RICE UNIVERSITY

PEACE AND REFORM:
The Attempts of the Meinl Group to
Preserve the Habsburg Monarchy, 1917-1918.

by

Donald E. Straka

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Abstract

PEACE AND REFORM: The Attempts of the Meinl Group to Preserve the Habsburg Monarchy, 1917-1918.

Donald E. Straka

When Emperor Francis Joseph died in November, 1916, the new monarch Charles I ascended the throne to find the Austro-Hungarian empire in serious danger. Foodstuffs and raw materials were in short supply, dissident nationalities were clamoring for reform or outright secession, Germany was taking an overbearing attitude toward her ally, and a military victory appeared distant at best. Although Emperor Charles was untrained for the task before him and was often unable to decide on a firm course, he had a sincere desire to help his peoples.

This desire encouraged the activities of Julius Meinl, Joseph Redlich, and Heinrich Lammasch. These men were loyal monarchists and believed that the only way to save the Habsburg empire was to make peace with the Entente and to reform the monarchy along more liberal lines. During the two years of Charles' reign, they attempted to achieve their goals in several ways.

Besides speeches in parliament or before private meetings, the first opportunity for the members of the Meinl group to achieve their aims came in the summer of 1917. Emperor Charles was looking for a new minister-president to initiate peace and reform and considered both Lammasch and Redlich for the post. However, Lammasch refused the office and Redlich, although he accepted, was not appointed because of opposition from Germany. When
this chance for political power was missed, the Meinl group was forced to turn to more unofficial efforts to attain their ends. In the winter of 1917-1918, Meinl and Lammasch conducted conversations with Allied contacts in Switzerland about prospects for peace. The discussions of both men produced certain effects in Allied countries, particularly the United States. President Wilson was especially interested in Lammasch's proposal since it indicated a chance for a separate Austrian peace. However, at this time Emperor Charles was hoping once again for a military victory and did not support the peace activities of the Meinl group. The emperor was influenced in his decision by his foreign minister Count Ottokar Czernin.

Charles was committed to a militant course that within a few months produced ruinous results. In the fall of 1918, while the Habsburg armies disintegrated at the front, the Czechs and the South Slavs prepared to leave the monarchy. The emperor, desiring a peaceful transition to the new states and hopeful of retaining some unity in central Europe, appointed Lammasch as the head of the last imperial government, the ministry of liquidation. Lammasch held office for two weeks and his presence did ease the dissolution of the empire. The efforts of the Meinl group to save the monarchy ended in failure when the Austrian republic was declared on November 12, 1918.
PREFACE

The origin of the idea for the subject of this thesis lies in my personal feeling that the greatest value of the study of history is its aid to the greater understanding of oneself, of others, and of human society. Thus the current issues concerning the relationship between pacifism, reformism, and the political state directed my interest to the men of the Meinl group and the last years of the Habsburg monarchy. As a liberal and a pacifist, I wished to examine the cause of peace during a time of extremism and to discern, as far as possible, the reasons for its failure. Although a direct parallel cannot be drawn between the situation of the Meinl group and present conditions, a study of these men may hold some lessons for today's supporters of peace and may lead indirectly to a better understanding of the individual's relationship to a national state.

Having chosen a subject previously given little attention, I expected difficulty in finding source material. However, after beginning research I found that the problem was not particularly the lack of material but rather the type available. Either there were a few general statements in secondary sources or a mass of details in letters and diaries. The task, then, was to present a coherent essay without being overwhelmed by detail.

Most of the material for this thesis was found in the Fondren Library at Rice University. The rest I found in the New York Public Library while
working there in the summer of 1967 on a research grant. I wish to thank
the staffs of the New York Public and Fondren libraries for their assistance
in aiding my research. I would also like to express my thanks to my fellow
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And special thanks to S. F. P. Of course, I alone am responsible for the final
form of the thesis and any errors that may be in it.

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D. E. STRAKA
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CHAPTER I

THE MEINL GROUP

When a political state collapses, attention is usually focused on those forces which are responsible for the destruction of a government. This is especially true in the case of the breakup of the seven-centuries-old Habsburg empire in the autumn of 1918. Most studies on the dissolution of Austria-Hungary have concentrated on the disintegrating factors that led to collapse. In particular, great attention has been given to the role of the various independence-seeking nationalities in the demise of the monarchy. Much less research has centered on the attempts by the Habsburg emperor and some of his loyal subjects to save the empire. General works have at most made only a passing reference to such attempts, while articles and monographs on the subject have dealt largely with a few government-sponsored peace efforts or the official statements of war aims.

Only within the past few years have historians, and then mostly Austrians, published documents and correspondence referring to those Austrians who stood midway between the old conservatives, who desired to leave the monarchy unchanged, and the radicals, who wished to tear it apart. It is the purpose of this thesis to draw attention to several such men who wanted to restore peace to the monarchy and give it a viable form, and to examine their activities and views and the reasons for their ultimate failure during the last two years of the First World War.

Although active since before the beginning of the war, these supporters of
peace the reform did not achieve any real influence during the conflict before
the accession of Charles I to the throne in November, 1916. Changes in policy
were expected from the young new emperor while nothing in the way of liberal
changes had been looked for from his predecessor Francis Joseph after a fran-
chise reform in 1907. Francis Joseph, who had ruled the Habsburg lands since
1848, died after having fulfilled what he regarded to be his most important
mission: the maintenance of the realm and of the imperial power. Even though
he had done little to solve the nationality question, Austria's most pressing
problem, the death of the aged ruler removed one of the strongest remaining
integrative forces in the empire. The monarchy, which was now passed on to
Emperor Charles' tutelage, was in grave danger.

The difficulties in which the empire found itself were intensified by the war.
Although the economy of Austria was fairly sound in 1914, by the beginning of
1917 the effectiveness of the Entente blockade had begun to produce major dis-
ruptive effects. Industries suffered from the lack of raw materials and fuel.
Textiles were particularly hard hit, and the shortage of cotton and wool not only
affected civilians but also the troops, who were reduced to wearing shoddy and
makeshift clothing. Military transportation was hampered by the poor condition

1 Robert A. Kann, The Multinational Empire. Nationalism and National
Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848–1918 (2 vols., New York: Octagon

2 Joseph Redlich, Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. A Biography

of the railway rolling stock and by the insufficiency of fuel for locomotives. City residents had to bear the winters with a minimum of coal and oil.

The food situation in the urban areas was especially grave. The blockade and the induction of peasants into the army, among other things, reduced the availability of foodstuffs. Despite government attempts to fix prices, the cost of provisions increased enormously, while the quality of some foods, such as bread, steadily decreased. Rationing was introduced in cities and towns in 1915, and the number of rationed products grew each year of the war. Fortunes amassed by war speculators and black marketeers provided a bitter contrast to the industrial workers, who were unable to protest their declining purchasing power through inflation because of the military control over the factories and mines. Although generally patriotic, the public was becoming restive under these hardships. Food riots in Vienna and elsewhere became more frequent as the war progressed. 4

Shortages in materials and food were not the only internal problems afflicting the monarchy. As the fighting continued, pre-war dissatisfaction among the non-German and Magyar nationalities increased. Ukrainians, for example, complained repeatedly of Polish repression. The Czechs and the South Slavs were the most outspoken of the dissident nationalities in their demands for the redress of grievances and finally for secession. Emigré politicians and intellectuals provided the leadership for separatist movements, did their best to

convince Entente leaders of their right to independence, and instructed nationalists at home to engage in sabotage and encourage defeatism.\(^5\)

Despite the efforts of the government to alleviate the economic difficulties, placate the nationalities, and stamp out sedition, in the months after Charles I came to the throne internal discontent reached the level of immediate danger to the existence of the empire. Although the new emperor came to his task with enough enthusiasm and dedication, he was not quite equal to the challenge presented him. Charles had never been properly educated for the role of a monarch, and this lack was shown in the absence of firm political principles.\(^6\) Francis Joseph had not introduced him to any official business although he did tell the heads of various departments to talk to his heir so that Charles could obtain some idea of the workings of the administration.\(^7\)

Good-natured, modest, gentle, and of average intelligence, the young ruler was often unsure of himself and therefore changeable in his views, too dependent on his advisors, and reluctant to make a final decision or pursue a policy to the end.\(^8\) Thus, Charles at times found himself dominated by various groups, usually those conservatives who had traditionally backed Habsburg power.\(^9\)

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\(^5\)See ibid., pp. 350-382.


\(^7\)Redlich, *Emperor Francis Joseph*, p. 531.


Even though he sincerely desired peace and realized the necessity for making some reform, his variable nature was one reason for the failure to end the war and save the monarchy.

But Charles was enough of a Habsburg to resent any attempt at the domination of Austria by her powerful ally Germany. In the spring of 1917 Germany appeared unified in her determination to wage the war by every means and to achieve her war aims. This attitude could only further increase the tension that had existed between the two central powers for months. Charles felt that the chances to attain peace would be better if Berlin renounced all claims to territorial acquisition in the west. In return, he suggested compensation in eastern Europe.¹ In June, 1917, he made a last attempt to convince his ally of the need for peace. He wrote Emperor William II asking that Germany make a declaration for peace on the basis of the status quo. Such an announcement was made in a published article, but Berlin did not consider it a serious offer.¹¹

Charles was supported in his attitude toward Germany by his foreign minister, Count Ottokar Czernin, a friend and advisor of the assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand. Czernin hoped to maintain Austria's equality in the alliance. He considered a moderate negotiated peace necessary to prevent the collapse of Austria and did not believe that either the Russian revolution in March or submarine warfare would bring about a peace on Germany's terms.


¹¹Ibid., pp. 360-361.
He told Berlin in the spring of 1917 that it would be impossible for his country to continue the war beyond the end of the year and warned both monarchs of the possibility of internal revolution. Still, Czernin realized the extent of Austria's dependence on German aid, both military and economic, and was convinced that the conclusion of a separate peace was absolutely impossible. To withdraw from the alliance would not end the war since Germany would then fight Austria.

The new emperor and his foreign minister did not entirely succeed in resisting the demands of their necessary ally. Charles failed to secure an equal partnership in the determination of policy. In March, 1917, Austria had to accept a lesser status when Germany contended that territorial gains should be proportional to the contributions of each country. During the last two years of the war Germany's dominance over the conduct of the war and interference in Austrian internal affairs was to increase.

Charles' fear and resentment of German domination was shared by others in the empire. The emperor's well-known desire for peace encouraged persons who, while loyal to the Habsburg House, realized that if Austria-Hungary were to survive immediate peace was necessary and the government had to be

12 Ibid., pp. 343-352 and 407.


15 Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War, p. 346.
reorganized along more liberal lines. The presentation of plans for the reformation of the empire to serve as the basis for a negotiated peace was an idea which became stronger after Charles became emperor.\textsuperscript{16} Supporters of such a combination, including Empress Zita and Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, the head of Charles' civil cabinet, were the liberal opposition to whom Woodrow Wilson addressed his appeals for peace. They did not constitute a party or political force in the usual sense but were only a loose group of individuals.\textsuperscript{17}

One group of such moderate liberals centered around the Austrian businessman Julius Meinl. Two other men, Heinrich Lammasch and Joseph Redlich, were also leaders of the group. These three men, who held common views and objectives, cooperated in attempting to achieve the goals of peace and reform. At times they had the political power to achieve these tasks within their grasp. Hoping to bring the war to an end as soon as possible, Meinl and Lammasch conducted conversations during the winter of 1917-1918 with unofficial Allied representatives in Switzerland on the subject of peace. Although they played a leading role in the last government of the empire, the members of the Meinl group failed to prevent the collapse of Austria-Hungary in November, 1918. The failure of the Meinl group to achieve peace and reform was due to elements in the character and attitudes of the men themselves and to factors in Austria and the international scene well beyond their control.


Although Lammasch and Redlich were better known, Meinl was the link between the various members. Through letters and visits, he kept his friends informed and in contact with each other. Often he used his car to provide transportation for his associates in Vienna and elsewhere. Meinl was born in 1869. At twenty he entered his father's coffee-based grocery business and proceeded to expand it until the chain of stores was as prominent in the monarchy as the Atlantic and Pacific Tea company stores were in the United States. His factories were among the most important industries in Vienna.

By the beginning of the century the firm had established an import bureau in London, and during his annual trips there Meinl learned English and formed friendly connections in the British capital that were to prove of great help in his peace activities during the war. Meinl also acquired in London a strong impression of the strength of England; thus from the onset he regarded the war with grave forebodings. He knew from the detailed reports received from his branch stores how serious the food situation in Austria would be if a prompt peace were not decided.

In December, 1915, Meinl founded the Österreichische Politische Gesellschaft. Created as a forum for the discussion of political problems, the association was composed of many of the politicians, officials, professional men,

18 Ibid., p. 174 n.

and intellectuals of Vienna. Meinl organized the discussions, selected the topics, and picked the speakers. The organization served as a place of contact for the leaders of the Meinl group with the public. Few records of the speeches and discussions remain except in the form of police notes. These show that the average attendance at the meetings to be a hundred or more.

Joseph Redlich was a leading member of the association. Born the same year as Meinl, he came from a prosperous German-Jewish family in Moravia. He studied law at the University of Vienna and several other schools. One of his principal areas of study was English constitutional history. Redlich's work in this area convinced him of the need for the federalization of the empire and autonomy for local nationalities. From 1907 until 1918 he was a German Progressive Party member of the Austrian Parliament, and between 1910 and 1913 he spent many months in the United States teaching at Harvard and other institutions. Redlich was also well known in England for his excellent study of the British parliament.

The most prominent of the three men was Heinrich Lammasch. Born in 1853 and educated at several universities, he was a widely recognized authority

20 Ibid., pp. 11-14.


on international law. In 1899 he attended the first Hague Peace Conference and
became a judge on the International Court of Arbitration. After 1899 Lammasch
became a member of the Austrian House of Lords, although as a member of the
so-called Center Party, he remained outside the major parties. In 1907 he was
a member of the Austrian delegation to the second Hague Peace Conference and
was the vice-president of the commission for arbitration. During these years
he also served as one of Archduke Francis Ferdinand's advisors on constitutio-
nal questions. Since he was a known pacifist, the military leaders of
Austria wanted to place him under arrest at the beginning of the war but were
prevented by Francis Joseph from doing so.

Lammasch's pacifism and his views on the monarchy and her nationalities
stemmed from deeply held religious convictions. Along with his friend Ignaz
Seipel, a future chancellor of republican Austria, Lammasch represented a
Catholic political theory which, though in many ways traditional and conserva-
tive, was sincerely democratic. Two premises fundamental to all Catholic
parties in Austria were loyalty to the Habsburg monarchy and the disavowal of
racial nationalism. During the war Lammasch favored the supranational and


23 Benedikt, Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe, pp. 54-55.

24 Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, The Emperor Karl, translated by D. F.

25 Hans Sperl, "Heinrich Lammasch," Neue Österreichische Biographie

26 Kann, The Multinational Empire, Vol. I, p. 103; Albert Fuchs, Geistige
Strömungen in Österreich, 1867-1918 (Vienna: Globus Verlag, 1949), pp. 267-
268.
pacifist approach to the political situation as represented in the Catholic Church and the Socialist International. Though not a socialist, he approved of many of their practical goals, especially that of peace. He himself placed more hope for the end of the war in the papacy than in the International but felt that peace was more important than the means by which it was obtained.

Lammasch's views were also influenced by his study of international law. Basic to his thought was the conviction that a higher law existed above the state or national group. Before the war Lammasch consistently advocated a more western orientation of Austrian foreign policy, particularly in regard to the United States. During the conflict he argued that America would somehow bring the war to an end either through war with England or by leading a league of neutrals. He also assisted Constantin Dumba, the monarchy's ambassador in Washington, in attempts to explain the war from the Austrian viewpoint, to counteract atrocity stories, and to help Austrian prisoners of war in Russia.

Lammasch opposed the military spirit of Germany and believed that a separate peace for Austria would end the war. Yet he did not fail to recognize the great obstacles to a negotiated peace, such as the difficulty of reversing Austria's course and the growth of Slav nationalism. He thought a solution for


\[28\] Ibid.

the latter problem would be found not just in the federalization of the empire according to national groups but by greater emphasis on personal autonomy. Federal reform in the sense of departmentalization would only create situations such as in Hungary, where the Magyars oppressed the minority nationalities. It would not be enough to promise changes; a reform program should be begun during the war. There were three fundamental ideas in the political theory of Lammasch which were at the same time objectives: the preservation of the Habsburg monarchy, its reformation to provide for proper national claims, and the formation of an international peace league.

Lammasch first became acquainted with Meinl around Christmas, 1916, when the Viennese merchant initiated an exchange of letters. Although the two men appeared disparate in character, the retired Catholic professor and the Jewish industrialist shared an internationalist outlook, a western orientation, and a concern for the welfare of the Habsburg empire. Despite the different foundations for their views, a conservative, intensely spiritual Catholicism and a practical liberalism, the similarity between Meinl's and Lammasch's opinions was sufficient for the correspondence to develop into a friendship. It was not unusual for Lammasch, on his many visits to Vienna from his residence in Salzburg, to stay at Meinl's home in Dornbach. The intellectual and the


businessman, realizing the necessity for peace and reform, agreed to cooperate in endeavors to achieve their two common goals.

Within a month the new collaboration between Meinl and Lammasch became public. At a meeting of the Österreichische Politische Gesellschaft on January 29, 1917, the two men presented similar ideas on how to end the war. Meinl set forth his views in a lengthy speech. He called for a peace without victory. Neutrals, especially the United States, he said, had an important role in making peace. The first condition of peace should be acceptance of Wilson's suggestion for a League of Nations for the prevention of war, followed by a reduction in armaments.

Meinl warned against the dismemberment of the empire. Any settlement of the war, he said in his speech, must leave the territory of the monarchy intact. He suggested that the Czech parties make a declaration of loyalty to Austria. This declaration should be in the form of a protest to Wilson and the Entente against the planned separation of Czech lands from the monarchy. He claimed that the Czechs did not want such a separation, which was a geographical impossibility, and that the issue was misunderstood by foreigners. The Poles, Meinl said, should join with all the parties in parliament in a declaration of loyalty to the Habsburgs and state that any solution of Polish problems must be satisfactory to Austria. However, he argued that Austria should be willing to accept advice from neutrals on questions of internal problems that involved international interests, such as the Polish question. Meinl thought that the

33Benedikt, Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe, p. 61.
statements and aims presented in his speech would answer the request for the stipulation of war aims made the month before by Wilson. He thought that his aims would also have the support of neutral countries. When the people in England and France tired of the war, he added, an acceptable peace would be made. 34

After Meinl's speech, a letter from Lammasch was read to the association members. The Salzburg professor expressed complete agreement with Meinl's statements. Lammasch also advocated the establishment of a union of nations for peace and said that Austria must play a leading role in the formation of such a league. He thought that a strong independent Austria free from any Prussian militaristic traits would be welcomed by the Entente Powers. 35.

The collaboration of Meinl and Lammasch was strengthened by the inclusion of Redlich in the group. A highly literate and articulate man, Redlich used his abilities for the cause of peace and reform alongside other members of the Meinl group. His views were similar to those of Meinl and Lammasch. At another meeting of the association, Redlich presented an historical analysis of the nationality problem. To Redlich the present difficulties of the monarchy could be solved only by the appeasement of the dissident nationalities, especially


35 Letter of Lammasch read at a meeting of the Österreichische Politische Gesellschaft on January 29, 1917, ibid., pp. 67-69. The two men also agreed that the March revolution in Russia would not improve the chances for peace. Meinl thought that the new government would remain in the war on account of its fear of Germany. Meinl to Lammasch, n. p. March 15, 1917, ibid., p. 79. Lammasch said the revolution might present a good opportunity for Austria to make peace with England, but he feared that Germany would hope for a separate
through cooperation with the Czechs. He urged the Austrian Germans to change their basic approach to the nationality question. The monarchy, he said, was no place for Prussian Junker ideas. 36

Besides making speeches to the Politische Gesellschaft, Meinl, Redlich, and Lammasch had little chance to take a direct hand in government affairs during the early stages of the war. Their first opportunity to achieve political power came in the summer of 1917, when Charles gave in to the increasing clamor for the calling of parliament. Charles appointed the Bohemian Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic to the post of minister-president. He and his ministers took office with the intention of convening parliament, which had not met since the war began, and of reforming the constitution. The Austro-German bourgeoisie and the South Slavs were demanding constitutional reform (though for quite different reasons of personal advantage). The growing complaints over the conduct of the war and the increasing hardships for civilians, plus the threatened entry of the United States into the war and the March revolution in Russia, only further convinced Charles of the need to convene parliament. 37

The emperor called the assembly to meet on May 30, 1917.

When the deputies gathered at the end of May, the crucial issue between the government and parliament was the Slav demands for federal reform. Redlich


spoke for the cause of constitutional reform before parliament on June 12. He argued that the grant of autonomy for the nationalities was the best solution for the problems of the empire. Federalization, he said, should be carried out by parliament and not by imperial degree. 38

Redlich's speech was highly popular. He was congratulated by many groups—South Slavs, Czechs, Poles, Christian Socialists, and Social Democrats. 39 Despite the popularity of ideas for national autonomy, Clam-Martinic, however, rejected the demands for federal reform as utopian. Unable to satisfy the demands for reform and failing to appease the Slavs with offers of new ministerial posts for non-Germans, 40 the cabinet of Clam-Martinic lost any support it had. As a consequence, on June 18 the members of the ministry handed in their resignation, although they did not leave office until five days later. 41

Clam-Martinic's resignation forced Charles to begin a search for a new minister-president. The emperor hoped to reconcile opposing factions in the empire by appointing a man acceptable to all groups. The persons he considered for the office were men of moderately liberal views, including Lammasch and


41 Benedikt gives the date of resignation as June 18. See his Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe, p. 95. May gives it as the 23rd in his The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, Vol. II, p. 645. However, Redlich pointed out that although the Clam-Martinic ministry resigned on the 18th, it remained in office for another five days. See the entry of June 22, 1917, Redlich, Das Politische Tagebuch, Vol. II, p. 211.
Redlich. While he made the search, Charles asked Baron Ernst von Seidler to form a temporary government whose primary task was to get the budget through parliament. 42

The first candidate Charles considered for the minister-presidency was Lammasch. The Salzburg professor had first been brought to the emperor's attention when Charles had been looking for a man to give legal and political opinion on an amnesty he was considering. 43 On June 17 the emperor asked Lammasch to come to Vienna for an audience. 44 Lammasch met with Charles for a short time on June 20 and again, for a much longer time, on June 22. During these two meetings, the personality of Lammasch made a deep impression on Charles. The emperor, confident that Lammasch was the proper man for the post, asked him to form a cabinet. Charles said the new ministry was to plan the reorganization of the monarchy under Lammasch's direction and to consider ways to begin peace discussions. 45

However, Lammasch declined the post offered him by the emperor. One


43Karl Friedrich Nowak; The Collapse of Central Europe (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1924), p. 264. The amnesty degree for civilians imprisoned by military courts was proclaimed on July 2, 1917.


reason he gave for his refusal was his health. He was sixty-four at the time and complained to Meinl that the constant activity of office would be too much. Even the last few days had tired him. To Redlich he gave another reason. He had not accepted the offer because of his slight parliamentary experience. Whatever the reason, it is clear that Lammasch missed a valuable opportunity to initiate constructive efforts for peace and reform.

Shortly after Lammasch declined the minister-presidency, Redlich came under consideration for the office. Charles had asked his friend and advisor Polzer-Hoditz to head a reform ministry, but he, too, had refused the offer. Polzer-Hoditz had taken the opportunity of the audience, however, to recommend Redlich for minister-president. He thought that Redlich was the best choice of the possible candidates because the liberal professor had always taken a moderate position on the nationality question. In addition, he was internationally known as an expert in modern administration and his foreign contacts and knowledge of foreign affairs were valuable. Polzer-Hoditz thought that these points, combined with his linguistic abilities and his experience with parliamentary routine, made Redlich the outstanding choice.

Charles, impressed by Polzer-Hoditz's recommendation, called Redlich for an interview on July 3, 1917. During the audience the emperor questioned

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him extensively about his ideas on autonomous nationalities and administrative reform. He concluded the audience by asking Redlich who he thought might undertake the work of putting these concepts into practice. Redlich suggested that older, established statesmen such as Max Vladimir Beck be asked first.\(^49\)

Redlich suspected that despite his recommendation of other men, he himself would be called upon to head a government. His suspicion was based on information received from Meinl the day after the interview. Meinl, who had just come from an audience with the emperor, said that Redlich was to be proposed for minister-president in order to smooth the way for peace. Meinl thought that Redlich was the right man to lead a ministry but said that some people felt that he should be finance minister and a more distinguished man should be appointed minister-president. He added that Lammasch had recommended Redlich to Charles.\(^50\)

Redlich's suspicion proved to be correct, for on the next day, July 5, he was summoned for a second audience with Charles and asked if he would undertake to lead a reform ministry. Charles told Redlich he was to head a government based on the promise of national autonomy, the maintenance of the centralized state, and the presentation of a complete statement concerning peace. These points, he felt, would be the only way to achieve an effective government.\(^51\)


\(^{50}\)Ibid., p. 215.

Redlich did not hesitate to accept the minister-presidency. He told the emperor that although such a task would involve vast responsibility, he would serve Charles and the monarchy as best he could. He agreed with the three points Charles had outlined as a basis for the new ministry but said that in order to carry out reform he must be both minister of interior and premier. Since there would be many difficulties in implementing a reform program, Redlich thought that all nationalities should be included in the cabinet. He also suggested that Lammasch be appointed minister of justice. Charles told him to sound out the various parties on their attitude towards his appointment and to report back on July 7.

Redlich had been offered the highest post in the government and had accepted it; yet he did not become minister-president. The reason may be found in the extent of Germany's domination over Austria. On July 6, the day after Redlich's second audience with Emperor Charles, the German emperor and empress came to Vienna to visit the imperial family. Charles was told that a government which did not maintain the dominance of Germans in Austria was not acceptable to his ally. Redlich, a Moravian Jew, felt that something had gone wrong when Czernin refused to see him on the seventh. There had been a change in plans. Redlich was told that Charles now wanted to retain the

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54 Ibid., pp. 332-333
Seidler government and establish a state conference of from twenty to twenty-five parliamentarians to assist Redlich in pushing through a reform program. Since Redlich felt that only direct immediate action by a representative government could prevent the destruction of Austria, he thought Charles' plan childish and refused to head such a commission. Thus, another member of the Meinl group missed an opportunity to achieve peace and reform.

Although he had bowed to German pressure, Emperor Charles would not give up his hopes for a reform ministry. Within a few days after Emperor William's visit, Charles was listening to more liberal advice from Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, a professor at the University of Munich and a well known German pacifist. Foerster had written a pamphlet in 1913 on Austria's nationality problem which had recently come to the attention of the Meinl group. Recommended by Lammasch, the pamphlet also aroused the interest of Polzer-Hoditz and of the emperor himself, who wanted to discuss it personally with Foerster. Lammasch sent an invitation to Foerster to come to the imperial summer palace at Reichenau near Vienna for an audience with the emperor. He mentioned that Charles intended the two men to form a government in which all nationalities were to be represented and which was to reorganize Austria on a federal basis.

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Foerster had the audience with Charles on July 10, 1917. The emperor had just come from a meeting with Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff and told Foerster the German generals claimed the Americans would never reach Europe because of the U-boats. Charles expressed the opinion that they were wrong and insisted that the entry of the United States would decide the outcome of the war. The emperor and Foerster then talked about the nationality problem in general. 58

The pacifist and liberal Foerster worked well with the members of the Meinl group. He told Lammasch that Redlich had made an excellent impression on him and that Meinl, whose idealism was founded on a realistic basis, was a gift from God and could be the "economic savior of Austria." 59 On July 17, he appeared, along with the three other men, before a meeting of the Österreichische Politische Gesellschaft at which a resolution calling for peace was passed. 60 Foerster, Lammasch, and Redlich also visited the German ambassador to Vienna, Count Botho Wedel, and told him they blamed Germany for the

58 Ibid. Foerster wished to publish an account of the interview but was prevented from doing so by Czernin. In fact, later in the month the foreign minister wanted to ban the German professor from the country but the emperor forbade him. Polzer-Hoditz, The Emperor Karl, pp. 337, 342 and 342 n.


continuance of the war and that they thought Austria should negotiate for a separate peace. 61

Meanwhile, encouraged by the interview with Foerster, Emperor Charles tried once again to appoint a reform minister-president. For a short time Charles considered one of the statesmen Redlich had suggested, Baron Max Vladimir Beck, a former minister-president, 62 but instead decided to approach Lammasch once more. This decision was formed on the basis of the recommendation of Foerster and Polzer-Hoditz. The latter had mentioned Lammasch as an acceptable candidate in mid-July during a report to the emperor. Charles agreed with his advisor and said that Lammasch was such a well-known supporter of peace that his name alone would reveal the program of the ministry. 63 The decision to offer the minister-presidency to Lammasch a second time was also prompted by the resolution passed by the Reichstag in Berlin on July 19 which rejected a war for territorial acquisition. The resolution, whose chief supporter was Matthias Erzburger, an important Catholic deputy, increased the emperor's hope for a democratic cabinet to help Austria. 64

61 Richard Fester, Die Politik Kaiser Karls und der Wendepunkt des Weltkrieges (Munich: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1925), p. 166. Sometime during the summer of 1917 Czernin told Wedel that Lammasch had proposed that an ultimatum be sent to Germany demanding her agreement within two days to the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine or Austria would conclude a separate peace. Ibid., pp. 165-166.


63 Polzer-Hoditz, The Emperor Karl, p. 344.

64 Benedikt, Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe, p. 127.
Having made the decision, Charles called Lammasch for an audience. When Lammasch arrived at Reichenau on July 21 he was met by Polzer-Hoditz and told about the renewed offer of the minister-presidency. He appeared greatly surprised and complained that his health was too poor to accept such a burden. When Charles presented the request to form a government, Lammasch, although he had been urged by Foerster to accept the post, insisted on time to think it over.

There are several conflicting versions as to why Lammasch did not become minister-president when invited to accept the office a second time. According to the first version, Charles interpreted Lammasch's hesitation to accept the post to mean that he had declined the offer. Polzer-Hoditz supported this version. He thought that the emperor had taken the professor's modesty as a lack of self-confidence and had not realized that once Lammasch was at work, he would be very different from the seemingly irresolute man he had seen. Foerster expressed the same opinion, explaining that Lammasch's character should have been taken in account before assuming that he had refused. He, Foerster said, had "expected stronger urging and definite orders from the

65Polzer-Hoditz, The Emperor Karl, p. 344.


67Benedikt's note, ibid., p. 127.

68Ibid.

Emperor," and once in office he would have been "as energetic as he was previously hesitating."\(^{70}\)

Lammasch himself gave several different explanations for why he did not become minister-president. He told Redlich that while he was thinking about the emperor's offer Charles received a telegram reporting a breakthrough of the new Austrian offensive on the eastern front. On receiving this news, Charles broke off the audience, and Lammasch's unoffered decline was "accepted."\(^{71}\) Several months later he told an Allied contact in Switzerland that he had refused the office because he thought the time was not ripe for the execution of his ideas.\(^{72}\) Still another version is that Lammasch demanded that if he were to accept the post Austria must break with Germany, make a separate peace, and federalize the empire. Since Charles was not prepared to accept these conditions he did not call on Lammasch to form a government.\(^{73}\)

Despite Lammasch's various explanations for his failure to become minister-president, there is good evidence that it was his hesitation that caused Charles to assume that he had declined the offer. When he was not appointed to the high office, Lammasch seems to have expressed his true feelings in a letter


\(^{73}\)Strong, Austria, 1918-1919, p. 104.
to Polzer-Hoditz. "Personally," he said, "I am relieved at the change of plan, because I do not feel myself strong enough for that extremely difficult and responsible work. What I would have to offer, would in substance have been only my name." His international reputation, he thought, would give him some influence in enemy and neutral countries, but this would be insufficient for the task. He added that Polzer-Hoditz could "assure His Majesty that it was not anxiety about my health . . . but my doubts whether my strength would be adequate that was the reason for my hesitation." 

After he had missed the opportunity to lead a reform ministry Lammasch began to have second thoughts. When Redlich visited him, he spoke of a plan for a cabinet with Redlich as either minister-president or minister of interior, Meinl as food supply minister, and Foerster as minister of education. Although Lammasch said he would prefer to be minister without portfolio, Redlich had the impression he would now accept the minister-presidency. Meinl also thought that in a month or so Lammasch would be appointed to head a ministry. However, the chance was gone. Lammasch would again be called to lead a government only in the last days of the empire.

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75 ibid., pp. 346-347. See also the original German version in Benedikt, Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe, pp. 129-130.


77 Entry of August 23, 1917, ibid., p. 231.
The failure of members of the Meinl group to achieve political power in the summer of 1917 was due in part to the personality of Lammasch. The Salzburg professor could quite possibly have become minister-president if he had accepted the offer immediately on either of two occasions. However, his refusal of the office in June and his admitted relief when not appointed in July show that Lammasch was unwilling to accept the responsibility of leading a government. At best, he appeared to be willing to accept the post of a minister.

The failure of the Meinl group to gain office was also due to two factors beyond their control: German domination and the personality of Emperor Charles. The monarchy was so dependent on economic and military aid from her ally that there could be no government in Vienna which did not have the approval of Germany. Thus, when objections were raised to a non-German ministry, Charles quickly reneged on Redlich's appointment.

Unable to oppose Germany, the Habsburg emperor was caught between a desire for peace and the fear of offending his ally and his conservative supporters. Charles constantly wavered between one course and another, one candidate and another, never quite able to make up his mind. It is possible that even if Lammasch had accepted the minister-presidency, Charles, as in the case of Redlich, would have decided not to appoint him. Unable to decide on a candidate, Charles found it easier to leave things as they were. The "caretaker" cabinet of Baron von Seidler now became a permanent government.
CHAPTER II
CONVERSATIONS IN SWITZERLAND

After their opportunities to attain political power had been missed in the summer of 1917, Meinl, Lammasch, and Redlich were forced to turn to more unofficial attempts to preserve and liberalize the monarchy. Throughout the autumn of 1917 they continued to press for the realization of their goals by writing letters and articles and making speeches, all to little effect. Their influence did not become significant again until the winter of 1917-1918, when Meinl and Lammasch separately, but with full knowledge of each other’s activities, conducted unofficial conversations about peace prospects with Allied contacts in Switzerland.

Although the United States did not declare war on Austria-Hungary until the end of 1917, diplomatic relations had been broken when war began with Germany. The severance of relations closed a channel along which offers and counter-offers had passed between Vienna and the Allied Powers. Emperor Charles and Count Czernin, recognizing the dangerous situation of the monarchy, hoped to be able to sign a negotiated peace, while the western democracies were anxious to separate Austria from Germany. Since both sides were willing to continue talks, more or less official discussions were held between the Entente and Austria after the American embassy left Vienna. Many such meetings were in neutral Switzerland. The Austrian Count Nicholas Revertera met with Count Abel Armand, a French representative, at Freiburg,
Switzerland, during the summer of 1917, and Count Albert Mensdorff met at Geneva with Jan Smuts and Philip Kerr in December, 1917.

Meinl and Lammasch held talks in Switzerland which were somewhat less "official" in nature than those of Revertera or Mensdorff, since neither man was actually a member of the administration or the armed forces. However, Lammasch and Meinl had good qualifications to act as intermediaries between their country and the Allies. Both were known to some extent in the allied countries. Both spoke English, were political moderates and pacifists, and could always gain an audience with Emperor Charles. The government of the United States knew of these "few farsighted leaders of thought at Vienna"\(^1\) who were close to the emperor and could be depended upon to suggest a separate peace to those of influence.\(^2\) It was also felt that these men could provide the Allies with insights into the ideas of the young Austrian ruler.\(^3\) The British prime minister, David Lloyd George, also gave his support to the various secret negotiations going on in Switzerland.\(^4\)

Meinl was the first of his associates to attempt peacemaking. In the last six weeks of 1917 he took an extensive trip through Germany and Switzerland.


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 255.

\(^3\) Hugh R. Wilson, Diplomat between Wars (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1941), p. 36.

In the latter country he worked out a step by step approach to peace discussions. First the neutral members of the International Study Commission were to meet to discuss war aims. Then a second conference was to be called, this time including representatives of the Entente; finally, a third meeting was to be held with persons from the Central Powers. Meinl hoped that such gradual cooperation in the discussion of war aims would shorten the war. However, when a plea for peace among nations published by the British conservative, Lord Lansdowne, aroused new hopes for an end to the war, Meinl decided to take advantage of the opportunity. He abandoned his time-consuming original plan and switched to a more direct approach.

It is probable that his decision was also affected by the American declaration of war against Austria-Hungary on December 7, 1917. When Meinl and others in his circle spoke of neutral aid in ending the war they usually meant that of the United States, in whose president they placed great faith. This faith, which was undoubtedly reassured by Woodrow Wilson's statement that he did not wish to "rearrange" the monarchy or interfere with its internal affairs, did not falter when America became a belligerent against their country.

Meinl put his plan for direct action into practice by visiting Harold F. 

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6 Ibid., p. 196.

McCormick, an American businessman living in Zürich, in mid-December. He informed him that he would like to know within eight days what peace terms President Wilson would seriously consider if Germany and Austria proposed them and asked him if he could get a message to the American government. McCormick was slightly disturbed at the approach and asked his visitor why he had come to him instead of to a more neutral person. Meinl replied that the neutral countries were too nervous at the present and that it was better to contact unofficial persons such as himself. He added that although he was in Switzerland as a private individual, his mission was known in Vienna.8

The discussions carried on in Switzerland between the enemy powers were for the most part conducted by private individuals such as McCormick. Embassy staff members seldom took a direct part; men with no actual relationship other than friendship to a government were usually involved. One man who served in such a role for the United States was the American professor and expatriate George Davis Herron. During the many years he had lived in Europe Herron acquired a wide circle of important friends and acquaintances,9 including Foerster and other intellectuals in Central Europe.10


In 1917 the publication of his book *Woodrow Wilson and the World's Peace* caused many Europeans to believe that Herron was a close friend of the president and kept in close contact with him.\textsuperscript{11}

Indeed, Herron was more of a Wilsonian than Wilson. Since he did not have to deal with the practical difficulties of a president, he carried his ideals to a higher plane.\textsuperscript{12} He had been certain since youth that he was to play a role in the construction of a better world.\textsuperscript{13} As the American charge d'affaires in Switzerland Hugh Wilson wrote, Herron was "firmly convinced that there was something Messianic contained in the revelations of President Wilson. I have heard him talk to enemy subjects with a glow of fervor and a sincerity of belief which made me think of Professor Herron as an Old Testament prophet."\textsuperscript{14} For Herron there could be no compromise between a total German victory and the complete destruction of Germany. He never concealed his belief in the impossibility of a negotiated peace from any of his friends and contacts in the enemy countries.\textsuperscript{15}

Herron was not selected by the president or the state department for any diplomatic duties. Nevertheless, since he lived in Switzerland, he considered it natural that when his former friends from Germany or Austria came to that

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{12}Mamatey, \textit{The United States and East Central Europe}, p. 139.

\textsuperscript{13}Briggs, \textit{George D. Herron and the European Settlement}, p. 9.


\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 39 and 52.
country they wanted to obtain information from him about the attitudes of the Allied Powers.\(^\text{16}\) When the United States entered the war members of various committees representing Austrian subject nationalities called on Herron to explain their desires and ask him to use his influence with Wilson to induce him to recognize their causes.\(^\text{17}\) Foerster also visited Herron to report the interview he had with Emperor Charles in July, 1917. Later the Munich professor mentioned him to Lammasch; thus, it was natural for Meinl and Lammasch to turn to Herron when they wanted to contact President Wilson with a maximum of secrecy.\(^\text{18}\)

Since Herron was considered a representative of the American president, Meinl decided to present his peace proposal to him. However, Meinl did not approach Herron by himself. He preferred to have the support of like-minded Germans and neutrals when he met Allied contacts.\(^\text{19}\) Thus, when he visited Herron on December 20, 1917, he was accompanied by Konrad Haussmann, a leader of the Progressive Party in the Reichstag, and Doctor de Jong van Beek en Donk, a former Dutch minister of justice and the general secretary of the Association for a Durable Peace. The three men began by explaining to Herron

\(^{16}\)Herron to Briggs, n. p., n. d., \textit{ibid.}, p. 27.


that Germany and Austria desired peace. However, they said, Germany was in a good position militarily and, since further victories could be expected, Berlin could not make too many concessions. Since the war was alien to the people of the United States, they thought that America should persuade her allies to make peace.  

Herron refuted each of the points made by Meinl, Haussmann, and De Jong. He said that if Germany wanted peace all she had to do was to state openly and clearly her desire and terms to the Allies. Secondly, Germany's present military position gave her the opportunity to initiate peace, but not the right to assume the role of victor. He told his visitors that they were mistaken about America's participation in the war. Though peaceful, his country, "having once drawn the sword, would never sheathe it until the thing called Germanism or ourselves is destroyed."  

Although Herron had made his position clear, Meinl and his friends continued to argue for several more hours. They wanted to know what the attitude of the American government would be if Germany proposed definite peace terms. They asked Herron if he would inquire to Washington about his government's reaction to a German peace offer. Herron disapproved of this maneuvering. Why, he asked, did not the Austrian emperor or the German chancellor present


\[21^{\text{Ibid.}}\]
a peace offer directly to President Wilson? Then they could find out the attitude of the United States. He said that Meinl could not expect him, a private individual, to know what the leaders of his country thought. Herron regarded any further discussion as futile. He concluded the meeting by telling the men that if they wanted a message sent to Washington they should come back with a peace proposal signed by one of their rulers. After they left, Herron wrote an account of the conversation and, not quite trusting Charge d'Affaires Wilson, who he thought was too young and inexperienced, sent it to the American ambassador in France, William G. Sharp.

Although the meeting with Herron had produced little result, Meinl was not discouraged. Immediately after leaving Herron, Meinl, accompanied by Haussmann, approached Samuel Edelman, the American vice-consul at Geneva to inquire again about the intentions of the United States. Edelman told them that the American people were united behind President Wilson and determined to carry on the war. If Germany wanted peace, he said, Berlin must state its terms in a definite form. Meinl thereupon wrote out a note in rough English on the kind of peace he said the Central Powers desired:

Society of nations, international arbitration, proportional and mutual disarmament, and on that basis, Minister's statement about Belgium, evacuation of France, submission of all outstanding questions of European peoples and nationalities to the peace conference on the basis of consideration of the wishes of the people.

22 Ibid., pp. 479-480.

23 Ibid., p. 481.

Edelman thought that this memorandum left too many important questions to the peace conference. When he asked about Alsace-Lorraine, Meinl said that autonomy would be granted to the area as promised in the Reichstag peace resolution of July, 1917. Meinl went on to say that Austria did not want to dominate the Balkans, that there would be no annexations by his country, and that Poland was to be a separate kingdom.  

Meinl concluded the discussion by suggesting a way to put pressure on the leaders of Germany. The Entente, he argued, had made a mistake in not acting on the Reichstag peace resolution. This failure weakened the German people while it strengthened the victory party. He proposed that Wilson publicly state that this peace resolution reflected the desires of the German people. Since Germany had never made a definite statement of war aims, the American president should ask the rulers of Germany if they were in accord with their people and unreservedly endorsed the peace resolution.

When Meinl returned to Vienna shortly after the meeting with Edelman, he reported his discussions to Count Czernin. The foreign minister, who thought little of such unofficial peacemaking efforts, was displeased with the account of Meinl's activities. In a rather condescending letter, Czernin thanked Meinl for his "patriotic interest" in the monarchy's problems but said that he did not think it wise to pursue these actions at the present time. He requested that

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25 Ibid., pp. 511-512.

26 Ibid.
Meinl not continue in any private attempts to make peace.27

Despite Meinl's lack of success in Vienna, his conversations in Switzerland did have some effect in Washington. President Wilson, when he read the report of the Edelman meeting on January 1, 1918, became interested in Meinl. He commented that Mein's views were a "long way, in fact, nearly all the way, towards our position."28 Curious about the man who held such similar opinions, the president asked Secretary of State Robert Lansing for additional information on Meinl. Lansing then sent a telegram to Bern requesting that anything known about Meinl and the possible importance of his statements be cabled back immediately.29

Until the American legation at Bern sent more information, President Wilson knew about Meinl from only two sources: the original account of the Edelman discussion and a State Department memorandum. Both of these gave the impression that Meinl's peace feeler was an official one. In the report of the Edelman conversation, Chargé d'Affaires Wilson had added that, according to Meinl, Berlin would make definite peace proposals to the United States if they were received and treated confidentially. He thought it apparent that


28 Quoted in Mamatey, The United States and East Central Europe, p. 174.

"Meinl had been instructed to make feelers."\(^{30}\)

The second source of information Wilson had about Meinl was a memorandum produced by the office of the assistant secretary of the Department of State and sent to the president on January 3. The author of the memorandum stated that Meinl was a Viennese capitalist and a conservative in politics but one of the first men in the monarchy to advocate peace. He was said to have the confidence of Czernin and the Hungarian leader Count Julius Andrássy and probably also that of Emperor Charles. It is apparent, the note concluded, that Meinl "must therefore enjoy the confidence of the Government and is not improbably its direct agent."\(^{31}\)

The misinterpretation of the official nature of Meinl's mission was not corrected by more accurate information until several weeks later. As noted above, Herron reported his discussion with Meinl in a letter to Sharp in Paris. Sharp did not send this account, which indicated that Meinl was a private individual, to Washington until January 10.\(^{32}\) In reply to Lansing's request for more information, Chargé d'Affaires Wilson cabled that Meinl and Czernin did not work in cooperation. He also emphasized the unofficial character of the Austrian's visit to Switzerland.\(^{33}\)


Before the additional information was received and under the impression that Meinl was an official representative of Austria, President Wilson incorporated Meinl's suggestion for separating the German people and rulers into the address in which he announced the Fourteen Points. In the opening paragraphs, he asked if the representatives of the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk were speaking for "those who speak the spirit and intention of the resolutions of the German Reichstag of the 9th [sic] of July last, the spirit and intention of the Liberal leaders and parties of Germany, or those who resist and defy that spirit and intention and insist upon conquest and subjugation?" Wilson was to refer again to this point in his speech of February 11, 1918.

President Wilson's Fourteen Points Address, which included Meinl's suggestion, also led indirectly to a peace feeler by another member of the Meinl group, Lammasch. The stage was set for Lammasch's peacemaking effort by Count Czernin's reply to the Fourteen Points. In a speech on January 24, 1918, the Austrian foreign minister expressed general approval of the peace conditions Wilson had enumerated. Although he announced Austria's complete support of her allies and rejected any interference in internal affairs, Czernin said that the Vienna government agreed with many of the American president's points. Discussion, he thought, would settle any remaining differences.

34 Wilson's address to Congress stating the war aims and peace terms of the United States (delivered in joint session, January 8, 1918), Messages and Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. I, p. 465.

35 President Wilson's address to the joint session of Congress, February 11, 1918, ibid., p. 474.
Czernin concluded that the lack of conflict between the interests of the United States and Austria "suggests the thought that an exchange of ideas between these two Powers might be the starting point for conciliatory discussions between all states which have not entered into peace conversations."\(^{36}\)

When Lammasch arrived in Switzerland a week after Czernin's speech, he found that the atmosphere in this neutral meeting ground had grown tense as a result of the foreign minister's remarks.\(^{37}\) The ostensible purpose of Lammasch's presence in Switzerland was a meeting of the leading Catholic members of the German and Austrian governments in Zürich with representatives from the Church to discuss matters of interest to Catholics.\(^{38}\) However, there seemed little doubt among the various government representatives that his real mission was to initiate the Austro-American discussions suggested by Czernin. Charge d'Affaires Wilson, who thought that Lammasch was a man of "unquestioned integrity," was willing to accept him as an emissary from the monarchy.\(^{39}\)

Lammasch was indeed in Switzerland for peace discussions, specifically with Herron. Just how much official backing Lammasch had for his mission is unclear. However, he certainly tried to give Herron the impression that Emperor Charles was on the verge of making peace and that he was in Switzerland

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39 Wilson, *Diplomat between Wars*, p. 36.
to help arrange it. Utilizing De Jong as an intermediary, Lammasch told Herron that Charles had once again offered him the minister-presidency. When he had told the emperor that he would accept the office only if Austria made a separate peace, Charles had agreed to this condition. However, Lammasch said his poor health prevented his immediate acceptance of the office. Lammasch also told Herron about a telegram he received from Meinl in Vienna which stated that if President Wilson made a favorable reply in public to Czernin's speech, Austria would demand that Germany change the tone of recent addresses. If Berlin did not do so, the monarchy was prepared to break with her ally and make a separate peace. Lammasch assured Herron that the message was accurate and that the emperor was prepared to end the alliance if Germany refused to make peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points.

After these preliminary messages Lammasch wanted to meet Herron personally. When, on January 28, 1918, De Jong brought a second telegram from Meinl to the American legation at Bern which said that the offer for talks in Czernin's speech was sincere, Lammasch requested a meeting with Herron. He hoped to prove the sincerity of Austria's desire for peace and to give a full statement of the emperor's beliefs.

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41 Ibid.

42 Wilson to Lansing, Bern, February 8, 1918, Ibid., p. 84.

43 Ibid., p. 86.
The meeting took place on February 3, 1918, under carefully arranged conditions of secrecy, at the chateau Hofgut near Bern. Both Lammasch and Herron began by stating they had no official mandate. However, Lammasch indicated that he was speaking for the emperor and Herron kept the American legation fully informed about the contents of the discussion. In reply to a question about forming a ministry, Lammasch said he had been offered the minister-presidency but that he would not accept because his health was poor, and having led an academic life, he had no political connections. He did feel, however, that he was capable of handling a post such as the ministry for foreign affairs.44

Lammasch informed Herron that the real influence behind Czernin's reply to the Fourteen Points was the emperor. Charles, he said, had told the foreign minister either to make the speech or resign. Although he had been forced to give the speech, Czernin had still weakened the effect of what the emperor wanted to say. Lammasch told Herron that Czernin was not to be trusted as he was too much under the domination of Germany.45

Since he was convinced that Charles was eager to be rid of German dominance and was prepared to federalize the monarchy into areas of autonomous nationalities, Lammasch had devised a plan to bring about peace. The first step required President Wilson to state publicly that Czernin's speech of January 24 indicated that Austria was willing to make peace. After Wilson had made this statement, the Austrian emperor would then write an open letter to


the pope explaining in general terms the scheme for the reformation of the empire. In this letter, Lammasch said Charles would agree with the principles of disarmament and a union of nations as Wilson proposed and would suggest that a peace conference be based on these general principles rather than territorial questions. Charles would conclude the letter with the statement that autonomy, as promised for the empire, would also be a satisfactory solution to the question of Alsace-Lorraine.

The third step in Lammasch's peace formula involved American aid in the creation of a reorganized Austria. The two major threats to reformation were the Magyars and the Germans. Lammasch said the United States could help the emperor get around these opponents by making national autonomy an explicit condition for peace. When Herron asked if the Austrians would really permit such dictation in their internal affairs, Lammasch answered that they not only would permit it, but they begged for it. If Wilson made federalization a condition of peace, Lammasch went on, Austria would accept it and would ask Germany to conclude an armistice. He thought that Berlin would not refuse to make peace; to do so would threaten the breakup of Germany. If she did, Austria would, however, make a separate peace. After describing his plan, Lammasch asked Herron for a frank reply. Herron said he would think it over and give an answer on the following day.

The same evening Herron talked the Austrian proposal over with Chargé

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46 Ibid., pp. 88-89.

47 Ibid., p. 90.
d'Affaires Wilson. Both men were skeptical about it. Wilson thought the plan was very impractical and had doubts that the emperor could shift from the conservative group depending on the support of Germany to Lammasch's group and its ideas. Herron expressed the opinion that, although Lammasch was a good man, he failed to understand Wilsonian ideals. He felt that the proposed scheme did not offer a new vision of the world. Instead, the emperor wanted to capture the new order and use it for the old in order to bind the people to a reactionary autocracy with new chains. To Herron, acceptance of the Austrian offer would betray the trust put in the United States and its president by the people of the world. He, therefore, suggested to the American government that a separate peace with Austria would destroy the chance of creating a new world.

The next day Herron met again with Lammasch but did not immediately reply to the Austrian professor's plan. After repeating that he had no official connection with the American government and could in no way presume to know its course of action, Herron took Lammasch to task for being old-fashioned. Diplomacy reminiscent of 1815 and an outlook limited to Austria were no longer suitable. Today nations must consider all of Europe and humanity. "The time has come when righteousness is the only thing that is practicable." Herron

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48 Ibid., p. 98.
50 Wilson to Lansing, Bern, February 8, 1918, Ibid., pp. 90-92.
51 Ibid., p. 99.
tried to point out that Austria proposed an immoral peace. He felt that Lammasch had not grasped the real reason for the war: to insure liberty to individual people and to nationalities. He asked his visitor to return to Vienna and use his influence with the emperor to undertake a genuine reform in Austria. Such reforms, he assured Lammasch, would have the full support of the American nation.

Turning finally to Lammasch's peace plan, Herron said that President Wilson could not be expected to make the first move in a peace offer. This was the responsibility of Emperor Charles. Nor could the pope act for him. Since the United States was largely Protestant, bringing in the papacy would only unnecessarily complicate the matter. He asked Lammasch to utilize the same faith he placed in the Catholic Church to overcome the practical difficulties in the path of a regenerated Austria. Lammasch appeared to be quite moved by Herron's discourse and promised to return to Vienna to present his arguments to Emperor Charles. 52

Despite Herron's moralistic rejection of Lammasch's plan, President Wilson was interested in the Austrian peace plan and decided to fulfill the first step. As suggested by Lammasch, this would only amount to giving favorable public recognition to Czernin's speech of January 24. Since Wilson had already

decided to reply to various criticisms of the Fourteen Points, the requested remarks about the Austrian foreign minister could easily be incorporated in this speech.53

Wilson's decision to act on Lammasch's peace formula was also influenced by advice from two sources. The first was the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, who had reported that he had information indicating that Austria was willing to make a separate peace and that Czernin was now supporting such an action. Balfour, although he urged caution, did not want the Entente to miss an opportunity to detach Austria from Germany.54 The second source was the president's own Secretary of State Lansing, who was convinced that the Lammasch proposal was evidence of Austria's desire to break with her ally. That Lammasch was the intermediator was sufficient proof for him. He had known Lammasch since 1910, when the Austrian was president of the tribunal at The Hague judging a case for which Lansing was the counsel for the United States.55 During the early part of the war Lammasch had written the secretary of state a number of letters asking America to use its influence to end the war.56


55 Mamatey, The United States and East Central Europe, pp. 223 and 224 n.

56 Lansing, War Memoirs, p. 256.
Thus, when Wilson consulted Lansing about Lammasch, the secretary of state gave a good recommendation. Lansing wrote the president that he believed that Lammasch was "honest and sincere, lacking entirely the ability or inclination to engage in intrigue."\(^{57}\) He said that the Austrian professor had opposed the war from the beginning and mentioned the letters he had received from Lammasch pleading for an end to the war. "Convinced of Lammasch's honesty of purpose," Lansing was sure "that he could not have spoken as he did unless he was acting under the authority of the Emperor Karl."\(^{58}\) He added that he felt that the emperor was sincere in his desire to reform the monarchy.\(^{59}\)

A week after the Herron-Lammasch conversations, Wilson, supported by the advice of Balfour and Lansing, presented his speech analyzing the German and Austrian responses to the Fourteen Points to Congress. Differentiating between the two, the president told his listeners that, whereas Chancellor Georg Hertling's reply had been vague and confusing, Czernin's had been made in a friendly tone.\(^{60}\) Wilson went on to speak of the Austrian foreign minister's speech in a favorable manner. "Seeing and conceding the essential principles involved and the necessity of candidly applying them," the president said of Czernin, "he naturally feels that Austria can respond to the purpose of peace as

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\(^{57}\)Lansing, "Memorandum on Dr. Heinrich Lammasch, February 10, 1918," quoted in Mamatey, *The United States and East Central Europe*, p. 223.

\(^{58}\)Ibid., pp. 223-224.

\(^{59}\)Ibid., p. 224.

expressed by the United States. He would probably have gone much further had it not been for the embarrassments of Austria's alliances and of her dependence upon Germany. In recognizing in Czernin's words a willingness on the part of Austria to make peace, Wilson fulfilled the first step in the plan advocated by Lammasch.

President Wilson, having made the requested response, decided to offer an inducement to Austria if she concluded the separate peace suggested by Lammasch. A secret cable was sent to Bern proposing financial aid to the monarchy if the country broke with Germany. Lammasch was to be told through a safe intermediary that money could be expected from the United States if Austria needed it after severing her alliance. Lammasch received this message about February 25.

By the time Lammasch received the offer of American aid, however, the political situation in Austria had passed beyond his influence. Emperor Charles had once more changed his mind. From a reforming, peace-seeking attitude, he switched again to a conservative outlook. He had replied to the friendly attitude expressed in Wilson's speech but not in the form or substance proposed by Lammasch at the meeting with Herron. Instead of sending a public letter to the pope, the emperor transmitted a secret message to the American president.

61 Ibid., p. 477.
63 Wilson to Lansing, Bern, February 25, 1918, ibid., p. 130 n.
The emperor's shift in attitude appears to have taken place within a few days. On February 14 Charles gave both Lammasch and Polzer-Hoditz indications that he would undertake peace and reform. On that day, Lammasch, confident that peace would come when the emperor fulfilled the second step in his plan, 64 presented his proposal to Charles. Although there is no record of the audience, Lammasch appeared satisfied with the results. He thought that the emperor had agreed with his peace formula and that the proclamation of the federalization of the empire would soon be made. 65 Also on the fourteenth, Charles asked Polzer-Hoditz about plans for the reformation of the monarchy. Although he prepared a memorandum on national autonomy, Polzer-Hoditz was never again approached about the matter. 66

Four days after these two audiences, Charles sent, instead of an open letter to the pope, a secret message to Wilson which replied to the four points formulated by the president in the February 11 address. This letter also reflects the emperor's change in attitude. A first draft was written on February 17, possibly when Charles was still influenced by Lammasch, but was never sent. A second draft, probably influenced by Czernin, was dispatched to Washington via neutral Spain on February 18. 67 The difference between the two


65 Telegram from Lammasch to De Jong, n. p., February 18, 1918, quoted in Briggs, George D. Herron and the European Settlement, p. 84.


drafts is substantial.

Both texts begin similarly with only minor changes in wording. However, a subtle difference soon appears that is indicative of a change in attitude. Instead of the phrase "just peace which harmonizes the conflicting interest" in the draft of February 17, the phrase "a just peace securing vital interests" was substituted in the message sent to President Wilson. There are also more substantial differences between the two texts. In regard to territorial settlements, Emperor Charles had first written that "changes of frontier as may have to be made in the direct interest and to the advantage of the peoples involved, can be brought about in a friendly manner by agreement between state and state." In the version sent to Wilson, the position on territorial changes was reversed. The emperor now called for a peace without annexations and, although discussions could be held, the "pre-war possessions of all states were to be regarded as inviolable." In other words, Charles wanted a

Lammasch himself said that Czernin was creating difficulties in his attempt to get Charles to enact his peace program. See the telegram from Lammasch to De Jong, n. p., March 6, 1918, Briggs, George D. Herron and the European Settlement, p. 85.


69 The Ambassador in Great Britain (Page) to the Secretary of State, London, February 20, 1918, United States Foreign Relations, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. I, p. 126. British Intelligence intercepted the message when it was transmitted from Vienna to Madrid on February 18. It was not officially delivered to Washington by the Spanish government until February 26.


peace on the basis of the status quo before the start of the war. The two texts concluded similarly with a call for further discussions between the United States and the empire.

Even the draft of February 17 was not as liberal as the letter to the pope suggested by Lammasch. Neither text mentioned the federalization of the empire, which was one of the key points of the Lammasch proposals. The first letter contained no reference to autonomy; the second, took a more uncompromising stand on the nationality question. The emperor said in the text sent to Washington that he could furnish proof "that there are national demands the satisfying of which would be neither good or enduring." He specifically refuted the Italian demands for Austrian territory. Certainly in this revised letter sent to Wilson there is none of the conciliatory attitude expressed by Lammasch at the meeting in Switzerland.

When Emperor Charles' message arrived in Washington, Wilson was immediately aware of the great difference between the letter and the original Lammasch proposal. He was still interested in the peace plan but decided to consult the British government before he wrote a reply. Balfour told the president that he was struck by the difference between Charles' letter and Lammasch's plan and thought that the secret letter reflected Germany's influence on the emperor. On the other hand, he regarded the Herron–Lammasch conversations as an adequate basis for talks, although he warned the Allies

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72 Ibid.

73 Mamatey, The United States and East Central Europe, p. 229.
must not hinder the war effort by alienating Italy or the anti-German Slavs.

The foreign secretary suggested that the president attempt to discover if Charles meant to follow through with Herron's and Lammasch's proposals. Wilson had already decided to do what Balfour advised. In a letter addressed directly to the Austrian monarch, the American president tried to ascertain if Charles was going to support Lammasch's ideas. Wilson turned aside the suggestion that representatives of the United States and Austria meet, because he thought his position had been clearly stated in the Fourteen Points address. However, since he knew little of the emperor's position, he hoped the monarch would reply in a more explicit and detailed way. The president said that he would like to have before him a practical program as to how Charles was to satisfy the demands of the nationalities within his empire. He would also like to have more complete information about what the emperor proposed to do in connection with Italy and the Balkans.

The attempt to reach peace begun by Lammasch at the meeting with Herron ended with President Wilson's letter. The emperor did not intend to carry out Lammasch's proposals. Although a reply to the American president was prepared in Vienna and sent to Madrid, Czernin then instructed the Austrian ambassador

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in Spain not to send it on to Washington. The hopes aroused by the Herron-Lammasch talks were finally forgotten as the German spring offensive began in the west.

The failure of the Lammasch peace discussions marked the end of attempts by members of the Meinl group to bring about peace by meeting Allied representatives. Several factors contributed to the lack of success of the Meinl and Lammasch talks. One reason for the ineffectiveness of the attempts of the Meinl group to end the war in the winter of 1917-1918 can be found in the relationship between the members of the group and the Austrian foreign minister. The negative influence of Czernin can be discerned throughout the course of the peace efforts of Meinl and Lammasch. Members of the Meinl group and Czernin had distrusted each other for months. Meinl thought that the foreign minister did everything possible to prevent popular movements such as Lammasch and himself represented and was sure that he intrigued against them. Lammasch also distrusted Czernin and did not hesitate to tell Herron as much. He believed that the foreign minister was under German domination.

Czernin, for his part, disapproved of the activities of the Meinl group and did not doubt that they wished to see him removed from the government. He


77 Mamatey, The United States and East Central Europe, p. 232.

thought that the cooperation between Lammasch, Foerster, and Polzer-Hoditz for a peace ministry during the summer of 1917 was proof of this intrigue.\textsuperscript{79} He told the German ambassador in Vienna that these men worked for his overthrow.\textsuperscript{80} The foreign minister, although he had little sympathy with Germany's war aims, thought that Austria could not pursue an independent course. He therefore rejected any suggestion of a separate peace. While Czernin closely followed the various "official" peace talks, he disapproved of the peacemaking efforts of Meinl and Lammasch, as he felt they were harmful to the official politics of the government.\textsuperscript{81} After the war Czernin denied any knowledge of or connection with the unofficial talks of the Meinl group.\textsuperscript{82}

Another factor in the failure of the Meinl and Lammasch peace conversations was the attitude of the men themselves. It is obvious that the members of the Meinl group were indulging in some wishful thinking when they felt they had the complete support of Emperor Charles. Since they had a good opportunity the previous summer to realize the variable and indecisive nature of Charles, Meinl's and Lammasch's optimism was unwarranted. Their lack of success was compounded by a change in their attitudes caused by engaging in secret

\textsuperscript{79}Polzer-Hoditz, \textit{The Emperor Karl}, p. 347.

\textsuperscript{80}Fester, \textit{Die Politischen Kämpfe um den Frieden}, p. 146.


diplomacy. Initially supporters of the open diplomacy proposed by President Wilson, Meinl and Lammasch took part in secret meetings and fell prey to a common affliction of diplomats: insecurity and distrust of both friends and enemies. 83

Nor did Meinl and his associates fully understand the attitudes of the Western Powers towards peace with Germany and Austria. After several years of grim warfare, the Allies could not accept the position of superiority adopted by Meinl and Haussmann at their meeting with Herron. Meinl's efforts to persuade the American government to take the initiative in a peace offer could only be rejected. Lammasch's proposals aroused interest in London and Washington only because they indicated a chance for a separate Austrian peace. When Emperor Charles failed to act on Lammasch's plan, there was no hope for success.

The influence of the Meinl group during their peace discussions was opposed, as in the summer of 1917, by that of Germany. Upon hearing of the Lammasch talks, Berlin delivered a stern warning to Austria threatening to occupy Vienna if Charles did not disavow the proposals of the Salzburg professor. Faced with this ultimatum, the Austrian government expressed tentative and evasive disapproval of the talks. 84 Germany also frustrated peace


84 The Minister in Switzerland (Stovall) to Lansing, Bern, March 23, 1918, United States Foreign Relations, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. I, p. 173.
efforts during the winter of 1917-1918 by appearing nearly victorious in the war. In March, 1918, German military success was at its height. Emperor Charles hoped that submarine warfare and the spring offensive would bring about an ultimate victory for Germany. Thus, the influence of Meinl and his colleagues was offset by the belief in a German victory before the United States could participate to a significant extent in the war. 85 During this time Germany also extended her domination over Austria. Fearing that her wavering ally might really make peace, the German government demanded in the spring of 1918 a long-term political, military, and economic alliance that amounted to complete dominance over Austria. 86

The failure of the various secret peace negotiations in 1917 and 1918 of which the Meinl and Lammasch conversations were a part was perhaps the last turning point in the disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy. 87 Whatever the numerous reasons for their failure, Emperor Charles and Austria-Hungary were committed in March, 1918 to a militant course. Meinl, Lammasch, and their associates were to remain in the background until this course had produced disastrous results.

86 Fischer, Germany’s Aims in the First World War, pp. 527-528.
CHAPTER III
THE MINISTRY OF LIQUIDATION

The ascendancy of German influence in Vienna in the spring of 1918 resulted in fewer activities on the part of the members of the Meinl group. There were to be no more private visits to Allied contacts in Switzerland. Lammasch, Meinl, and Redlich were helpless as Charles seemed determined to continue the fighting.

The militant course to which the emperor committed Austria-Hungary did not bring victory or relief to the empire. Instead, the stability of the monarchy further deteriorated. The apparent German military strength at the time of the spring offensive soon disappeared. The American troops, which were moving into France in increasing numbers, more than balanced the men freed by the Central Powers' peace with Russia.

The Austrian military efforts were no more successful than those of Germany. In the second week of June, 1918, the Habsburg armies were thrown in a massive offensive against the Italian lines. The attack, which was urged by the German high command, lasted ten days and proved extremely costly in Habsburg casualties. No gains were made. The Austrian defeat in Italy and the failure of Germany to gain victory in France contributed to the poor morale of the inhabitants of the empire.¹

Difficulties within the monarchy also increased the weariness of the people over the four-year-long war. Inflation was reaching an uncontrollable degree, while material shortages greatly reduced industrial output. The shortage of food continued unrelieved; in the summer of 1918 rations were again reduced. Undernourishment and famine were common in urban areas. The privations added to the growing disgust with the war and led to mass rioting in Vienna and elsewhere in the country. ²

An even greater threat to the survival of the empire than the worsening military situation or the complaints of a hungry populace was the nationality question. Separatist tendencies were on the rise among the Czechs, Slovaks, and the South Slavs. Throughout the war exiled members of these dissident national groups had worked to convince the Allied Powers of the justice of their demands for independence. During the summer and fall of 1918 the Czech and South Slav radicals within the empire became aware of the efforts and influence of the exiles. ³ Also, in the last year of the war the Entente began to recognize the exiles' claims for independence from Austria-Hungary.

The military defeats, the deterioration of the army, the growing demands of the dissident minorities, and the critical internal situation of the monarchy convinced Emperor Charles to abandon any hopes for a military victory. The

²Ibid., pp. 734-735.

Austrian monarch decided, this time firmly, to seek peace and attempt reform. In July, 1918, Charles permitted the long-troubled ministry of Ernst von Seidler to resign and appointed Baron Max Hussarek von Heinlein as the new minister-president. Hussarek reflected the new desire of his monarch for reform. He hoped to discover some kind of federal plan that would appease the moderate Slavs. The difficulties confronting the new government were great, as both the Czechs and the Hungarians immediately announced that they would not cooperate in any scheme of federalization.  

Besides undertaking reform, Charles wanted the new cabinet to have the aspect of a peace ministry. The emperor therefore asked Hussarek to include Lammasch in the government, since he thought that the name of the law professor would contribute to the appearance of a peace cabinet. 5 In accord with the imperial wish, Hussarek asked Lammasch to join the government as a minister without portfolio. Lammasch indicated that he would join if representatives of the Slav nationalities were included in the ministry. At the same time, Redlich was asked to become minister of finance. Although he, too, seemed willing to enter the government, in the end neither man became a member of the Hussarek ministry. Possibly this was because the German-oriented Seidler, now the head of Charles' civil cabinet, advised the emperor not to appoint them. 6

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After the appointment of the ministry, Emperor Charles and the new foreign minister Stephen Burian renewed efforts to reach peace with Austria's enemies. In September, Burian issued a call to all the warring powers to meet in a neutral country for peace discussions. The peace proposal, unpopular in Germany, was quickly rejected by the Allied countries. 7 The next month Austria joined Germany in a more determined attempt to end the fighting. On October 4, 1918, Burian dispatched a message to President Wilson offering to conclude an armistice and begin negotiations for a peace based on the Fourteen Points and Wilson's four principles of February 12, 1918. 8 Although the American president immediately answered a similar note of Germany with a request for more information, he decided to delay before answering the Austrian government. 9

While waiting for Wilson's reply to the peace note, Charles decided to offer proof to the president of Austria's sincere desire for peace and reform. Since Burian's first peace note of the previous month the emperor had been thinking of undertaking the federalization of the empire. 10 This reform would not only fulfill Wilson's Point Ten, which called for national autonomy, but would also,
Charles hoped, prevent further disintegration of the monarchy. Federalization was to be carried out by imperial decree, not by parliamentary action.

Before issuing the decree Charles called together, on October 12, representatives of the nationalities and the more important parties in an effort to work out a compromise between the various national and political demands. He also discussed with them the possibility of forming a representative government. His efforts, however, failed. No cooperation seemed possible. Four days after this unsuccessful meeting Charles took matters into his own hands. He proclaimed the October Manifesto, in which the federalization of the empire was announced.

The October Manifest had several defects. The wording was too vague. The document said only that Austria would become a "federated state in which every race will form its own state commonwealth in the districts inhabited by it." It gave no details as to how this was to be accomplished and made no mention of what the divisions would be. In another generalization, the city of Trieste was promised a special status "in accordance with the wishes of its inhabitants." In addition to the vagueness of the statements, the manifesto was further weakened by the fact that Hungary was excepted from the federal plan. Magyar pressure had forced the emperor to include a statement that the reform

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13 Ibid.
would not "touch the integrity of the lands of the sacred Hungarian crown."  

On being shown the first draft of the manifesto, Lammasch, although he suggested some changes in the text, expressed reservations about the proclamation. He proposed changes in the concluding paragraphs which introduced a note of confidence in the future and a reference to the great work of peace that was being created. This pacific tone was used in the published form. However, even with these changes, Lammasch was not satisfied with the reform plan. Although Hussarek said the law professor was in "enthusiastic agreement" with the ideas of the manifesto, a friend reported that Lammasch opposed the publication of the proclamation since he feared its effect on the nationalities.

Any doubts held by Lammasch as to the results of the October Manifesto proved to be well founded. The emperor's proclamation failed to prevent the disintegration of the monarchy. Instead, it furthered the centrifugal process by giving an appearance of legality to separatist movements and by lowering the morale of the army.

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14 Ibid.

15 Glaise-Horstenau, The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, p. 208; Rumpler, Das Völkermanifest Kaiser Karls vom 16. Oktober 1918, pp. 61-62. For a comparison of the first draft and the final published form, which, although it incorporated Lammasch's suggestions, was considerably less specific than the original text, see ibid., pp. 88-91.


The manifesto also failed in its second purpose: that of influencing President Wilson. When the long awaited answer to the peace note of October 4 finally arrived on October 19, Wilson, instead of being favorably disposed by the announcement of national autonomy, informed the Vienna government that Point Ten of his Fourteen Points was no longer applicable. The American government, he explained, had recognized the independence of the Czechs and Yugoslavs and was "no longer at liberty to accept the mere 'autonomy' of those peoples as a basis of peace."\textsuperscript{19} The dissident Slav nationalities, Wilson said, were now to judge what actions would "satisfy their aspirations and their conception of their rights and destiny as members of the family of nations."\textsuperscript{20}

Wilson's reply signalled the end of the empire. Due to the Allied recognition of Slav independence and the effects of the October Manifesto the government in Vienna was losing control of the country to various national committees. In an attempt to salvage something from the rapidly disappearing monarchy, Charles turned to a plan formulated by Hans Kelsen, a legal advisor to the ministry of war, for the federal reform of Austria. One of the numerous plans for reform submitted to the emperor the previous month, Kelsen's plan differed from the usual scheme in that it was designed to prevent economic disaster if the empire were to break up.\textsuperscript{21} In the hope that the plan would retain some

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{19}Lansing to Ekengren, Washington, October 19, 1918, \textit{United States Foreign Relations, 1918}, Suppl. 1, Vol. I, p. 368.
\item \textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
form of unity in the monarchy, Emperor Charles called on Kelsen to put it into practice.

Kelsen's proposal was to dismiss the Hussarek cabinet and replace it with a commission made up of representatives of the nationalities empowered to cooperate in the dissolution of the monarchy "in agreement with the nationalities . . . that were establishing themselves as independent states." Kelsen hoped that his commission would "further the possibility of drawing together the new national states into a Central European federation." When the formation of the new body was announced, Kelsen argued, the emperor should state his willingness to head such a federation in some manner. The dynasty, however, should not hinder the creation of a union of states. To be most effective, the commission should be led by a pacifist of international reputation; Kelsen therefore proposed that Lammasch be appointed chairman.

Kelsen was not the only person proposing that Lammasch head the government. Indeed, Lammasch was being mentioned more and more frequently as a suitable candidate for minister-president. As noted earlier, the emperor had previously considered the aging law professor as a possible addition to the Hussarek cabinet, but now many people, even from abroad, advised Charles to select Lammasch for the high office. Redlich, for example, called for

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22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., pp. 45-46.

Lammasch’s appointment as the best hope of Austria to obtain the trust of Wilson and the Entente.  

The frequent mention of Lammasch’s name during the first few weeks of October gave rise to widespread rumors of a ministry headed by the law professor. Various members of parliament, especially the South Slav deputies, believed that Lammasch would be called to form a cabinet. Vienna newspapers also reported the possibility of a Lammasch ministry. Throughout the early part of October Lammasch, Meinl, and Redlich discussed the chances of forming a government and conferred with various imperial officials. So far, however, there were only rumors; Redlich himself stated that nothing positive was known about a possible Lammasch government.

While waiting for more definite news on the question of a ministry, the three principal members of the Meinl group sent a message to the American government asking for a lenient peace. The idea for the telegram was originated by Lammasch. After Meinl and Redlich agreed to the suggestion, they dispatched a message to Lansing asking the secretary of state to warn President Wilson not to make the terms of peace too harsh. Stern demands from the Entente, they argued, would only revive German militarism. The telegram

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27 Entry of October 3, 1918, ibid., p. 296.

28 Entry of October 10, 1918, ibid., p. 298.

29 Entry of October 18, 1918, ibid., p. 304.
added that "henceforth German people will not allow itself to be dictated to by
... and ... enforced authority ... . The German people, however, can
only carry out this program in a manner fitting its own circumstances, tradi-
tions and ideals."30 The message was sent on October 19.

Shortly after the message was sent the rumors of a Lammasch ministry
became true. As the empire began to break up, political power was offered to
Lammasch. On October 21, 1918, Austro-German politicians, in accordance
with the provisions of the October Manifesto, formed a provisional assembly
and proclaimed a new Austrian state composed of the German-speaking areas.31
On the same day Hussarek and his ministers, who had first tendered their res-
ignations on October 11,32 left office. The only way to prevent anarchy was to
appoint a government to carry out an orderly liquidation of the administrative
system of the empire.33 For this purpose, Emperor Charles presented Lam-
masch with a request to head a commission patterned after the proposal made
by Kelsen.34 Lammasch accepted on October 22.

Lammasch at first planned to form a representative commission as sug-
gested by Kelsen, who now advised him in constitutional matters. He attempted

30Telegram to Secretary of State Lansing, as quoted in part in Baker,
34Kelsen memorandum, n. d., Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler,
to set up an executive committee of the united national governments under his presidency. The bases of this committee were to be the recognition of the national states, representation of these states at the peace conference, settlement of conflicting territorial claims, the transference of the central administration to the new states, the signing of an armistice, and the maintenance of order and food supplies during the time of the dissolution of the old empire.

On the twenty-fourth of the month Lammasch tried and failed to form the commission. He contacted representatives of the nationalities to arrange support for the committee and found little enthusiasm for the plan. Although the South Slavs, Poles, and Germans agreed with the basic idea of the proposed body, the Czechs declined to take part in any Austrian ministry. Meinl had conferred with several Czech representatives and reported their refusal to cooperate to Lammasch. Karel Kramar, one of the Czechs consulted, said that neither he nor anyone of his nationality could join a body that resembled an Austrian ministry "no matter what the program was," since "they felt bound to undertake nothing without the definite agreement of the Entente."


36 Telegram from Emperor Charles agreeing to his committee, n. p., October 24, 1918, quoted in ibid., p. 261.


39 Quoted in Glaise-Horstenau, The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, p. 262. See also the memorandum from Lammasch to Redlich, n. p.,
Slovenes, at first agreeable to the proposed committee, reversed their position and refused, probably at the inducement of the Czechs.  

When Lammasch failed to organize the commission, he had two choices: either to resign or to establish an ordinary imperial ministry. Before he reported his lack of success to the emperor, Lammasch conferred with Kelsen and Redlich about the two courses available. The latter argued that Lammasch should form an imperial government since his pacifist reputation would greatly aid Austria at the peace conference. Although Kelsen advised against Redlich's suggestion, Lammasch, hesitant at first, finally agreed to propose the creation of an ordinary cabinet to the emperor. This cabinet was to have the same program as that of Kelsen's commission. 

Thus Kelsen's idea of a representative commission formed the basis for the last government of the Austro-Hungarian empire: the ministry of liquidation, headed by Lammasch. The prospective minister-president hopefully explained to the emperor that this ministry, if appointed, would "be able to count on the sympathy of public opinion in the whole of Austria," including the Christian Socialists, the Social Democrats, and the Slav parties. In addition, his


government "would have the best effect on the Entente and on public opinion in the Entente countries." Emperor Charles agreed to the proposal.

However, the optimism expressed by Lammasch soon proved to be exaggerated. Within a day it was discovered that the political parties could not be relied upon to negotiate; the best that could be expected of them was a passive toleration of an imperial government. Lammasch told the emperor that any cooperation by the nationalities and the political parties depended on their personal feelings towards the members of the new government and especially towards the minister-president. Obviously referring to himself, Lammasch added that "only persons who kept aloof from the pro-war agitation, and had not compromised themselves by interference in national politics, would come under consideration."44

The Lammasch government was formed on October 25, 1918. The list of ministers was, however, not officially signed by the emperor until Charles returned from a trip to troubled Hungary on October 27. Most of the members of the new cabinet were former ministers of the Hussarek government, but Lammasch wished to add some friends and supporters.45 The new minister-president asked Polzer-Hoditz to take the position of minister of interior, but

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43 Ibid.

44 Telephone message of Kelsen with the emperor, n. p., n. d., quoted in Ibid. This message is included in the memorandum sent by Lammasch to Redlich, n. p., n. d., in Redlich, 'Heinrich Lammasch als Ministerpräsident," Lammasch and Sperl, Heinrich Lammasch, p. 171.

45 For a complete list of ministers, see Glaise-Horstenau, The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, p. 263.
the latter refused since he thought that the appointment of the Hungarian Julius Andrásy as the minister of foreign affairs was inappropriate when the Magyars no longer participated in the common administration of the dual monarchy.

Two new additions to the cabinet were Ignaz Seipel as minister for social welfare and Joseph Redlich as finance minister. Lammasch feared that the inclusion of Seipel, a Catholic prelate, in the ministry might arouse anticlerical opposition and wanted to appoint a Jew as a balance. For this purpose, he originally proposed Julius Tandler as minister of health. However, he decided not to appoint Tandler when it was pointed out that Redlich was of Jewish background.

Lammasch and his ministers had two major objectives in internal affairs: to facilitate the transference of the government administration to the new national authorities and to retain some form of unity among the states of the empire if possible. Emperor Charles and Lammasch agreed that the ministry of liquidation was to make the breakup of the monarchy as peaceful and bloodless as possible. Secondly, Lammasch hoped that his government could provide a focus for the federal union suggested by Charles in the October Manifesto. Even though the Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, and Yugoslavs no longer participated in an Austrian government, Lammasch still thought the revolution


could be directed toward a federal state. Redlich was not so optimistic. He realized that he was probably the last finance minister of the empire.

In reality, the ministry of liquidation could do very little to achieve any objective. Shortly after the ministry was constituted Croatia and other South Slav areas seceded from the monarchy, Czechoslovakia declared itself a republic, and the Habsburg armies broke up at the front. The new nations arising from the remains of the empire had already begun to take over the functions of the administration. This was also the case in German-Austria, where a new government had organized with the Socialist Karl Renner at its head. A constitution had been drawn up which, while not mentioning a republic, ignored the monarchy.

What influence the last government of the Habsburgs did have with the Succession States was due to the presence of Lammasch as minister-president. Lammasch's reputation as a pacifist and enlightened conservative was the primary reason for any cooperation with or at least toleration of the ministry of


liquidation. The two new nations of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, who owed so much to the Entente, refused to have any dealings with a government still at war with their benefactors. However, the Czechs, in the interest of preventing the spread of internal unrest to their own country, promised to continue to supply foodstuffs to Austria.  

The Czech leader Thomas Masaryk credited the Lammasch government with good intentions but doubted if the new minister-president had any real influence in the empire. The Poles were more cooperative. Although they had seceded from the monarchy to join an independent Poland, they kept a representative in the Lammasch ministry.

The new government of German-Austria was more willing to cooperate with the Lammasch cabinet than those of any of the Succession States. Otto Bauer, a leader of the Social Democrats and one of the founders of the new Austrian state, had long recognized the similarity of aims between his party and the loyal pacifists represented by Lammasch. Bauer thought that Lammasch personally gave meaning to the position of this group. He, however, felt that the Salzburg professor would not retain his position and that the old conservatives would regain power.

A second socialist leader, Karl Renner, disagreed

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with the purposes of the ministry of liquidation. He said that the liquidation of
the administration should be carried out by representatives of the national gov-
ernments, not by an imperial ministry. The socialist leaders realized that
the coexistence of the two governments—monarchical and republican—was
impossible. In a short time, the new would push aside the old.

While Lammasch and his cabinet tried to guide the dissolution of the empire
the foreign minister, Count Andrassy, had only one main task—to end the war.
He was also eager to prevent revolution in his native Hungary. These two
objectives, he thought, could be achieved only by an immediate and separate
peace. Andrassy convinced Emperor Charles of the need for such a peace
and, on October 26, the Austrian monarch sent a message to Emperor William
of Germany explaining the impossibility of continuing the war. Austria was in-
capable of more fighting, Charles said, and there would be serious trouble in
the empire and great danger to his dynasty if the war did not end. Therefore,
he had decided to ask the Allies for a separate peace and an immediate armistice
within the next day.

Despite a brotherly plea from Emperor William not to sign a separate


60 Bauer, Die Österreichische Revolution, p. 114.


peace, Charles and Andrassy were determined to go ahead. On October 27 the foreign minister began the draft of a message to President Wilson expressing Austria's agreement with the conditions of peace that the president had stipulated in his message of October 19, that is, the independence of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The question of how to state Austria's willingness for a separate peace to the president caused Andrassy some difficulty. Some advisors in the foreign ministry argued for a forthright statement of the severed alliance from Germany. Lammasch, however, suggested that vaguer wording be used so the possibility of united action between the Central Powers could be kept open. The premier's idea was adopted, and the note that was sent to Wilson concluded with the broad statement that Austria was willing to begin peace discussions immediately "without waiting for the outcome of other negotiations."  

Although Andrassy's note was an open request for a separate peace, it drew little response from Washington. While President Wilson was considering a reply, Masaryk denounced the Austrian offer as "meanness and duplicity." The Czech leader reminded the American government that the president had promised that Austria must deal with an independent Czechoslovakia. He,

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66 Masaryk to Lansing, Washington, October 29, 1918, ibid., p. 858.
therefore, suggested that Wilson not answer the Austrian note. The president followed this course, although he had the Vienna government told orally that its peace offer was being referred to the Allied Powers.

The tasks of the ministry of liquidation were essentially concluded by the attempt to begin negotiations for an armistice and by the formation of the Succession States. While Lammasch had failed to retain any unity in the Habsburg lands, the transition to the new states had been largely peaceful. Although the Lammasch government had failed to sign an armistice based on a modified Point Ten, fighting had largely ceased. Several ministers therefore suggested on October 31 that the government resign. Others were in favor of this action if only to allow the emperor to ask them to continue and thus limit their activity and responsibility. Redlich argued for the latter course of action. Seipel and Lammasch, however, opposed the resignation of the ministry. The minister-president thought that the government should remain in office because the armistice negotiations would begin soon. Lammasch finally agreed to accept

67 Ibid.

68 Memorandum of Lansing, Washington, October 31, 1918, ibid., p. 429.


72 Ibid.
the resignations of those ministers whose functions had ceased to exist. 73

Little remained that the ministers could do. Lammasch could not even take an active role in parliament. 74 Redlich realized the precarious situation of the ministry when Renner told him he had taken over the House of Lord building for the new government. 75 Finally, Lammasch became convinced of the futility of continuing. On November 6 he offered his resignation to the emperor as he felt his mission was over. Seipel, however, disagreed and the two men visited Charles, who persuaded Lammasch to continue as minister-president. 76

Nonetheless, the end was approaching. By the first week in November Lammasch and the remaining members of his ministry could do nothing but act as personal advisors to the emperor, who was now isolated from his realm. 77

Friends of Emperor Charles feared for his safety on account of the furore of republicanism sweeping the country. The presence of the Habsburg ruler in Vienna also impeded the union with Germany desired by many German–Austrians. Therefore, on November 9 Lammasch, Redlich, Seipel, Renner, and others met to draw up a proclamation ending Habsburg rule. Since Charles would never

76 Entries of November 6 and 8, 1918, ibid., p. 315.
have formally abdicated, Seipel wrote a clause stating only that the emperor renounced all control over government functions. On November 11, 1918, Lammasch and the home department minister, Edmund Gayer, brought the decree to Emperor Charles, who, after some hesitation, signed it. The task—and existence—of the ministry of liquidation was over.

The establishment of the Austrian Republic the day after Emperor Charles signed his last royal proclamation terminated the efforts of Meinl, Lammasch, and Redlich to preserve the monarchy. These men and their colleagues, such as Foerster, advocated that the continuance of Habsburg rule could be ensured only by a liberal reform of the empire along lines of national autonomy and federalization and by making an early peace with the Entente Powers. During the war, but especially in the last two years, Meinl, Lammasch, and Redlich had worked to accomplish the two goals which they regarded as essential for the continued existence of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Their efforts to preserve the Habsburg empire during 1917 and 1918 were marked by rising hopes, followed by sudden disappointment. First there were the hopes aroused by the chance of the appointment of a liberal ministry headed by Lammasch or Redlich in the summer of 1917. But instead of a new program under either of the two men, the conservative government of Seidler remained in office. Then the optimism of the members of the Meinl group was again aroused during the winter of 1917-1918 by the conversations conducted by Meinl

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and Lammasch in Switzerland. Lammasch's discussions with Herron seemed especially hopeful. But their talks produced few results. Finally, Lammasch and his associates obtained the political power necessary to achieve their goals only when it was too late to do so.

There are two broad categories of reasons for the failure of the Meinl group to accomplish peace and reform: the attitude and character of the men themselves, and, to a greater extent, factors in the political situation beyond their control. These two groups of causes for failure, or combinations of them, may be distinguished in each of the situations Meinl, Lammasch, and Redlich found themselves in 1917 and 1918.

The attitude of Lammasch towards the minister-presidency was one reason for the failure to form a peace ministry in the summer of 1917. Indeed, there was a confusion of motives during the emperor's search for a new minister-president, but Lammasch's hesitation to accept the responsibility of government on two occasions remains a significant factor. True, the law professor was an aging and ill man unprepared by an academic life for the arduous task of leading a state. However, at a time when the difficulties were even greater, Lammasch no longer offered reasons to decline the office but accepted the responsibility when he formed the ministry of liquidation.

Meinl's and Lammasch's attitude towards their peace activities was a factor, though admittedly not the major one, contributing to the lack of success in the conversations in Switzerland in the winter of 1917-1918. Both men were unduly confident about the possible success of their peace efforts. Lammasch was particularly over optimistic. He appears to have thought he had the full
support of the emperor for his plan, even on the day Charles sent a radically different proposal to the American president.

Another element in the failure of the peace talks—one which combines the views of the Meinl group and factors beyond their control—was the attitude of the Western Powers and the inability of Meinl and Lammasch to understand it fully. Meinl revealed a serious misunderstanding of his country's enemies when he proposed to Herron that the Entente take the peace initiative to a militarily superior Germany. Lammasch, the loyal monarchist, did not realize in his discussions with Herron the degree to which Wilsonian principles had come to dominate American thinking. In general, the conversations showed that the members of the Meinl group did not understand how the years of war had hardened Allied attitudes.

The relationship between the members of the Meinl group and Foreign Minister Czernin was a second element in their lack of success which combines the attitudes of the group and a factor over which they had no influence. Meinl and his colleagues, convinced as they were of Czernin's antagonism to peace and reform, were unable to cooperate with the foreign minister. However, Czernin, before his resignation in the spring of 1918, possessed a degree of influence with the emperor that the Meinl group did not have. Jealous of the prerogatives of his office, convinced of the impossibility of obtaining a separate peace, and suspicious of intrigues, the foreign minister did not hesitate to use his influence against the Meinl group.

Besides the enmity of Czernin and the attitudes of the Allies, there were two other major contributing factors to the failure of peace and reform that were
beyond the control of the Meinl group: the personality of Emperor Charles and the extent of German domination over the monarchy. Charles was in a difficult situation. A gentle man, untrained for the task of ruling, he was called to the throne at a time when the monarchy was in grave danger. Eager to help his peoples but loyal to the Habsburg traditions, he could not make up his mind between the necessity for reform and change and the hope that a German victory was soon to come. Unable to decide on a definite course of action his vacillation amounted to adherence to a conservative course and cost him his crown. Twice his indecision affected members of the Meinl group: in the summer of 1917, when he turned away from a liberal peace ministry, and in the spring of 1918, when he swung again to the hope of victory and rejected the Lammasch peace formula.

Without the firm backing of the emperor, Meinl, Lammasch, and Redlich could not achieve their goals because of German domination. Austria was too dependent on economic and military aid from her ally to follow an independent course. Thus, when Berlin disapproved of a reform ministry headed by Redlich in July, 1917, Emperor Charles was forced to abandon the idea. Germany also protested Lammasch's peace activities. The apparent German military superiority in early 1918, together with the influence of Czernin, caused the emperor to reject the course for peace proposed by Lammasch. Germany even argued against the Austrian attempts at a separate peace in the last month of the war when there was little hope left.

When Lammasch was appointed minister-president in October, 1918, it was too late for the Meinl group to obtain peace and reform. Indeed, it had been too
late for some time. The moderately liberal formulas of the members of the Meinl group could no longer claim support from the dissident elements in the empire. The Lammasch ministry could not even achieve Allied recognition of the most earnestly sought goal: peace. It is ironic that, after continued failure, the Meinl group was perhaps most successful in the ministry headed by Lammasch. Their political power lasted two weeks and their task was to liquidate the empire they had striven to save.
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