, that people should overcome all kinds of narrowness and focus on the broader context. In his speech, Seipel focused on the nations and the kinds of cultural and economic organisations that could foster peace and overcome the crises that were afflicting Europe. He also mentioned the League of Nations and the Catholic Church as guarantees for peace. At the end of his remarks, he formulated the aim of the movement as finding and putting into practice a form of organisation between the European states that would go beyond individual states.<sup>31</sup> Although the Congress did not achieve its aim of being a milestone on the path towards European unification, the lives and thoughts of its participants may still serve as guidelines for the challenges Europe faces nearly a century later.

### ***Conclusions***

Ignaz Seipel was one of the most significant politicians of the interwar years in Austria. He initially studied to become a theologian and later entered politics. Throughout his life, he remained in touch with the academic community and strove to base his political actions on the conclusions of his academic studies. He saw his work as a priest in the Catholic Church as an integral element of his vocation. He participated actively in the design of the Austrian Constitution and was present at key occasions when Austria transitioned from a monarchy to a republic. Despite his devotion to the Monarchy, he saw that democracy was the only viable form of government. Seipel used the concepts of 'state' and 'nation' to convey his views about the development of a federation within Europe. According to him, the state is the only institution with an authoritarian component derived from the natural family. Within the nation, people are free and autonomous, and the understanding of these people is the best foundation for a unified Europe.

| 31 Seipel, 1926, p. 3. |

## 2. Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi, Paneuropa (1894–1972)<sup>32</sup>

Anita ZIEGERHOFER

Richard Nikolas Coudenhove-Kalergi is regarded as the most prominent European visionary of the interwar period. To preserve peace on the continent, he aspired to unite European states in a confederation called ‘Paneuropa’. He believed that only the Franco-German reconciliation could achieve this goal. Having failed to accomplish this, RCK turned his attention to the unification of Central, Eastern, and South-eastern Europe. He saw the Little Entente and the subsequent alliances of states in this region, which were formed in the 1930s, as a possible nucleus of Pan-Europe. However, all of his efforts failed due to the policies pursued by the European states, which resulted in the outbreak of the Second World War.



Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi (RCK) was born in Tokyo on 17 November 1894.<sup>33</sup> He was the second son of the Austrian ambassador to Japan, Imperial Count Heinrich Coudenhove-Kalergi, and his wife Mitsuko Aoyama, who was the daughter of a Japanese merchant.<sup>34</sup> In 1896, the family returned to his father’s estate in Ronsperg [Poběžovice], Bohemia. RCK grew up in an international, cosmopolitan household. This family environment and his time spent as a pupil at the Theresianum in Vienna served as inspiration for RCK’s Paneuropean ideas. In 1917, he graduated with a degree in philosophy from the University of Vienna. Soon after, the Peace Treaty of St. Germain made him a citizen of Czechoslovakia.

RCK published his ideas concerning Paneuropa for the first time in an article written for the *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna) entitled ‘Paneuropa: Ein Vorschlag’ (‘Paneuropa: A Proposal’).<sup>35</sup> This newspaper article is regarded as the initial spark for the creation of the Paneuropean movement. In 1923, his 168-page book *Paneuropa*

32 Richard von Coudenhove Kalergi, Writer, philosopher, politician and founder of the Pan-Europa Union, unknown photographer, in: ÖNB, Bildarchiv Austria, Inventarnummer Pf 3944:B(2), public domain, source of the picture: [https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Coudenhove-Kalergi#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Graf\\_Richard\\_Nikolaus\\_von\\_Coudenhove-Kalergi\\_\(1894%E2%80%931972\)\\_~1930.jpg](https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Coudenhove-Kalergi#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Graf_Richard_Nikolaus_von_Coudenhove-Kalergi_(1894%E2%80%931972)_~1930.jpg).

33 Detailed Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004; Ziegerhofer, 2022, pp. 32–35.

34 Detailed Schmidt-Muraki, 2017.

35 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1922, pp. 3–4 and Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, pp. 82–83.

was published and translated into many of the major European languages except Russian and Italian. The central question of the book was, *'Can Europe, in its political and economic fragmentation, preserve its peace and independence in the face of the growing non-European world powers – or is it forced to organise itself into a confederation of states to save its existence?'*<sup>36</sup>

RCK saw the world as being divided into five planetary force fields: Pan-America, East Asia, the Russian Empire, the British Empire, and Europe, which was divided into nation-states. Building on this theory, RCK developed his plan for Pan-Europe. Europe, fragmented into nation states, should be united in several steps. First, a Paneuropean Conference (with a Paneuropean Office in Geneva, Vienna, or Paris) needed to be established. Second, a Paneuropean Customs Union should be created, with all member states entering into arbitration and guarantee treaties with each other. The crowning highlight would be the creation of the 'United States of Europe' along the lines of the United States of America or Switzerland. Paneurope saw itself as a non-partisan organisation dedicated to unifying Europe. Paneurope as an association was founded on 9 July 1925 as the association 'Paneuropa Union, Centrale' with headquarters in the Leopoldinischer Trakt of the Vienna Hofburg.<sup>37</sup> There were soon Paneurope offices in almost all European capitals, and in 1926, an office was opened in New York.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the creation of a European confederation of states with a mutual guarantee of equal rights, security, and independence, the Paneuropean movement called for a Federal European Court to settle all conflicts between European states. Further, a European alliance with a common air police would have ensured peace and disarmament. The gradual creation of a European Zollverein, the joint development of European colonies, the introduction of a European currency, and the protection of all national and religious minorities in Europe against oppression were also to be achieved by a united Europe.<sup>39</sup>

Paneurope was to consist of twenty-six states, seven small territories, and the European colonies. From today's perspective, the demand for the inclusion of colonies must be considered as extremely problematic.<sup>40</sup> RCK assumed that Britain would be its own 'non-European empire'.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, instead of membership, he proposed the creation of a British-European Entente as the basis for Britain's future relations with Paneurope.<sup>42</sup>

In RCK's view, a Paneuropean Federal Union would offer European states the following advantages: Protection against war within Europe, neutralisation of Europe in world conflicts, protection against an invasion by Russia, the possibility

36 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1923, p. IX.

37 Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, pp. 100–102.

38 Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2003, p. 8.

39 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1934, p. 164.

40 See f.e. Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1929, pp. 1–19.

41 See Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, p. 76.

42 Ibid. pp. 76–78.

of disarmament, and the ability to compete with the American and British as well as the East Asian and Russian industry.<sup>43</sup> In order to be able to create a Paneuro-pean community, a Paneuropean patriotism was needed.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, RCK called upon the youth and women of Europe, the leaders of the European spirit, and all Europeans of good will to create a Paneuropean Union.<sup>45</sup>

In the promotion of his idea, RCK was truly a professional. He gave Paneurope its own motto – *in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas* – and symbol, the narrow red cross on a golden background representing Christian ethics and the enlightenment. This logo was intended to serve as a corporate identity and appeared on badges, scarves, ties, and cigar loops.<sup>46</sup> The Paneuropean Congresses, which began in 1926, also served this purpose. In 1933, the Paneuropean Economic Centre was founded in Vienna, followed by economic and agricultural congresses. RCK promoted his idea through radio broadcasts, the Paneurope Journal, and books about Paneurope. He went on lecture tours throughout Europe and overseas. He was the ambassador of a united Europe. As a result, he came into contact with many of the leading politicians of his time, including Edouard Herriot, Aristide Briand, Gustav Stresemann, Tomáš G. Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, and Winston Churchill. He also persuaded the German industrial magnate Robert Bosch to set up a paneuro-pean foundation, and many German industrialists supported him financially. Alongside his political and business contacts, RCK cultivated a paneuropean exchange of ideas with intellectuals and artists including the brothers Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Franz Werfel, Stefan Zweig, and Gerhart Hauptmann.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.1. Central Europe

As early as 1920, even before he made his ideas public, RCK was considering which country could take the initiative to create Paneurope. He focused on the ‘Little Entente’, which had been formed in the early 1920s based on bilateral treaties. The political leadership of this alliance between Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania was exercised by Tomáš G. Masaryk in Prague.<sup>48</sup> If Masaryk were to give official support to Paneurope, RCK argued, it would have the strongest resonance throughout Europe: ‘*the Little Entente would follow him and attract the best elements of France, Germany, Italy and Poland*’.<sup>49</sup> However, Masaryk refused to officially endorse Paneurope because he felt he was too ‘*old to be the George Washington of Europe*’.<sup>50</sup> The president, however, remained a supporter of the movement throughout his life,

43 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1923, pp. 154–155.

44 Ibid. p. 166.

45 Ibid. pp. 166–167.

46 Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, pp. 358–360.

47 See the short description Ziegerhofer, 2023, pp. 9–14; detailed Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004.

48 Langer, 2014, pp. 431–438.

49 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1966, pp. 117–118.

50 Ibid.

introducing RCK to foreign minister Edvard Beneš, who in return put him in touch with other important politicians (e.g., Aristide Briand).<sup>51</sup>

In March 1930, RCK wrote an article about the political idea of Central Europe, introducing it with reflections on Friedrich Naumann's book *Mitteleuropa* (published in 1915).<sup>52</sup> However, RCK rejected *Mitteleuropa* because it contained a plan to extend and secure the '*German sphere of life and power through the closest possible union with the Danube Monarchy and the Balkan states*'<sup>53</sup>. In his opinion, which was correct in terms of realpolitik, France would perceive Central Europe as a power-political instrument of Germany and would therefore be forced to ally with Italy against Germany at all costs.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, according to RCK, '*the political contrast between Hungary, mutilated [by the Treaty of Trianon], and its neighbours was too stark*'.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Central Europe was not the way to Paneurope – he even considered it to be the wrong path. The right one led, in his perception, undoubtedly from Berlin to Paris.<sup>56</sup> This assessment was deliberately directed against Germany, which had already established trade relations with the agrarian states of South-eastern Europe before the Great Depression. The idea of a protected Central and South-eastern European economic area under German rule became increasingly relevant with the start of the Great Depression in 1929.<sup>57</sup>

## 2.2. Eastern Europe

RCK probably also rejected Central Europe because of the political and ideological connotations of the term. However, he saw the climate in Eastern Europe as an opportunity to realise his Paneuropean vision: '*I have usually found more European patriotism among the statesmen of Eastern Europe and the Balkans than among the leaders of the crystallised nations of Western Europe*', he observed.<sup>58</sup> Because of its geographical and political position, he assigned Austria the role of mediator between the antagonisms of Eastern and Central Europe. In the economic talks between Austria and Hungary that took place in 1931, RCK saw an opportunity '*to create a new economic powerhouse on the Danube, capable of accelerating the unification of Europe*'.<sup>59</sup> As the Schober-Curtius plan for a customs union between Germany and Austria had been condemned and struck down by the Hague Court of Arbitration in the same year, RCK proposed that the unification of Europe should take place on the Rhine and the Danube. For him, the Rhine was a synonym for Franco-German rapprochement. The same applied for the Danube and the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He concluded

51 Detailed about the relation between Paneuropa and Czechoslovakia, Ziegerhofer, 2022, pp. 195–209.

52 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1930, p. 85.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid. p. 89.

55 Ibid. p. 86.

56 Ibid. p. 91.

57 Sundhaussen and Clewing, 2016, pp. 260–261.

58 Osteuropa, 1931, p. 52.

59 Ibid. p. 53.

that the connection of the Rhine and the Danube thus signified the cooperation of Germany and France with the successor states.<sup>60</sup> He apparently still believed in the development of Franco-German friendship as the foundation of a peaceful Europe, considering that if these two states were to come to an understanding, their political race for power in Central and South-eastern Europe would come to an end. It could instead lead to an alliance with the successor states.

RCK's focus on the Little Entente and other possible alliances can not only be explained by German expansionist intentions in Central and South-eastern Europe. It should also be seen in light of the failure of the idea of a 'European Union' put forward by the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand at the tenth meeting of the League of Nations in September 1929.<sup>61</sup> He was subsequently asked to draft a memorandum for the establishment of the United States of Europe by the foreign ministers of the European members of the League of Nations. This so-called Briand Memorandum was sent to the governments of various European states between 17–19 May 1930. Some of the reactions of the Eastern European countries should be mentioned here briefly. The Czechoslovak government, for example, saw this 'European Union' as an opportunity for Germany to regain power and therefore had reservations. Poland was enthusiastic, since the impulse came from France, but feared that it might diminish its relations with the Soviet Union. Hungary and Bulgaria mainly demanded a revision of the peace treaties. Their governments did not believe that the plan could be implemented.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, the Memorandum was rejected by Germany, Italy, and England. Germany rejected the memorandum for various reasons but particularly because it was perceived as too political. Moreover, the non-participation of Turkey and the Soviet Union could have jeopardised Germany's relations with these countries.<sup>63</sup> Italy put forth a similar argument,<sup>64</sup> and Great Britain rejected the memorandum with reference to its 'non-European networks'.<sup>65</sup> Austria replied in very general terms with was a *'diplomatic masterpiece of obfuscation'*.<sup>66</sup> These rejections marked the beginning of the end of the Paneuropean movement. RCK must have realised that the rapprochement of Germany and France had become a distant prospect.

### 2.3. Danube Union

In his attempts to realise Paneurope at any cost, RCK focused on Eastern Europe. French Prime Minister André Tardieu's plans for a customs union among the successor states of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire seemed promising to RCK.<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that the Austrian Federal Chancellor Ignaz Seipel was

60 Rhein und Donau, 1931, p. 290.

61 See Ziegerhofer, 1999, pp. 377–397.

62 Ibid. pp. 257–258.

63 Ibid. p. 390.

64 Ibid. pp. 386–387.

65 Ibid. p. 388.

66 Ibid. p. 391.

67 Koch, 2009, p. 32.

the first Honorary President of the Paneuropean Union.<sup>68</sup> He supported RCK and his movement until his death in 1932.<sup>69</sup> Seipel advocated the creation of a ‘Danube federation’,<sup>70</sup> but RCK was not particularly in favour of his approach. When Tardieu’s attempts were unsuccessful, RCK took the initiative with the following justification: André Tardieu’s initiative had reopened the Danubian question, continued Briand’s European work in terms of realpolitik, and thus ‘*the revision of one of the greatest economic follies of the peace treaties*’ was called into question.<sup>71</sup> RCK described ‘*Eastern Europe, which was born out of the Paris Peace Treaty, [as] an economic miscarriage*’.<sup>72</sup> In order to make these states economically viable, he suggested expanding their markets, reducing tariffs, and promoting closer economic cooperation. The Danube Union would have to be formed by all countries except the Scandinavian, Baltic, and Iberian states. According to RCK’s credo, the Danube question would lead to the solution of the economic problems of Paneurope.<sup>73</sup> Did the Paneuropeans realise that the French policy of alliances in Eastern and Central Europe was inefficient? Those countries suffering from the agricultural crisis had no choice but to foster economic ties with Germany. This also applied to Yugoslavia, Romania, and Hungary.<sup>74</sup>

Independently of Andre Tardieu’s advance, the Hungarian Paneuropean Union had organised a conference in Budapest under the auspices of its executive president, Paul von Auer. It took place on 12 and 13 February 1932 and was attended by representatives of the Paneuropean Unions of Austria, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. They discussed whether it would be desirable for the ‘*successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to enter into an economic alliance in the very near future*’ in order to promote Paneurope. Furthermore, they discussed which states might be interested in such an alliance.<sup>75</sup> Those present advocated for the creation of a unified Paneuropean economic entity formed by the countries mentioned above, together with Hungary. In addition to the regulation of trade relations, there would also be a need for certain harmonisations in transport, monetary, industrial, and agricultural policies. Finally, the ‘*Comité permanent pour le rapprochement des pays danubiens et la Pologne*’ was established in Budapest, the chairmanship of which was entrusted to Paul von Auer.<sup>76</sup> All those present agreed that the Paneuropean Union had now placed its international framework at the disposal of the peoples of the Danube countries, and that ‘*the Danube [would] become a symbol of the union of peoples, a symbol of Danube patriotism*’.<sup>77</sup>

68 See article Seipel.

69 Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, pp. 170–171.

70 See El Beheiri in this chapter, 1.3.

71 Donau-Union, 1932, p. 135.

72 Ibid. p. 127.

73 Ibid. p. 131.

74 Sundhaussen and Clewing, 2016, p. 261.

75 Paneuropakonferenz der Nachfolgestaaten, 1932, p. 61.

76 Ibid. p. 64.

77 Ibid.

#### **2.4. *United States of South-Eastern Europe – United States of Europe***

One year later, the conclusion of an ‘organisational pact’ between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia was initiated by the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš. The treaty, signed on 16 February 1933, was purely economic. The Little Entente had evolved from an alliance into a confederation of states – with 50 million people on 700,000 km<sup>2</sup>, RCK exulted.<sup>78</sup> In complete ignorance of the real political facts, he thought that the “*United States of South-Eastern Europe*’ would be created. These three states could therefore proudly claim to be the “*primeval cantons of the European Confederation*”.”<sup>79</sup> His plan was born in the context of the decisive changes in the political environment in Germany: Adolf Hitler had become Chancellor on 30 January 1933. In addition, two pacts inspired RCK to develop another unification concept. The first was the Mussolini Pact (as RCK called it), a four-power pact initiated by Italy on 15 July 1933 with France, Germany, and Great Britain. The second was the Litvinov Pact, as RCK called the non-aggression pacts with the Baltic states initiated by Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim M. Litvinov.<sup>80</sup> RCK feared the division of Europe into British and Russian zones of influence, proposing that small- and medium-sized European states should unite to form their own confederation rather than leaving the question of unification and organisation to the great powers.<sup>81</sup> This bloc of more than twenty states could be called the ‘United States of Europe’. It would always be defensive, never offensive, and therefore open to the accession of the great powers.<sup>82</sup> This European confederation would have to grant itself mutual economic preference, guarantee political protection against aggression, would have a federal court, and ensure the protection of minorities. Recognising that a bloc of twenty European states could not be created in one fell swoop, RCK proposed a gradual expansion. In the first place, the earlier ‘attempts at organisation’ of the Little Entente, the Baltic Union, and the Balkan Union would have to be extended. Attempts should be made to organise closer cooperation between Austria and Hungary, between Spain and Portugal, and between the Scandinavian States.<sup>83</sup> Finally, cooperation between the Oslo Convention States (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg) and Ouchy<sup>84</sup> (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) as well as the eight Central European States should be coordinated at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, which lasted with interruptions from 1932 until 1934. The initiative should be taken by Spain, the largest country and a neutral power. This confederation of states would, however, have to be drawn up on a legal basis. Therefore, at the Basel Congress in 1932, leading European lawyers declared their willingness to draft such a European pact.

78 Die neue Großmacht, 1933, p. 48.

79 Ibid. p. 53.

80 Block der Kleinstaaten, 1933, p. 193.

81 Ibid. p. 194.

82 Ibid. p. 197.

83 Ibid.

84 Halkelma-Kohl, 1932, pp. 620–629.



The ‘Paneuropean’ Commission of Lawyers met in Geneva on 28 September 1933. Unfortunately, there is no record of the Commission’s work.<sup>85</sup>

As early as August 1933, the journal ‘Paneuropa’ was banned in Germany, and soon after RCK’s books were also prohibited. Two months later, the Paneurope Union was dissolved by the Nazis, erasing one of the most important and, above all, financially strong sub-organisations. RCK had to look for new financial supporters.<sup>86</sup> By the end of 1933 at the latest, RCK was aware that the creation of Paneurope as a political union of states was utopian due to the political situation. He therefore began to concentrate on the economic unification of Europe, given the increasing economic dependence of various South-eastern European states on Germany. It was to this end that he organised the first Paneuropean Economic Conference, held in Vienna on 2 December 1933. The aim of the conference was to ‘*overcome the crisis in Europe and unite all European states into one economic area*’.<sup>87</sup> The conference was attended not only by economic theorists but also by entrepreneurs from Austria, France, Norway, Hungary, Romania, Greece, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland.<sup>88</sup> A ‘Paneuropean Economic Manifesto’ was drafted, which called for the creation of a large economic area to secure Europe’s ‘economic future and equality’, particularly in the face of the US, the UK, the Soviet Union, and the East Asian region.<sup>89</sup> At the suggestion of the former Romanian Foreign Minister Mihail Manoilescu, an Economic Bureau was established and had already begun work on organising another conference,<sup>90</sup> which took place between 16–18 May 1934, again in Vienna. The intention was to move from words to action, establishing a Paneuropean Economic Council that was to be chaired by the French minister Joseph-Honoré Ricard and would serve to intensify the cooperation between European governments.<sup>91</sup> Besides the Austrian delegation, representatives from France, Spain, Romania, and Czechoslovakia attended the conference.<sup>92</sup>

### ***2.5. United States of Eastern Europe***

When Yugoslavia, Greece, Romania, and Turkey formed the so-called Balkan Pact on 9 February 1934 to secure their common borders against aggression from other Balkan countries,<sup>93</sup> RCK saw this as a further step on the road to European unification: ‘*the area that was once the most troubled in Europe is being transformed*

85 Ziegerhofer, 2022, p. 203.

86 Ziegerhofer, 2004, p. 117.

87 Paneuropäische Wirtschaftskonferenz, 1933, p. 253.

88 Detailed II. Paneuropa Wirtschaftskonferenz Wien, Mai 1934, pp. 1–28.

89 Paneuropäisches Wirtschaftsmanifest, 1934, p. 1.

90 Ziegerhofer, 2004, p. 294.

91 II. Paneuropa Wirtschaftskonferenz, 1934, p. 20.

92 Ibid. Subsequently, on 15 May 1935, a Pan-European Economic Centre was established in the House of Federal Legislation under the auspices of the Austrian Federal Government see: Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, p. 310.

93 Sundhaussen and Clewing, 2016, p. 124.

into a pillar of European peace'.<sup>94</sup> RCK saw this new Balkan Entente as a continuation of the Little Entente in the South, particularly since Yugoslavia and Romania had been members of the former. The 'reconstruction of Europe from the East' could only work if a '*modus vivendi [...] with Bulgaria and Hungary*'<sup>95</sup> was found. These two revisionist states would have to be accommodated in matters of national minorities and economic necessities, RCK suggested.<sup>96</sup> He attributed to Poland, '*the only great power in the Eastern European area*', a crucial role in the realisation of the United States of Eastern Europe. The latter could be a bridge between the Balkan Entente and the establishment of a Baltic pact between Estonia and Latvia, which was currently under negotiation. In this way, the United States of Eastern Europe could be formed on the basis of the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente, and the Baltic Union '*from the Arctic Sea to the border of Persia*'. The only precondition would be the reconciliation of Poland and Lithuania.<sup>97</sup> RCK dreamed that '*in this part of Europe [begins] the consolidation of peace and political construction, while the skies of Western Europe are increasingly darkening*'.<sup>98</sup>

The Czechoslovak Prime Minister Milan Hodža undertook another measure to alleviate the problems in the agricultural sector by proposing the establishment of a grain centre in Vienna in January 1936.<sup>99</sup> In order to minimise dependence on Germany, the plan (which was not implemented) aimed to stimulate the exchange of goods between the agricultural East and the industrial West. The first meeting of the Paneuropean Economic Centre, held in Vienna from 27 to 28 January 1936, was also devoted to this idea.<sup>100</sup> In order to reduce potential inequalities, RCK immediately drew up his own plan for a Paneuropean Agricultural Commission. However, when the Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg rejected this plan as well, the conference participants agreed on the organisation of an agricultural conference in autumn 1936.<sup>101</sup> Following the meeting of the Economic Centre, RCK opened the first Paneuropean Danube Conference in Vienna,<sup>102</sup> which the Hungarian economist Elemer Hantos had played a leading role in organising. This meeting resulted in the expression of the intention to convene a conference of the Danube states, in which Austria would act as a bridge to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria. This proposal was favourably received by the '*Comité permanent pour le rapprochement des pays danubiens et la Pologne*', but was not implemented.<sup>103</sup>

94 Balkanpakt, 1934, p. 34.

95 Ibid. p. 36.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid. p. 37.

98 Ibid. p. 38.

99 Feierabend, 1936, pp. 77–81; Hodža in Wien, 1936, pp. 93–94.

100 Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, p. 315.

101 Ibid. p. 316 sowie Erste paneuropäische Agrar-Konferenz, 1936; Ergebnisse der ersten paneuropäischen Agrar-Konferenz, 1936.

102 Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004, p. 316.

103 Ibid. p. 317.

When Hodža signed a trade treaty with Chancellor Schuschnigg in Vienna on 2 April 1936, RCK proposed that the reason for the meeting was to ‘renew and build on the spirit of Locarno, at the Danube’.<sup>104</sup> RCK saw the visit as a major event and ‘the first such treaty on a preferential basis between a power of the Little Entente and the Roman pact system: the first bridge between these two hitherto antagonistic systems of states in Central Europe’.<sup>105</sup> Previously, RCK had devoted the March issue of the Paneurope Economic Journal to the economy of the Danube region.<sup>106</sup> France, Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia were invited to contribute.

### **2.6. Danube Europe – Europe of the Successor States**

In 1935, RCK once again referred to the two ‘Völkerströme’:<sup>107</sup> the Rhine and the Danube. For him, the Rhine was Western Europe’s fateful river, the Danube that of Eastern Europe. Alluding to the Locarno Treaties of 1925, RCK stated that the attempt to synthesise the two ‘rivers’ had begun on the Rhine. Since the Franco-German policy of rapprochement had failed, he concluded that ‘*the Danube question is at the centre of European interest*’.<sup>108</sup> Once again, RCK mentioned the idea of a Danube Europe based on the Swiss model, hoping that ‘*the European nation-states of the East would become larger cantons of a greater Switzerland*’,<sup>109</sup> presumably to avoid any thoughts of restoration. The first and most important institution of ‘Danube Europe’ would be a federal court that would guarantee equal rights for minorities. Joint military, economic, and foreign policy cooperation would follow in later stages.<sup>110</sup> Due to its geographical location, size, international culture, and tradition, only Vienna could be considered as the centre of ‘Danube Europe’. In 1937, RCK contemplated replacing the politically occupied term ‘Danube Europe’ and proposed the term ‘Successor States’, which was new in international law after the end of the First World War.<sup>111</sup> The term ‘Successor States’ was understood to mean Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland, and Italy. According to RCK, it would have been possible to unite these states in a political and economic community. This would have created a European metropolitan area twice the size of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

RCK considered the terms Danube States, Danube Bloc, and Danube Europe to be incorrect because the term Danube States implied ‘*exclud[ing] Italy from the system and [including] Germany and Bulgaria*’.<sup>112</sup> Because of its size, Germany would automatically

104 Hodža in Wien, 1936, p. 94.

105 Ibid. pp. 93–94.

106 Die Wirtschaft im Donaauraum, 1936, pp. 1–14.

107 Donau-Europa, 1935, p. 309.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid. p. 310.

110 Ibid. p. 301.

111 Nachfolgestaaten statt Donaustaaten, 1937, p. 6.

112 Ibid. p. 8.

regain the lead in this system. Therefore, Germany could only be a neighbour but not a member of the future Central European group of states. For the sake of clarity, RCK advocated using the term ‘Successor States’ instead of ‘Danube States’.<sup>113</sup> This would include Poland and could connect the Little Entente and the alliance Italy had formed with Austria and Hungary. He stated, ‘*the renewal of the system of Successor States would also be economically justified [...] and would be suitable [...] to form the core of a future unification of Europe*’.<sup>114</sup> Central Europe expert Elemer Hantos was much more realistic. He disagreed with the RCK’s demand to rename ‘Danube Europe’ as ‘Successor States’: the term ‘Danube Europe’, according to the controversial expert, is an officially defined one. The six states that make up ‘Danube Europe’ form a group of countries with approximately equal economic and cultural development opportunities, and not so much a distinction from Italy and Germany.<sup>115</sup> In 1971, in order to avoid misunderstandings, RCK referred to the belt of states between the Soviet Union and Central and South-eastern Europe as ‘Intermediate Europe’.<sup>116</sup>

In March 1938, events in Austria reached a climax that also affected the Coudenhove-Kalergi family. On the night of 12 March 1938, when Austria was ‘annexed’ by Nazi Germany, the family fled to Bratislava, then via Budapest, Zagreb [Agram], and Rome to Switzerland.<sup>117</sup> On 29 September, Germany, Italy, France, and England signed the so-called Munich Agreement, which ordered the evacuation of the Sudeten German territories starting on 1 October 1938.<sup>118</sup> RCK lost his Czechoslovak citizenship and soon after took French citizenship.<sup>119</sup> The Little Entente ceased to exist after the Munich Agreement.<sup>120</sup> The same applied to other alliances, which had to give way to the alliances of belligerent states. The family spent the Second World War in exile in the US,<sup>121</sup> returning to Europe in 1946. In 1947, RCK founded the European Parliamentary Union (EPU)<sup>122</sup> and in 1954 he reactivated the Paneuropean Movement in Baden-Baden, Germany. At the eighth Pan-European Congress in Bad Ragaz (Switzerland) in 1958, Otto Habsburg was among the speakers. Coudenhove-Kalergi first met him in 1939 and finally proposed Otto Habsburg as his successor as President of the Pan-Europa Union in 1960.<sup>123</sup> In 1950, RCK was the first person to receive the Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, and in 1966 he was awarded the Charlemagne Prize (Karl IV) of the Sudeten German Landsmannschaft.<sup>124</sup> Until the end of his life, he worked for world peace and remained a strong advocate for the unification of Europe,

113 Ibid. p. 9.

114 Ibid.

115 Hantos, 1937, p. 106.

116 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1971, p. 34.

117 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1966, pp. 22–224.

118 Hürten, 1995, pp. 306–310.

119 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1943, p. 208.

120 Sundhaussen and Clewing, 2016, p. 489.

121 Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2003, pp. 3–26.

122 Detailed Posselt, 1987.

123 Fundamental Baier, 2006. See in this chapter 4.3.

124 Europa-Gesellschaft Coudenhove-Kalergi, 2010, p. 251.

which he perceived as crucial for consolidating peace. This had become increasingly relevant since the Iron Curtain divided Europe into East and West. His main focus was on political developments in Eastern Europe.<sup>125</sup> The tireless fighter for a united Europe died on 25 July 1972 in Schruns, Vorarlberg. His grave is in Gstaad.

### **Summary**

RCK had observed the political situation in Europe during the inter-war period very carefully but he had not always interpreted it correctly. RCK saw the reconciliation between Germany and France as a basic requirement for the creation of Paneurope. However, this was not foreseeable at the beginning of the movement, which is why RCK saw the nucleus of Paneurope in the Little Entente, a project heavily supported by France. Thus, RCK had to defend himself repeatedly against accusations that Paneurope was under French influence. The Locarno Treaties offered a glimmer of hope for the Franco-German rapprochement that Briand and Stresemann were striving for, but Stresemann's untimely death in 1929 shattered all hopes. With the rejection of Briand's memorandum in 1930 at the latest, this aim had become a distant dream. The Paneuropean movement was at its zenith, but at the same time, its decline was inevitable. RCK now relied on alliances between states in Central and Eastern Europe, primarily to contain French and German influence. The rise of National Socialism in Germany, an increasingly aggressive Italy, and the agrarian crisis resulting from the Great Depression may also have contributed to RCK's reorientation of Paneurope. The aim was then to create an economically rather than politically united Paneurope. In the end, RCK's efforts failed due to the spread of nationalistic and totalitarian ideologies across Europe that led the continent into another terrible world war. It was only after the end of the Second World War that the European states were ready to establish a European Community, a European Union – and RCK was one of its pioneers.

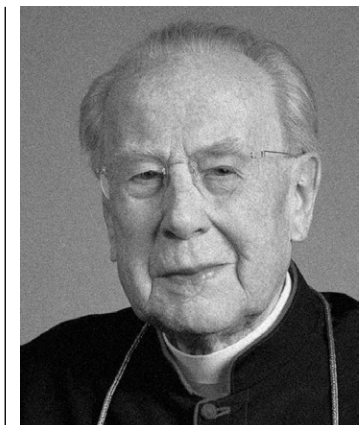
## **3. Cardinal Franz König (1905–2004)<sup>126</sup> and Europe**

Annemarie FENZL

The coalescing and unification of the 'Continent of Europe' as a community of states, the reflection on its common roots and the preservation of its spiritual heritage as a liveable habitat for all people of the continent was a theme that accompanied Cardinal König throughout his long life (1905–2004), as it was deeply aligned with his nature.

125 See Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1971.

126 DAW/Fotosammlung/Kardinal König, Portrait Kardinal König (kathbild.at/Franz Josef Josef Rupprecht). The photograph is from the archive of kathbild.at / Franz Josef Rupprecht and used here with the permission of kathbild.at / Franz Josef Rupprecht.



### 3.1. Life

Cardinal König's life almost stretched across the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>127</sup> Born on 3 August 1905 in Rabenstein, Lower Austria, into simple rural surroundings, the inquisitive boy's path led him from the confines of his homeland to the Benedictine grammar school in Melk, and after graduating from high school with distinction in 1927, he went to Rome to study philosophy and theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He became a consecrated priest in Rome in 1933, and from 1934 to 1937 was a chaplain in the diocese of St. Pölten, his hometown, and provided practical pastoral care in Altpölla,

Neuhofen an der Ybbs, St. Valentin, and Scheibbs to the common people. He also completed his theological studies during this time and was awarded a doctorate in theology in 1936. From 1936 to 1937, he studied law for two semesters on a scholarship at the University of Lille in northern France, where he also worked in pastoral care. From 1938, Dr. König, appointed by his bishop as cathedral curate in St. Pölten, was also the unofficial youth director of his home diocese. In 1945, he was transferred to Krems/Donau as a religion professor. Additionally, he habilitated in 1946 at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Vienna with his thesis *'Der Jenseitsglaube im Alten Testament und seine Parallelen in der Religion des Zarathustra (Belief in the afterlife in the Old Testament and its parallels in the religion of Zarathustra)'* as a private lecturer in religious studies in the subject of the Old Testament. He became an accomplished expert on the ancient Iranian religion of Zarathustra. In the following year, he was called to Salzburg as an associate professor of moral theology. On 31 May 1952, Pope Pius XII appointed him as titular bishop of Livias and coadjutor with the right of succession to Bishop Michael Memelauer of St. Pölten, who consecrated him bishop in the Cathedral of St. Pölten on 31 August 1952. In the fall of the same year, he was given the task of youth issues at the Austrian Bishops' Conference, and subsequently the duties of a press bishop.

#### 3.1.1. Archbishop of Vienna

After just four years, on 10 May 1956, he was appointed as Archbishop of Vienna as successor of Cardinal Theodor Innitzer, who died in 1955. On 17 June, he was ceremoniously enthroned in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. As his motto, he chose a passage from Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians: *'Veritatem facientes in caritate – speak the truth in love'* (Eph 4:15). On 15 December 1958, he was received into the College of Cardinals by Pope John XXIII. On 21 February

127 See: Fenzl and Moser, 2014.

1959, Cardinal König was appointed as the first military vicar of the Austrian Armed Forces.

As Archbishop of Vienna, Franz König was a proponent and driving force of pastoral care that reached out to people. He personally made hundreds of visits to parishes, schools, and businesses to make personal contact with the youth and working people. The modest churchman played a significant role in the church in Austria breaking away from its traditional one-sided political ties to the bourgeois camp. Despite the difficult disputes in which he was engaged about ‘fristenlösung’ (*time-phase solution for the termination of pregnancy*), which he described as an ‘open wound’ until his death, Cardinal König’s legacy continues to embrace ideological peace in Austria today.

At the level of the universal church, Franz König made his first appearance at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which was chaired by Pope John XXIII on 25 January 1959, where he would eventually become a leading personality. It was – in his own words – the ‘high time’ of his life. In countless speeches, sermons, essays, and lectures he tried in the following years to bring the Council closer to the people, and he continued to do so even after his retirement as Archbishop of Vienna, perhaps then even more strongly than during his active times.

Cardinal König also made the pioneering impulses of the Council fruitful in his diocese by convening the Vienna Diocesan Synod (1969–1971). This, along with the Austrian Synodal Process (ÖSV) held in 1973/1974, set the course for an internal renewal of the Church in the spirit of the Council, including its archdiocese.

In 1985, he handed over his well-ordered archdiocese, which he had guided calmly and without extreme polarisation in a time of great social and ecclesiastical upheaval – always aware that a bishop’s first tasks are to integrate, to listen, to wait, and to connect. In June of the same year, he was elected president of the international Catholic peace movement Pax Christi for the next five years.

For almost twenty years, interrupted again and again by many pastoral tasks and journeys, he worked as a ‘Chaplain in the elderly people’s home of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus’ in Vienna-Gumpendorf. To everyone’s amazement, he recovered quickly from a fractured femur he suffered in Mariazell in the summer of 2003 and had already resumed his pastoral duties in the fall of the same year, almost as if nothing had happened. After escorting his friend Franz Zak, the former bishop of St. Pölten, to his final resting place on 11 February 2004, he accepted an honorary doctorate from the University of Cluj on 18 February 2004 as a sign of the coalescence of Europe. Eventually, his strength left him. The theme ‘Europe’ had become even more important in the last years of his life.

In the early hours of 13 March 2004, Cardinal König died in his apartment in the retirement home of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus – in the truest sense of the word, as it used to be said, ‘*sleeping blissfully in the Lord*’. His death caused sincere sadness and consternation in all camps, and his funeral in St. Stephen’s was an impressive

and above all consoling demonstration of his firm Christian conviction, expressed again and again, that death does not have the last word in the life of the believer. What remains of Cardinal Franz König is, among other things, a concern for the slow merging of Europe.

### 3.2. Europe

Cardinal König's thoughts always pointed to the future. The topic of 'Europe' had occupied him for a long time. In 1983, together with Karl Rahner, he had published an anthology entitled 'Europe – Horizons of Hope'<sup>128</sup>, which brought together renowned authors from Cardinal Ratzinger to Leszek Kolakowski and Richard von Weizsäcker.

For Cardinal König, a future common Europe that would grow together was, above all, a guarantee for peace. In terms of the basic structure of his being, he has always had great understanding for a 'whole Europe' consisting of the East and West of the continent. Although he did not close his eyes to the number of difficulties involved, he supported the process of European unification to the end of his life to the best of his ability out of deep inner conviction in countless statements, but also through his actions.

On closer examination, three lifelines can be discerned here in particular, which repeatedly converged and connected with each other in the Cardinal's work.

- Personal prerequisites, such as openness and curiosity since childhood, no fear of contact with the unfamiliar, but rather a strong and positive interest in other countries, people, and languages, combined with a firm point of view, with the ability to listen to and seriously consider other opinions – in other words, the ability to engage in dialogue and a keen sense of commonality, came to fruition repeatedly in concrete life situations, which Cardinal König liked to describe as coincidences.
- As a Roman Curia Cardinal and head of one of the three Vatican Secretariats 'for the non-believers' established in the wake of Pope Paul VI's Council, numerous initiatives and contacts in talks between Christians and Marxists, in the West as well as in the East of Europe, were also, so to speak, part of the duties assigned to him by the highest authority.
- His deep conviction that only a unified Christianity can be capable of a fruitful and successful dialogue with the other major world religions in the service of peace was not least the driving force behind his ecumenical efforts, which resulted in the founding of the ecumenical foundation 'Pro Oriente' on November 21, 1964, still during the Council period.

Erhard Busek (+13 March 2022), with whom the Cardinal had a long friendship, had once assessed the success of his countless contacts with church institutions in the former Eastern Bloc thus: *'the collapse of 1989 would not have occurred as it did without*

| 128 König and Rahner, 1983. |



*the reference point of Cardinal König, because he used and expanded the rust holes in the Iron Curtain in order not only to promote the freedom of faith'.<sup>129</sup>*

### **3.3. Decisive events and life situations**

#### *3.3.1. Varazdin 1960*

Cardinal König was the first 'Western' Cardinal to travel to Eastern Europe. On one of the first of these trips – on the way to the funeral of his colleague from the Germanicum, the ostracised Zagreb Cardinal Stepinac, in which he was the only bishop from the West who participated – he suffered a serious car accident on 13 February 1960 before Varazdin, in which his chauffeur was killed. In the weeks that followed while in the infirmary of the small provincial hospital there, for the first time, the Cardinal clearly recognised Austria's responsibility for its eastern neighbours due to its position in the heart of Europe. This was a responsibility of which he, whose archdiocese at that time was still surrounded on almost three sides by the Iron Curtain, had not previously been aware, as he later often remarked in amazement.

He repeatedly spoke about those weeks in the hospital in Varazdin and their importance for him:

On 10 February 1960, the news reached me in Vienna, as a then young archbishop, of the death of Cardinal Stepinac, who had been released earlier from his imprisonment but was confined to his home district, and who was one of my study colleagues from the Germanicum. For this reason, but also to show the historical ties of Vienna with Croatia from the time of the Monarchy, I wanted to try to attend the funeral. To my surprise, my request to the Yugoslav Embassy in Vienna for a visa was granted relatively quickly. So I drove to Graz on the evening of 12 February spent the night there, and continued the journey to Zagreb in the morning of 13 February. On our way we passed the small town of Varazdin. Immediately afterwards, on a winding forest road, our car skidded and drove directly into the flank of an oncoming truck. My driver was dead and my secretary and I were unconscious. I woke up in the hospital in Varazdin. The injuries were severe and, for me, partly life-threatening. The medical care of the communist hospital was eager to help according to the standards customary at the time. It was a stroke of luck that spiritual sisters were still able to serve there. In the days of convalescence that followed, I found myself alone in a small hospital room with only one thing in front of me: *a picture of Tito, then head of state in communist Yugoslavia*. At that time – as far as I remember – the question of what this accident meant in my life emerged for the first time. In a way I cannot quite explain, it was the thought, the idea: the Archbishop of Vienna

| 129 Fenzl and Moser, 2014, p. 191. |

should see in this accident a sign that he should also take care of the Church behind the Iron Curtain. With my trip to see Cardinal Mindszenty at the American Embassy in Budapest the year after next, I began my contacts with the bishops and Catholics of the East. It was then that I realized that the Iron Curtain is not only a geographical border, but also a barrier in people's hearts and psyches. So, for me, the name 'Stepinac' became the prelude to a new understanding – not only of communist Europe, but of Eastern Europe in general.<sup>130</sup>

### 3.3.2. 'Go to Budapest!' – Cardinal Mindszenty – 1963

From this time on, the Cardinal saw that his specific task as the Archbishop of Vienna was to overcome the isolation of the Church in the Communist sphere of power by establishing fraternal contacts of the Austrian Church with the neighbouring Churches in Eastern Europe. He thus began a consistent 'policy of visits' to countries behind the Iron Curtain. From the spring of 1963, on behalf of John XXIII, he regularly visited Cardinal Mindszenty, who was under house arrest in the American Embassy in Budapest, and from then on maintained contact with him, along with the task, which required a great deal of empathy, to, as Hansjakob Stehle put it, '*dampen Mindszenty's zeal, which had become rigid during the tragic years of suffering*' until he left his self-imposed exile in the autumn of 1971 and came to Rome and later to Austria and, according to his wish, found a resting place in Mariazell until the end of communism in 1989.<sup>131</sup>

### 3.3.3. The Second Vatican Council – 1962–65

An important station in Cardinal König's life was the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), solemnly announced by Pope John XXIII in 1959, with its opening to the world. It was here that he first made his presence felt on the global level.<sup>132</sup>

With the Council, the Catholic Church fundamentally opened up to the world: in the pastoral constitution 'Gaudium et Spes' (Hope and Joy) with the programme title 'The Church in the Modern World', the Council professed the social responsibility of the Church and said: '*the Catholic Church, moreover, impartially cherishes all that other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities have contributed and continue to contribute in cooperation to fulfil the same task*'.<sup>133</sup> In doing so, the Council desired

that Catholics will contribute to the right fulfilment of their task in the international community, seek an active and positive cooperation with the

130 Rectified verbally and printed many times, among others in the *Osservatore Romano* according to a MS of 27 January 2003; further in: König, 1994, p. 257; commented in Feichtlbauer, 2003, p. 121 f.

131 Stehle, 1985, p. 110.

132 The Basic Message of Vatican Council II, in: König, 1994, pp. 43 ff.

133 Rahner and Vorgrimler, 1998a, p. 549 f.

separated brethren who, together with them, profess the love of the Gospel and with all people who long for true peace.<sup>134</sup>

Express appreciation of other Christian churches and communities and a call for cooperation was the message the Council provided to all people of good intent.

In this context, the Council also dealt in depth with the phenomenon of atheism and the Church's attitude towards it, and came to the following conclusion:

The remedy for atheism can only be expected from a presentation of doctrine appropriate to the situation and from the life of integrity of the Church and its members. [...] And while the Church unequivocally rejects atheism, it sincerely confesses that all people, believers and non-believers, must work together for the right building of this world they live together in. That certainly can't happen without sincere and intelligent dialogue.<sup>135</sup>

This adventure of dialogue found an accomplished and interested partner in Cardinal König.

### 3.3.4. *Ecumenical efforts for the unity of Europe in the service of a united Christianity – foundation of 'Pro Oriente' on 17 November 1964 in Rome*<sup>136</sup>

As the Council opened the doors to other Christian denominations, especially the Orthodox Churches – with this foundation of his, the Cardinal seized the *kairos* (the opportune time) of this historic moment. In the decades up to the present day, the Foundation has been able to give platforms for theological dialogue and interpersonal relations with the countries of the East, above all through its international ecumenical symposia, which have always been underpinned by good human relations. Thus, Pro Oriente became a trademark for ecumenical dialogue with the churches of Orthodoxy and the Oriental Orthodox churches.

### 3.3.5. *Cardinal of the Curia and head of a secretariat for non-believers and the dialogue with them, as well as with followers of other world views – 'Usus docebit' (Just start and learn in the doing) – 1965*

In April 1965, Pope Paul VI, who faithfully completed the great work of his predecessor after the death of Pope John XXIII, entrusted Cardinal König with the direction of the Vatican 'Secretariat for Non-Believers',<sup>137</sup> which had been newly founded in the wake of the Council. The Cardinal held this position for fifteen years, until

134 Ibid.

135 Rahner and Vorgrimler, 1998b, 467 f.

136 Regarding Pro Oriente see, among others and above all: Veritati in Caritate – der Beitrag des Kardinals König zum Ökumenismus (Cardinal König's contribution to Ecumenism), ed. On behalf of the Pro Oriente Vienna Foundation Fund, by Theodor Piffl-Percevic and Alfred Stirnemann Tyrolia, 1981.

137 König, 1994c, p. 68.

1980. In this capacity, he intensified contacts with representatives of areligious humanism in the West as well as with those of state atheism in the East.

The first steps of the young secretariat were not easy. Several options were open; the task was to identify those that could best meet the Council's concern for dialogue,<sup>138</sup> which dealt with the most diverse manifestations of atheism in today's secularised world. An important instrument for Cardinal König had always been dialogue itself, conducted without prejudice. His culture of conversation, never condescending, never lecturing, above all listening, which was to a certain extent innate, was also the sustainable basis for good interpersonal contact, which the Cardinal recognised as an important prerequisite for necessary and fruitful conversations: *'if the Church wants to engage with the present – and this is one of the basic goals of the Council – then it must enter into conversation with this world'*.

Thus, the Cardinal, who had no fear of making contacts and on the contrary had a keen interest in people and their thinking and feeling, fulfilled the basic demand of the Council throughout his life. That demand is that the Church come to a dialogue with the world. Before one can convert the world, one must approach it and talk to it. This basic attitude has not lost its relevance even in the present time.

In this basic attitude, Cardinal König widened his contacts with representatives of areligious humanism in the West as well as state atheism in the East. However, he always resisted any form of political instrumentalisation of his work, stating that *'the church, even if you don't always want to believe it, is essentially concerned here with a religious problem, a pastoral problem'*.

It was at this time, in January 1965, that the Cardinal, in an article published in the *London Times*, also addressed the problem of religious freedom and the tolerance associated with it, in contrast to the atheistic intolerance in communist-occupied countries. He noted at the time, among other things:

Tolerance in spiritual matters is one of the fundamental convictions of contemporary humanity, even though we witness examples of intolerance on a daily basis. This tolerance is not based on indifference, but on respect for people's inner conscience. If communism does not want to eliminate itself from the spiritual development of the world, it will also take note of tolerance as an essential value in its own sphere, it will not be able to ignore man's personal choice of conscience in the long run.<sup>139</sup>

In a festive lecture to the 'Circolo di Roma' in 1974, he described the conversation with the representatives of state atheism in the East: *'as difficult and up to now practically hardly possible'*<sup>140</sup>, but here the same was true as for the often misunderstood Vatican policy towards the East: *'once a path has been identified as the right one, it*

138 See: Peter, 1985, p. 107.

139 *London Times*, January 1965.

140 Festive lecture to the 'Circolo di Roma' in 1974.

*must be pursued, even if the successes do not materialize overnight*'. Overall, he said, more trust in the church is needed, the future of which also represents the future of man: *'we believe in the church of the future because we believe in the human being who will never stop questioning himself'*.<sup>141</sup>

The development has undoubtedly proven the Cardinal right. The conversation between faith and non-belief is still ongoing – in new facets – and will probably remain so until the end of time. The year 1989 and above all the Pope from Poland have set new precedents in this regard.

### 3.3.6. *Travel to the East*

During these and the following years, Cardinal König made numerous visits to almost all of the Eastern States, with the main objective always being to meet with bishops, priests, and believers, to whom he made it clear that they had not been 'written off' by the West. These journeys earned him – unjustly, as he repeatedly asserted – the reputation of an expert on the East, even an 'Eastern diplomat' of the Vatican. He never saw himself that way. His visits were most likely made with the understanding, but never with an official order of the Vatican. However, his reports were carefully noted in Rome and now and then a diplomat from the Vatican followed in his footsteps.

In any case, the Archbishop's Palace in Vienna was a transit station for many bishops and cardinals from the East during those years. A regular guest at the time, besides the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stephan Wyszyński of Warsaw, was a certain Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Krakow.

Cardinal König saw his specific task as Archbishop of Vienna primarily in overcoming the isolation of the Church in the communist sphere of power by establishing sympathetic, fraternal contacts with the neighbouring Churches in Eastern Europe.<sup>142</sup> With the succinct statement, *'the Archbishop of Vienna is the closest bishop of the West to the East, and in this I saw my first legitimation'*<sup>143</sup>, he justified his trips and contacts, and in a realistic assessment of the situation, it was clear to him even then that:

Little Austria, by the way, not only owes its resurgence to the interaction of East and West, but can only exist if there is peace in Europe, and if the relations between East and West are peaceful relations. If my travels have helped to strengthen this idea a little as an Austrian bishop, then my efforts have not been in vain. And if they have helped to bring about certain changes – positive changes – in the atmospheric conditions in which the Catholics of these countries live, then these trips have also served the Church.<sup>144</sup>

141 Ibid.

142 See: König, 1968, pp. 104 ff.

143 König, 1975, p. 21.

144 Ibid.

Further, this was very important to him from the beginning:

As recently as about 15 years ago (i.e., about 1961), it was thought that any trip to the East would only promote a communist government. A trip to the East would be considered a betrayal, a stab in the back, especially by the Catholics of these countries. Nothing is more incorrect. On each of my trips I have felt the grateful joy of the people. The Catholics of these countries have taken the visits as proof that they are not forgotten by us, that they are not written off by us.<sup>145</sup>

Under the title ‘The task of the Archbishop of Vienna’,<sup>146</sup> Cardinal König laid his intentions openly on the table when he stated:

I have always emphasized that I have no special mission to fulfil on behalf of the universal Church, nor am I designated with conducting negotiations on behalf of the Vatican. For this purpose, the Vatican makes use of its diplomatic organisation. What I have done, I have always considered as the natural task of the Archbishop of Vienna. I certainly do not want to question the fact that recognizing and grasping this task was entirely in line with my personal views. Geography and history suggest that the Archbishop of Vienna should establish contact with his colleagues in the episcopate in the East [...] to listen to their wishes and to show by his presence and his presence in their homeland, that the Church has not written them off, has not forgotten them. [...] The difficult fate of the Catholics in the East could be eased in two ways: firstly, by a change in the political balance of power, and secondly, by adapting the Church to the existing balance of power. The first is called struggle in the extreme, the second is submission. The Church, as such, could not go one way or the other way, it could not call for political struggle, but neither for surrender. The Church had to try to reach a middle ground.<sup>147</sup>

This meant first ensuring a proper hierarchy through negotiation with governments – ‘*strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*’<sup>148</sup> – and second, achieving a minimum of impact beyond the cultic space, that is, religious education for the youth, religious press, and literature. Many concessions were made here and the outcome was mostly uncertain, but what other path would have been open? The Cardinal recalled the concept of ‘*coexistence necessary in terms of realpolitik*’ between the Church in the East and communism, which, denied by the communists, was simply a fact during the Cold War period. He drew the following consequences from this:

145 Ibid.

146 König and Barta, 1968, p. 106 f.

147 König, 1968, p. 106.

148 Ibid. p. 109.

We can only help Christians in these countries to be able to exist in such coexistence. That's what it's all about: existence, breathing spiritual air, relieving pressure. What we are waiting for is not the collapse of the system, not an official change of the communist doctrine. But we are waiting for the further development of an already existing discrepancy between theory and practice, between doctrine and life in these countries. This dichotomy, this divergence, can give that minimum of breathing space that is necessary, so that all spiritual and religious life is not suffocated. The Church must also try to place its foot in this gap, in order to guarantee the supply of a little fresh air through purely legal arrangements. [...] This fresh air can also come from Austria, it can come precisely from here. We are not only the closest, we are also the most related. [...] Vienna is the last stop for anyone going from the West to the East; and it is the first stop in the West for the visitor coming from the East. Austria is familiar to both. That's true for Christians, too, over here and over there.<sup>149</sup>

3.3.7. *European Serenade in Heroes' Square on 10 September 1983, during Pope John Paul II's first visit to Austria*

An hour that was undoubtedly moving for Cardinal König was the impressive and festive 'Europavesper' (European Vespers) on Vienna's Heldenplatz in the presence of Pope John Paul II. This was the place where the Cardinal was able to publicly express his conviction when, addressing the Pope directly, he confessed before a large crowd:

In our small country, on the dividing line of two worlds, with the Danube river connecting the West and the East, one can, one must speak of Europe. The Christian, that is European, foundations were laid down in our country as well by Christian missionaries, by martyrs from the time of the fall of the Roman Empire.

I think of St. Severin, the martyr of Florian. The Church of Lauriacum on the Enns, between Lower and Upper Austria, rests on the Roman remains of an ancient Christian basilica. Our country also rests on such Christian foundation that unites peoples. Irish monks, Scottish missionaries, came here from the Christian West to the East. The Slavic apostles Cyril and Methodius reached the area around Vienna with their Christianisation.

The historical and geographical openness of our country between West and East wants to tell us once again in this hour: We are still a country where you can talk about Europe, and should talk about Europe.<sup>150</sup>

149 König and Barta, 1968, p. 110.

150 See: König, 1994d, p. 301.

### 3.4. *Final years*

Even in the last years of his life, Cardinal König supported the process of European unification in many speeches and presentations, always referring to Europe's Christian roots and heritage and its responsibility for the future of mankind. In 1998, he wrote the following:

Today we have to ask ourselves: *'How far are we, as Europeans and as Christians, ready to be not only stewards of the past but also builders of the future?'* – The builders of a new Europe, of a new 'House of Europe', have also been knocking on our doors for some time. Many come and tell us: One should, one ought to [...]; there is a lot of interest, a lot of hope, a lot of good will, but only a few want to do something about themselves and not just make appeals to others. It is not enough to discuss the important problems of a common market in Europe; Perhaps Europe needs even more a common approach to recognise diversity in unity, and in unity not to suppress diversity, – in other words: Europe needs a spiritual face,<sup>151</sup>

Under the title 'Europe seeks its way' in a festive volume presented by the Federal Chancellor of the Republic for Austria's first EU Presidency in 1998, the Cardinal's contribution deliberately drew a wide arc once again. He looked back at the burden of history, the problems of the present, and provided an outlook into a future worth living for the coming generations.

The Cardinal was aware of the special opportunity Austria was being offered at the time. As had always been his way, he provided concrete solutions when he stated that the way to Europe leads through Central Europe:

From an Austrian point of view, new questions have arisen since the official accession to the EU. Austria is closely linked to Central or Mid Europe by its geography and history. In Austria, one is particularly aware of the difficulties of an eastern-western tension and is therefore on the lookout to find ways of connection. And that means:

First: As early as 1964, when Europe was still divided into two parts, the establishment of the Pro Oriente Foundation provided an opportunity to build bridges to the East from a Central European perspective. This Viennese foundation was made without a mandate from the Vatican, but was in a constant connection with it. The geographical and historical position of Vienna, a city whose name still has a purely good sound in the East of Europe, should be used for ecumenical conversation and for ecumenical encounters with Orthodoxy. Later, such opportunities also arose in connection with the ancient Orthodox Churches of the East (Copts, Syrians,

151 König, 1998, p. 38.



Armenians, Ethiopians, Syromalabars). The name Pro Oriente was therefore well chosen.

When recently Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople pointed out that through Pro Oriente a 'service of reconciliation' was rendered, and when the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, Aleksij II, spoke of 'hundredfold fruit' through the activity of Pro Oriente, then the bridging function of Pro Oriente was highly appreciated by the Eastern side. When Huntington (op. cit., 251, 508) speaks of a 'historical divide' that '*for centuries has separated the Christian peoples of the West*' from the 'Muslim and Orthodox peoples,' the Pro Oriente Foundation was one of the first to build bridges for the larger Europe through its ecumenical work in Central Europe.

Second: Western Europe is not Europe, but only a part of it, and cannot determine the path of Europe through money and economic dominance alone. The desire and will of the Eastern European group of states to be included in the European Union is of great importance for the future of Europe. Therefore, if the finance ministers in Western Europe decide alone and determine the conditions for admission, this may promote a deep disappointment and turn away Eastern Europe from Europe.

Third: The history of Central Europe is still a force that connects states and nations in the middle of Europe in a special way. What was built in Central Europe during the time of the Habsburg Monarchy still exists as a sense of mutual connectedness, across all historical events. Austria has a major task here: to rebuild old European ties.

Fourth: For Austria, therefore, there is a need to awaken and promote interest in the Slavic languages in Central Europe; it is obvious that learning Slavic languages should be recommended to the young generation in Austria.

Fifth: For these reasons, Austria's path to Europe leads *via Central Europe*. For here, on the eastern and southern borders of Austria, Christians of different denominations and languages, Germanic, Slavic and Roman meet, which has been and still is of special significance in the history of Europe. This is a cultural wealth for the future of Europe that is not yet sufficiently recognised today in Western Europe.<sup>152</sup>

### ***Final chord***

In a broader sense,<sup>153</sup> Europe was also the subject of the Cardinal's last public appearance when, less than a month before his death, he received an honorary doctorate from the Romanian University of Cluj/Klausenburg. In view of his already weakened overall condition, those around him considered whether this strenuous honour at the university – also in view of the twelve honorary doctorates he had already been awarded – was absolutely necessary. The Cardinal answered simply,

152 König, 1998, p. 35 f.

153 König, 2014, p. 192.

*'It is a university from the East and it is about Europe'*<sup>154</sup>. He precisely and carefully composed his words of gratitude, as always, and gave his last address on 18 February 2004, barely a month before his death:

In this festive hour, I am particularly concerned to point out some things that are close to my heart: Europe is much more than the European Union. The countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in their diversity, some of which are predominantly Orthodox, are an essential part of this [...] The common historical destiny, the cross-border appeal of common symbols, spiritual culture and religion makes it clear that religion and Christian faith have shaped the spiritual face of the whole of Europe from the beginning. [...] The year 1989 brought freedom and self-determination to the peoples and churches of Eastern Europe. This historic turning point and the ongoing enlargement of the European Union are a historic opportunity for the 'Europeanisation' of the entire continent, as John Paul II said.<sup>155</sup>

With regard to the sometimes somewhat arrogant West, he continued:

[...] The countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe are not only in need of support, but they also bring a lot to the Europe that is growing together. Above all, they bring the experience of how to survive in dignity under the conditions of an inhuman regime. They bring rich cultural, spiritual and religious traditions, especially those of the predominantly Orthodox countries, and are thus a tremendous enrichment for the whole of Europe. In this sense, I would like to recognise today's honour by the oldest university in Romania, – a country that I have come to know and appreciate over the course of many years, – not only in terms of myself. Rather, I would like to place the academic deed in the wide context of the new building of our continent with its Christian heritage – to be answered jointly today by both East and West.<sup>156</sup>

He bravely endured the strenuous ceremony in the Great Ceremonial Hall of the University of Vienna because he wanted to, but he never recovered from the ordeal. Still, alongside the funeral of his friend Bishop Zak of St. Pölten on 11 February – his last public liturgical appearance in the church where he had been ordained bishop – God could not have given him a more beautiful final chord on 13 March 2004.

154 The cardinal's oral statement to the secretariat.

155 Ibid. p. 192 f.

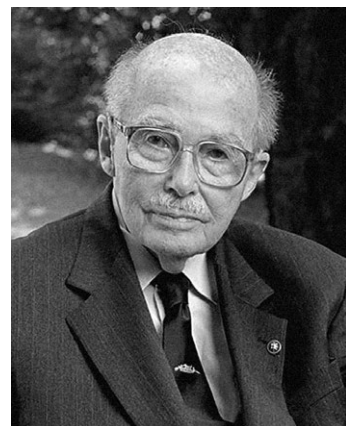
156 Ibid.

## 4. Otto von Habsburg, a European Giant (1912–2011)<sup>157</sup>

Nadja EL BEHEIRI

### 4.1. Childhood in the course of time

Shortly after the death of Otto von Habsburg, the son of the last emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Jerzy Buzek, the President of the European Parliament, called him a ‘European giant’ and a leading figure in process of European integration.<sup>158</sup> His life was deeply linked to Europe, albeit in a completely different manner than that which the House of Habsburg had initially planned. Many people saw him as a beacon of hope in Europe and several books had already been published about his ideas and destiny during his lifetime. The first portrait was written in 1932 by Karl von Werkmann, former personal secretary of the emperor Karl.<sup>159</sup> The focus of this book was on the young archduke’s position in the structure of the new European order. The most detailed biography was compiled by Stephan Baier and Eva Demmerle, who provided a highly interesting collection of letters and other testimonies related to the life and work of Otto von Habsburg.<sup>160</sup>



Otto von Habsburg was born in 1912, two years before the assassination of heir-to-the-throne Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. With the death of the designated successor of Franz Joseph, the son of one of Franz Ferdinand’s brothers, Karl, became the candidate for the Austrian and Hungarian throne. When Franz Joseph died in 1916 after the start of the first World War, Karl succeeded him as the emperor of Austria and king of Hungary. While the Austrian part of the Monarchy did not require a formal enthronement, a solemn coronation ceremony was held in Hungary. Little Otto also took part in this event, and he was to remember this

157 Otto Habsburg-Lothringen portrait by Oliver Mark, Pöcking 2006. Author: Oliver Mark, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International, source of the picture: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oliver\\_Mark\\_-\\_Otto\\_Habsburg-Lothringen,\\_P%C3%B6cking\\_2006.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oliver_Mark_-_Otto_Habsburg-Lothringen,_P%C3%B6cking_2006.jpg).

158 Otto von Habsburg Foundation: Biography [Online]. Available at: <https://habsburgottoalapitvany.hu/en/biography/> (Accessed: 17 May 2023).

159 Werkmann, 1932.

160 Demmerle and Baier, 2007. Demmerle was a close collaborator of Otto von Habsburg over many years, and Stephan Baier was his assistant in the European Parliament and his press officer. The authors also offer a detailed list of books written by and dedicated to the life of Otto von Habsburg.

ceremony all his life.<sup>161</sup> Karl's time as leader of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was short. A few days after the Armistice of 11 November that led to the end of World War I, the emperor signed two declarations (one for Austria and another for Hungary) renouncing all participation in state affairs avoiding a formal abdication from the throne. Shortly after, the imperial family fled the country and found exile in Switzerland. After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the situation concerning the preservation of the Monarchy was very different in Austria and Hungary. In Austria, a republic was installed and there was no continuity between the former empire and the new country. In Hungary after the collapse of the Socialist Republic of Councils, the National Assembly decided that Hungary would remain a kingdom. Still, in 1926, the second National Assembly passed a law that provided a seat in the Upper House for the Archdukes of the House of Habsburg. This law somehow had the effect of a neutralisation of that adopted in 1921.<sup>162</sup> Regarding the question who should be the king two options were taken into consideration. One group considered that Karl and the Habsburg dynasty lost the right to the throne because they had left the country during wartime, and that Hungary should therefore elect a new king from among the Hungarian nobility. However, the representatives of the legitimist theory based on Pragmatic Sanction defended that the House of Habsburg had not lost the right to the throne. In view of this situation, Karl attempted to return to Hungary twice and regain the throne. His second attempt failed due to the determined resistance of the regent Miklos Horthy. In Hungary, the National Assembly declared that the sovereign rights of the King were extinguished. Switzerland no longer granted exile to the royal family and the Entente resolved to exile the family to the Portuguese island of Madeira. Only a few months after his arrival on the island, Karl died in the presence of his eldest son. Otto always looked to this moment and his father's life as a guideline for his own thoughts and actions. Karl's widow Zita emigrated with her children to Spain, where the children of the last active emperor of Austria and King of Hungary received a humanistic and academic preparation for an uncertain future.

#### ***4.2. Main life events***

Otto von Habsburg completed his high school studies following the Austrian and Hungarian curriculum. Many of his Hungarian teachers came from the Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma. As one of the most important centres of spirituality, Pannonhalma played an important role in shaping the young Habsburg's intellectual profile, and he was eventually buried in Archabbey. Together with a profound knowledge of Hungarian history, the young archduke owed to his teachers his predilection for Hungarian literature, especially for that of Sándor Petőfi and János Arany. In his later years, Otto von Habsburg also expressed his admiration for Sándor Márai. He may have felt some spiritual kinship with Márai, as the post-World

161 Demmerle and Baier, 2007, p. 63.

162 Szabó, 2006, pp. 171–189.

War I era was a time in which both had to fight for their identities. Further, both figures strove throughout their lives to promote a better understanding of the fate of the Hungarian people.<sup>163</sup>

The main interests of the young archduke were history, politics, and languages. He considered German and Hungarian to be his mother tongues and spoke fluent English, Spanish, French, and Croatian. He earned a degree from the University of Leuven, where he acquired a doctorate in political and social sciences in 1935. Otto von Habsburg's personal and political convictions were forged by the social teachings of the Catholic Church, in particular by the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* issued in 1931 and especially since his eighteenth birthday by his sense of duty as head of the House of Habsburg.<sup>164</sup> From the mid-1930s onwards, the young Habsburg became a dedicated fighter for Austria's independence. He proved to be one of the staunchest enemies of the National Socialist regime, and his foresight regarding the Jewish population is remarkable. Even before Hitler seized power, a German politician stated that the danger posed by Hitler should not be overestimated, Otto responded powerfully that democracy is tested and weighed where it concerns the right of minorities, especially those of unpopular ones.<sup>165</sup> In 1933, he was warned that a warrant had been issued for his arrest.<sup>166</sup> In July 1935, the laws on the expulsion of the imperial family were abolished and Otto together with the head of the Austrian government Kurt Schuschnigg seriously considered the possibility of his return to the German part of Austria and the restoration of the Monarchy. However, things were to turn out differently: Chancellor Schuschnigg signed an agreement with Hitler in July 1936, which subsequently led to the Anschluss in 1938. Due to his relentless resistance against the National Socialist movement, Otto von Habsburg eventually had to seek shelter in the United States of America via Paris. In America, he established a close relationship with President Roosevelt and was in contact with the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. In exile, he also met the founder and president of the Pan-European Movement, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi.<sup>167</sup> In the United States, the young Habsburg gave numerous lectures on European topics and thus began an activity that would accompany him throughout his life under various guises. Of particular significance is a speech he gave on 10 June 1942 in the library of the US Congress on the subject of 'Danubian Reconstruction'.<sup>168</sup> In this speech, which can be considered fundamental for his

163 Cf. the narration of Sándor Márai reproduced on the homepage of the Habsburg foundation. Márai recounts his experience when he opted for Hungarian citizenship by the end of the First World War. Otto von Habsburg Foundation: A Banal Event from 1922 [Online]. Available at: <https://habsburgottoalapitvany.hu/en/a-banal-event-from-1922/> (Accessed: 17 May 2023).

164 This provides a good picture of his social and political beliefs, as it is one of the first publications of the young Habsburg. The book is titled 'Soziale Ordnung von Morgen' and was translated into several languages. The English version was published in 1959. Cf. Habsburg, 1959.

165 Cf. the report of the Otto von Habsburg reproduced in Demmerle and Baier, 2007, p. 115.

166 Demmerle and Baier, 2007, p. 116.

167 On Coudenhove-Kalergi cf. Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, 2004.

168 Demmerle and Baier, 2007, p. 196.

later thinking, the twenty-eight-year-old once again spoke out against Hitler and also denounced Benes' plans to banish the Sudeten Germans. He also stated that the Danube region's culture was closer to that of Rome or Paris than it was to that of Berlin or the Balkans. To liberate the area from Hitler's dominion, he proposed the formation of an association of small states, which should subsequently give up part of their sovereignty to unite into a federation under the name the 'United States of the Danube Region'.<sup>169</sup> On this occasion, the young politician also advocated for the drafting of a 'Danubian bill of rights', which, among other issues, should address the rights of different ethnic groups.

After World War II, Otto von Habsburg moved back to Austria. Due to the pressure of the Allies and the reinstatement of the Habsburg Laws of 1920, he was then forced to leave the country again. He chose Germany as his new place of residence and married the German Princess Regina of Saxony-Meiningen in 1951. The couple had seven children. During the revolution of 1956, Otto intervened with the scope that the United Nations should recognise Hungary as a neutral state. In 1961, after the birth of his first son Karl, he issued a declaration resigning his membership from the House of Habsburg Lothringen and professed himself a loyal citizen of the Republic Austria.<sup>170</sup> Otto instilled an interest in political issues in his children and did not differentiate between male and female children. In time, Karl von Habsburg became a member of the European Parliament, his youngest son Georg worked as an ambassador in Hungary, and his daughter Walburga became a politician and played an active role in the process of the rapprochement between Eastern and Western Europe during the political transition in 1989. The Council of Ministers deemed this declaration insufficient and Otto – although he was considered to be an Austrian citizen – was denied the entrance to Austria in accordance with the laws of 1920. Otto von Habsburg applied to the Supreme Courts of the country and after a long, difficult legal and political discussion, the son of the last empire received an Austrian passport and was allowed to enter the country.<sup>171</sup> Otto von Habsburg's political activities from the end of the seventies onwards are linked to two entities: the Paneuropean movement and the European Parliament, where he served as a deputy from 1979 until 1999. In the course of his work in the European Parliament, he gave special attention to preserving and promoting minoritarian languages. He also gained a reputation for his Latin speech, which he delivered on the spot during the Plenary session of the European Parliament on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1979.<sup>172</sup>

169 Ibid. pp. 196–198.

170 Ibid. p. 273.

171 On the question of the legal status of the son of the last emperor of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy cf. Andics, 1965.

172 Otto von Habsburg Foundation: Was ist die wahre lingua franca? Otto von Habsburgs rede vor dem europaeischen parlament auf lateinisch [Online]. Available at: <https://habsburgottoalapitvany.hu/de/was-ist-die-wahre-lingua-franca-otto-von-habsburgs-rede-vor-dem-europaeischen-parlament-auf-lateinisch/> (Accessed: 17 May 2023).

Regarding the anti-nationalist orientation of the Paneuropean movement, it is worth remembering the words of Franz Werfel. The Jewish author, born on the territory of the former Monarchy, describes in his famous novel ‘Forty Days of Musa Dagh’ a dialogue between a pastor and a Muslim dignitary. The Muslim dignitary states that nationalism fills the burning void Allah leaves behind when he is expelled from the human heart.<sup>173</sup> For Otto von Habsburg, the European idea was always linked, on the one hand, to peoples’ right to self-determination and on the other hand to his deep faith in the Christian God. The political activity of the son of the last emperor of the Monarchy during the seventies and eighties was characterised by a tenacious commitment to Europe, especially to the countries behind the iron curtain. A culmination of his efforts was the so-called Pan-European Picnic on the 19 August 1989. On this occasion, the border between Austria and Hungary was opened for a symbolic period. Some six hundred people took advantage of this moment and fled to Western Europe. In a speech addressed to his Hungarian and Austrian compatriots, which was read by his daughter Walburga, he spoke of the end of the dark years of dictatorship and asserted solemnly that the dawn of freedom was already visible.<sup>174</sup> From that moment on, Otto became an active promotor of the enlargement of the European Union and the mutual understanding between the nations involved in this process.

### ***4.3. Cornerstones for a European Federation***

Otto von Habsburg saw the idea of a United Europe as his life’s mission. Regardless of the twists and turns of fate, he always remained faithful to his beliefs and found a suitable framework through which to work toward his ideals. Since his time in United States, he was giving many lectures and published numerous books. He based his convictions not on an elaborate scholarly framework but on his own life experiences and his profound knowledge of European history. He believed that federalism should be the first characteristic of a United Europe. In 1974, as president of the Paneuropean movement, he stated that single states in Europe were simply too small to face the challenges of the time and expressed his conviction that the nation-states of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not have a future from an economic nor from a political point of view.<sup>175</sup> He stated that the federalist structure of the planned union had the advantage of being able to expand territory without being imperialistic. Given the contractual organisation of federations, enlargement may be accomplished with ease while maintaining the independence of the new member states, which would always acquire rights and obligations through the extension of those already existing within the federation and by the free acceptance of new members. Regarding the territorial extension of Europe, for the archduke it was always evident that the countries behind the Iron Curtain were also part of the

173 Posselt, 2021, p. 26.

174 Demmerle and Baier, p. 465.

175 Ibid. p. 389.

community for which he was arguing. In a book edited in 1991, he observed with satisfaction that since 1989, a new solidarity had arisen among the people of the Danube region. He spoke about a new kind of friendship that was emerging between people from Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, and Bavaria, which had always existed in people's hearts.<sup>176</sup> Hungary stood at the top of this list, as Otto always attributed the country an outstanding role in the process of European unification. It is also striking that Bavaria was mentioned separately from the rest of Germany as a part of the Danube Federation. Habsburg, however, showed a positive attitude towards the reunited Germany and opposed all those suspicious about its size or history. In connection with the idea of *Mitteleuropa* – Central-Europe – he highlighted that it was crucial to take as a point of reference not the centralist tradition of the Bismark Empire but the federalist ideas of the Holy Roman Empire and the German Confederation. A second criterion for a united Europe was democracy. In his view, a democratic – even a direct democratic – approach was the best guarantee against dictatorial bureaucracies, and the state must be the guardian and promoter of natural law. Otto von Habsburg opted for a resolute and courageous definition of natural law as those eternally valid principles that the creator has given the world as an unwritten but living constitution.<sup>177</sup> This approach is similar to that which Benedict XVI used many years later in his address to the German Bundestag in 2011. Habsburg tried to find harmony between the objective aspects of natural law (the eternally valid principles), the subjective ones (as a living constitution concretisation of the natural law was up to the people using it), and its rootedness in the creator. He prioritised whichever form of state was best suited to safeguarding natural law;<sup>178</sup> the structure of the state relates to its content in the same manner in which the body relates to the soul.<sup>179</sup> Otto von Habsburg considered the function of a monarch to be at most that of a supreme guardian of the law. In this sense, the European politician perspective approached that of Carl Schmitt, who saw a strong head of state as the guarantor of the constitution.<sup>180</sup> Already in 1957, Otto von Habsburg claimed that in an ideal state, judicial power should prevail over legislative and executive power. Regarding Montesquieu's system of the separation of powers, he was of the opinion that experience since the French Revolution showed that a balance between the three powers was not a realistic option. Experience put into evidence that one of the three powers always gains the upper hand. He asserted that a key point in every constitutional state was that everyone who holds power as well as every citizen assumes a restriction of his rights. The task of the judicial power consists in being the guardian of these voluntarily accepted limitations.<sup>181</sup>

176 Habsburg, 1991, p. 22.

177 Demmerle and Baier, 2007, p. 249.

178 Ibid. p. 249.

179 Ibid. p. 249. On the notion of natural law used by Benedict XVI. in the German Parliament cf. El Beheiri, 2017, pp. 90–112.

180 Schmitt, 1929.

181 Habsburg, 1959, pp. 105–107.



From an economic point of view, Otto von Habsburg is aligned with economic theorist Wilhelm Röpke, with whom Habsburg met during his exile in the US.<sup>182</sup> After the end of World War II, Röpke wanted to support the transition of Germany from national socialism to a market economy, believing that the establishment of a free market was an important goal to attain. However, in order to protect weaker members, the state would have to regulate the free market through laws and participants would have to hold themselves to legal and ethical standards.

Subsidiarity was another essential feature of the union for which the archduke advocated,<sup>183</sup> following the definition given in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*. According to the church's social teaching, the principle of subsidiarity is founded on human dignity and aims to protect personal freedoms. The encyclical states that *'a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depraving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help'*<sup>184</sup>. At the same time, the term subsidiarity comes from the Latin word 'subsidium' – help – and the principle of subsidiarity therefore also requires an attitude of support, promotion of welfare, and development. In view of the specific characteristics of the European Union, the politician mentions further aspects connected with the principle of subsidiarity. According to Habsburg, the people's right to self-determination is independent from the number of people belonging to a specific group or minority. Small ethnic groups in nation-states should have the same civil liberties as large nations. In practice, subsidiarity might oblige smaller units to transfer their competencies to larger units if they cannot fulfil them satisfactorily. From Habsburg's perspective, this criterion applies above all in foreign- and security-policy issues.<sup>185</sup>

### **Conclusion**

All of the events of Otto von Habsburg's life were closely linked to the ideal of a United Europe. He was a tireless fighter for peace and understanding between nations and people. He envisioned the nations of the Danube Monarchy united through an agreement freely accepted by all parties at the core of the new Europa. The protection and preservation of minorities played a key role in the agenda of the son of the last emperor of the Monarchy. According to the vision of this passionate representative of the new order, federalism, democracy, a moderate market economy, subsidiarity, Christianity, and natural law should be the fundamental values of the European community. Those values still bear an inspirational power for the challenges Europe faces.

182 Demmerle and Baier, 2007, p. 251. On Röpke cf. Ortiz, 2017.

183 Demmerle and Baier, 2007, p. 389. On the term of subsidiarity according to the social teachings of the Church cf. Guitián, 2017, No. 109.

184 Guitián, 2017, p. 45.

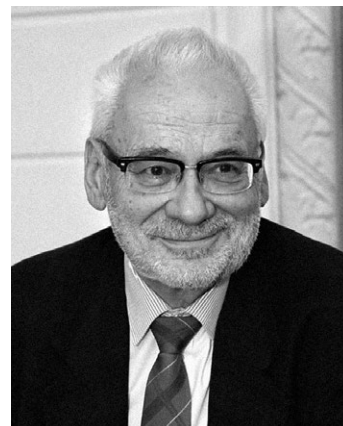
185 Demmerle and Baier, 2007, pp. 548–549.

## 5. Erhard Busek: *Homo politicus* and European visionary (1941–2022)<sup>186</sup>

Nadja EL BEHEIRI

### 5.1. Biographical data and political career

Erhard Busek was born in Vienna in 1941 and died there on the 13 March 2022. Busek was a professional politician; his commitment to politics was shaped, on the one hand, by his passion for Europe and, on the other hand, by his conviction that education is an essential prerequisite for elevating living conditions on all levels.<sup>187</sup> The roots of his family on the father's side stretched back to Silesia, those on his mother's side to Bavaria. Busek felt deeply rooted in Vienna and identified with Rousseau's statement that '*What you are, you become through Paris*'. Vienna moulded his identity.



The capital of Austria has always been a linchpin between East and West. This feature of the city influenced Busek's engagement in local government as well as his dedication to the countries that lay beyond the Iron Curtain until 1989. In his childhood, he experienced the country's endeavours to rebuild itself after the Second World War. Austria and more specifically Vienna was his homeland (*heimat*) in the most noble sense of the word. As a politician, he profoundly understood the situation of the many refugees that sought protection and often a new homeland in Austria due to different crises. He stated that '*homeland must be granted. But a homeland can only be offered by those who seek it for themselves and are then able to share it with others*'.<sup>188</sup>

Although he wanted to study history, as it seemed difficult to link a diploma in history to a specific professional future, he decided to attend law school. However, his interest in history influenced his intellectual biography. From a very young age, he was also an engaged catholic. As his father belonged to the Lutheran Church

186 Dr. Erhard Busek. Author: Franz Johann Morgenbesser from Vienna, Austria, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic, source of the picture: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2014\\_Erhard\\_Busek-5839\\_\(14547887566\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2014_Erhard_Busek-5839_(14547887566).jpg).

187 Busek published various autobiographical texts. The most recent dates from 2014. For interesting insides cf. also the conversation with Anita Ziegerhofer and Franz Schausberger in 2021. Karl von Vogelsang Institut: Politische Erinnerungen [Online]. Available at: [http://www.vogelsanginstitut.at/at/?page\\_id=3192](http://www.vogelsanginstitut.at/at/?page_id=3192) (Accessed: 17 May 2023).

188 Busek, 2014, p. 19.

and his mother to the Catholic Church, he always felt united to the ecumenical movement. During his high school and university studies, he took an active part in catholic youth movements (Katholische Hochschuljugend) and was influenced by personalities like Karl Strobl and Otto Mauer, both of whom were committed adversaries of National Socialism and promoters of the spiritual revival of the youth after the Second World War.<sup>189</sup> Shortly after graduating from the University of Vienna, he began his professional career as second secretary of the Austrian Christian-conservative People's Party (ÖVP), a position he held from 1964 to 1968. In 1972, he moved to the Austrian Federation of Trade and Commerce (Wirtschaftsbund), the representation board of the self-employed people. Together with the president of the association, Rudolf Sallinger, he advocated for the social security of freelance workers in Austria. At the same time, he began to show a pronounced interest in the countries behind the Iron Curtain and maintained numerous relations with civil movements and opposition groups in the former Eastern Bloc. From 1975 to 1976, he served as General Secretary of the Austrian People's Party, in 1975 he was elected to the National Council (Nationalrat). Since 1976, he served as the head of the People's Parties branch in Vienna. During his time in Austrian capital's local government, he supported issues such as environment, traffic, waste, urban renewal, and the active participation of citizens in decisions that directly affected them. He held office as Deputy Mayor and City Councillor of Vienna for nine years. In 1989, the year of great political change in Eastern Europe, he was appointed Minister for Science and Research, and in 1994 Minister for Education. In this function, he advocated for greater independence of universities from politics and promoted the harmonisation of Austrian higher education with the European Union system. During his mandate, he supported the introduction of universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) within the area of higher education in Austria. It is also worth mentioning that when the Islamic Religious Community requested that female students wear headscarves during class in the eighties, Busek was asked to give his opinion as the Minister of Education. He argued that multiculturalism means the acceptance of others, along with all their differences.<sup>190</sup>

From 1991–1995, he served as Vice Chancellor of Austria. Austria's entry to the European Union took place during this period. In the year 2000, he received an appointment as a Special Representative of the Austrian Government on the Enlargement of the European Union. In this capacity, he was intensively involved in Austria's accession negotiations with the European Union. He held different positions in Higher Education in Austria and received several honorary doctorates from European universities, including the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Starting in 1995, he served as chairman of the 'Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe'. When he left his position in the Austrian government and

189 Karl von Vogelsang Institut: Politische Erinnerungen [Online]. Available at: [http://www.vogelsanginstitut.at/at/?page\\_id=3192](http://www.vogelsanginstitut.at/at/?page_id=3192) (Accessed: 17 May 2023).

190 Hafez and Heinisch, 2018, p. 668.

parliament, he dedicated himself to the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe, where he acted as chairman over many years. As a head of the Institute, he was a reference point and a source of inspiration for various issues concerning the Danube Region.<sup>191</sup> From 2000 until 2012, he also held the position of Chairman of the European Forum Alpbach.

### ***5.2. The Danube, second river of European integration***

Erhard Busek referred to the Danube as the second river of integration. It characterises Austria's identity and is mentioned in the country's national anthem. The river Danube is a symbol of unity and coherence. After the reconciliation between Germany and France along the Rhine, the Danube was expected to provide a background for peaceful existence for the nations settled along the river.<sup>192</sup> Busek expressed his political convictions about Central Europe in numerous writings. He published his first book in 1968 on the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of the first Republic and against the background of the revolutionary events in Europe, especially the Prague Spring. In this book, he explained that by the end of the First World War, Austria had two basic alternatives: to create a Danube federation or to join Germany. The idea of unification with Germany was mainly promoted by the socialist wing of Austrian politicians led by Otto Bauer (1881–1938). In his characteristically sharp style, Busek asserted that the ideas espoused by Austrian politicians between 1918 and 1938 were only helpless attempts to converge towards one of these two goals. In both cases, nationalism determined by the country's specific circumstances after the fall of the Monarchy impeded the realisation of the aspirations of both parties. According to Busek, nationalism was the cause of the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and remained an obstacle for unification with Germany.<sup>193</sup> With the experience of the Second World War, the politician suggested an ideal return to the Austria of the Babenbergs, emphasising that Austria should make use of its central geographical position for its own advantage and that of neighbouring peoples. Prague, Budapest, Belgrade, Warsaw, and Bucharest were among the cities with which the Austrian politician wanted to establish closer relationships. This rapprochement was to take place through economic cooperation alongside intensive cultural collaboration. Research and training centres should be established to disseminate the neighbouring countries' language, history, and culture. At the same time, all existing educational institutions were to convey to Austrian citizens the historical and world-political context of their neighbours. This would allow historical circumstances as well as political differences to be taken into account. Already on this occasion, Busek made another demand which, against the background of Marxist ideology, should be qualified as courageous.

191 Schäffer, 2022.

192 Schäffer, 2022.

193 Busek, 1968, pp. 62–63.

In connection with cultural approximation, Busek proposed that educational entities on all levels should launch a confrontation with the political and philosophical systems of the neighbouring countries. He suggested that the United Nations and other international organisations could contribute to reducing tensions and search for initiatives to face problems.<sup>194</sup> Busek did not approach the question of proximity to neighbouring countries – especially to those situated on the other side of the Iron Curtain – on a theoretical level, but regularly travelled to meet with opposition members and established contacts with dissidents. However, his colleagues in the Austrian government did not always approve of his efforts. Already in the late seventies and eighties, he was able to establish contacts with representatives of the civil rights movement such as Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Lech Wałęsa, Václav Havel, Václav Klaus, József Antall, and Jan Carnogurský. Among his interlocutors, we also find leading intellectuals from the resistance movement, such as György Konrád from Budapest, Władysław Bartoszewski (who became an ambassador in Vienna after the breakdown of the Soviet regime) and Leszek Kolakowski from Warsaw.

### ***5.3. The concept of Mitteleuropa***

Only three years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Erhard Busek and Emil Brix published a book with the title ‘Projekt Mitteleuropa’. The authors tried to find a definition for the phenomenon in question and distanced themselves from the concept used by Friedrich Naumann. Naumann argued in a book published in 1915 for cultural and economic imperium under the leadership of Germany.<sup>195</sup> At the same time, Busek and Brix also reject the geographical identification of Mitteleuropa with the countries of the former Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>196</sup> According to the authors, Mitteleuropa should be defined by the region’s understanding of ownership and the distribution of property, its economic structure, its relationship with the church, and the design of its political institutions. Mitteleuropa is also characterised by the region’s common history, including the experiences of the Ottoman occupation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the independence movements of the year 1848, and the restoration of the absolute monarchy. Another common feature was the formation of nation-states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the experience of the First World War.<sup>197</sup> From this point of view, the authors assert that due to its different historical background, Switzerland does not belong to Mitteleuropa as they conceive it. The authors dedicate a separate chapter to the question of whether Germany should be part of Mitteleuropa. Similar to the case of Switzerland, Busek and Brix invoke historical arguments and discard Germany’s inclusion in the concept of Mitteleuropa. Although the existing linguistic community between Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and South Tyrol

194 Ibid. p. 75.

195 Busek and Brix, 1986, pp. 25, 44–46.

196 Ibid. p. 21.

197 Ibid. 1986, pp. 17–25.

would support the idea of integrating Germany, the authors argue that Germany had already distanced itself from Mitteleuropa, first in the Battle of Königgrätz and then in the two World Wars.<sup>198</sup> Busek also raised the question of the spiritual content of Central Europe, identifying it through its Greek-Jewish-Christian heritage. Busek states that the concept of Mitteleuropa is not possible without a reflection on the values inherent to this notion. According to the Austrian politician, these values include the conviction that humans are created in the image of God, that they hold inalienable rights, and that they have the capacity to transcend themselves. The European spiritual tradition presents a linear and non-cyclical understanding of history alongside the conviction that the human spirit is its driving force. Busek highlights the notion of freedom as a characteristic of European identity:

This freedom, together with the dignity of man founded therein and the consequent entanglement of guilt, it is this freedom that Europe has proclaimed to the world. But therein also lies Central Europe's shared culture and its task for the future: to announce to the world the freedom, dignity and responsibility of man.<sup>199</sup>

With this understanding of Mitteleuropa, Busek approaches the ideas of the vice-mayor of Vienna in the interwar period, Ernst Karl Winter (1895–1959).<sup>200</sup> Winter stood for a firm commitment to Austria and was an active opponent of National Socialism. As a communal politician, he promoted social balance and environmental protection. Winter grounded his political task in the social teachings of the Catholic Church.<sup>201</sup> We also find an interesting contrast to Busek's Mitteleuropa project in surveys carried out in the 1970s and 80s asking Austrian citizens whether they feel more closely attached to Germany or to other neighbouring countries. In the period from 1970 to 1980, a considerable number (60 to 70%) of respondents answered that Germany was the country they felt was most similar to their own. In second place were Switzerland and Hungary. Czechoslovakia reached only between 2 and 7 percent.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, Busek was among the initiators of the Pentagonale, an entity of cooperation between the countries of Central and South-eastern Europe. Initially, Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Italy, and Czechoslovakia took part in the project. In 1991, Poland joined. Since then, the project has operated under the name the Hexagonale. During these years, Busek also promoted and led the conference of rectors of Danubian universities.

198 Ibid. pp. 42–56.

199 Ibid. pp. 168–169.

200 Gehler, 2020, p. 918. Cf. Ziegerhofer, 2022, p. 39.

201 Holzbauer, 1992, pp. 110–111.

202 Thaler, 1999, p. 298.

#### 5.4. *New times with new challenges*

With the opening of the frontiers to the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, Busek put considerable effort in fostering mutual understanding between Austria and its neighbours. He actively followed the development of countries that had recently regained their freedom and tried to face the challenges produced by the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 to include former communist countries and in 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania became members. Between 2002 and 2008, he coordinated the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe, which had been created by the European Union after the Kosovo War to strengthen peace, democracy, and human rights in the area. He only ceased in his duties when the Pact was transformed into a Regional Cooperation Council.<sup>203</sup>

On a different level, Busek also searched for solutions to problems that had arisen from the phenomenon of globalisation. He asserted that globalisation has always existed, citing the formation of the first communities in early mankind and the transformation of society during the industrial age. The specific feature of modern globalisation is its speed, which confers on it a completely new quality. In this context, he called for the design of regulatory systems which, on the one hand, guarantee free economic space and, on the other one, also avoid the dangers related to the polarisation of rich and poor. These rules would have to be global in scope; according to the Austrian politician, the legal experience of the Imperium Romanum could serve as a model.<sup>204</sup> However, reactions to globalisation were also necessary in fighting crime, in the drugs sector, and regarding the security of the possession and transfer of weapons, as well as in the field of human trafficking. On the political level, Busek called for the establishment of a European government. The European Council as an instrument is not only problematic in terms of democratic policy, it is also threatened by conflicts of interest. In 2018, Busek and Brix published a second volume on the situation of Central Europe titled 'Mitteuropa Revisited' with the subheading 'Why Europe's Future will be decided in the Region'. With the new volume, the authors wanted to address the challenges connected with the deep crisis that European integration had been facing for several years. As the subheading indicates, Busek and Brix firmly believed that regardless of its problems, the future of Europe would be determined within the area designated as Central Europe and politically organised within the framework of the Visegrád Group (V4). They asserted that Central Europe is and should continue to be a project of peace. The Visegrád Group is an important means of regional collaboration and for the enforcement of common interests within the European Union.

In this book, the authors address difficult questions such as migration,<sup>205</sup> the relationship between Europe and Russia, and the situation of Islam in Europe. Brix and Busek claim to strengthen the position of the countries that, until 1989,

203 Cf. Biermann, 2002, p. 211.

204 Busek, 2005, p. 25.

205 Busek and Brix, 2018, pp. 167-173.

belonged to the Eastern Area to avoid a political and economic division in those countries. They argued that those countries should not feel like second-class members of the European Union.<sup>206</sup>

Regarding Islam, the authors draw attention to a fundamental difference between the European way of thinking and the Islamic approach to personhood. In the European tradition, every person is considered the bearer of equal rights and duties. In the countries influenced by the Quran, rights and freedom can only be realised among members of the Islamic religion. The authors express these features through the dichotomy between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society).<sup>207</sup> Busek once again claims that cultural and political formations should be the means for promoting mutual understanding and overcoming crises. During the last months of his life, the war against Ukraine was a harrowing experience for him, as it questioned all of the values for which he had fought over his many years as a European politician and visionary. He tried to do everything he could to support the civilian population and to promote peace.<sup>208</sup> At the same time, he reminded European politicians of their responsibilities: this new crisis that was unimaginable in the recent past shows that Europe must still live up to its mission.

### ***Conclusion***

Erhard Busek was a man of contrasts. He was an active representative of communal politics as well as a committed member of the Austrian federal government and a fighter for European unification. He was a dedicated member of the Christian conservative People's Party of Austria as well as an independent thinker. He forged his convictions through European history and Christian tradition, but he also displayed a startling openness to other religions. He acknowledged the difficulties of the modern era but remained convinced that the nations bordered by the Danube would continue to shape Europe's future throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

206 Ibid. p. 217.

207 Ibid. p. 153.

208 Cf. Zulehner, 2022.



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