

# MARIA THERESA

By WILLY ANDREAS

*Now that the war in Europe is approaching its seventh year, the memory of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) is recalled to our minds. In that war, the small state of Prussia, after maintaining itself against the armies of nearly all Europe, emerged as a power of the first rank. This has made Frederick the Great an almost legendary figure of universal interest and has obscured the personality of his principal adversary, Maria Theresa of Austria. She was one of the outstanding women in German history, as much the embodiment of her country as Frederick was of Prussia. Their antagonism was the beginning of that tragic rivalry for leadership which was not solved till our day with the creation of Greater Germany.*

*The historical essay has not been greatly developed in Germany, profound and voluminous studies being more in accordance with the German character. The following essay is a fine exception to this rule. In a few pages Professor Andreas of Heidelberg University presents a historical period, a great personality, and their interrelationship.*

**M**ARIA Theresa, born in 1717 the daughter of Charles VI of Hapsburg, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, was educated like any other princess, not at all as if she were to rule a great empire one day. Taught chiefly by Jesuits, she learned Latin, French, and Spanish. She had always enjoyed music, and her acting in little amateur-dramatic performances was applauded. Her childhood passed pleasantly. During the winter the family lived in the Hofburg, the palace in Vienna, spending the warmer months at the Favorite Palace, where there were lawns and trimmed trees in a park in French style. Old Vienna with its St. Stephen's cathedral and its comfortable elegance looked down upon this carefree childhood. The imperial family lived in a simple patrician style; only on solemn occasions was there a display of the traditional Spanish etiquette with its stiff formality. The children were hardly affected by it.

It was not long before the court poet Metastasio found occasion to dedicate a graceful little operetta to the young archduchess. It was her marriage in 1736 which he glorified by the gift of his melodious rococo art. Maria Theresa was genuinely in love with her handsome, gracious young husband, the Duke of Lorraine. Now began the happiest years of her life. All she had to be was wife, daughter, and mother, and she was a model of all three. There was neither ambition nor desire in her to take an interest in politics.

The premature death of her father in 1740 destroyed the idyll of an almost cloudless youth. There was no male heir. According to the dynastic law, she was obliged to rule. In the same year as the twenty-eight-year-old Frederick of Prussia, she ascended the throne. The Venetian Ambassador, one of those gentlemen from San Marco who were regarded as the subtlest observers of the courts of Europe,

reported at the time that she brought no knowledge of affairs whatever to the throne. The task confronting the twenty-three-year-old girl was gigantic.

## HER LEGACY

The Hapsburg Empire was at that time not much more than a bundle of kingdoms and countries, each of which tenaciously clung to its own ways and stood on its ancient constitution. All these territories lay scattered over Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Hungary; Slavic, Germanic, Magyar, and Latin national components lived there in a haphazard medley. Economically, the territories were separated by tolls and duties; juristically, by differing law codes. The only thing that united this motley, diverging structure was the person of the monarch. So far, however, this common ruler had not systematically developed the military and economic resources of the Empire or forced them into a single, encompassing order.

So Maria Theresa stepped onto very insecure ground after her father's death. He had handed her an empire loaded with debts, in hopeless financial misery. The administrative apparatus was cumbersome, lacking a vigorous unifying force. The army, once so glorious but defeated in the last few campaigns, was scattered far over the continent, poorly equipped, with scarcely half the full muster of men. An onerous legacy and a bad moment! For the atmosphere of Europe was sultry, and the mood of the subjects of this fragile structure discontented or at least skeptical. Even before the Emperor's death, during his illness, the Venetian envoy predicted the dissolution of this great monarchy; and when the dignified young woman, who looked more charming than ever in her black mourning dress, succeeded to the throne, even the man in the street shook

his head and foresaw the worst.

If in one of her first acts of government Maria Theresa appointed her "most beloved husband" as coregent, her main intention was probably to clear the way for him to the crown of the Holy Roman Empire. Just as little as she allowed any doubts to arise over the fact that she alone was entitled to rule her patrimonial dominions, did he have any thought of trying to supplant his wife in her realm. He was content with the role of Prince Consort and his patriarchal dignity as head of the family, in which Maria Theresa desired to see him acknowledged and honored.

She proceeded with caution and restraint during these first few months as her inexperience did not allow her to trust her own wisdom yet. At the same time, however, she regarded the counselors of her father, whose disunity perplexed her, with suspicion. She sought illuminating advice, and stepped into a labyrinth. Moreover, she regarded these old men, as she once put it, as "rather decrepit." Nevertheless, in her uncertainty and sense of responsibility, she could not bring herself to dismiss men who were still indispensable. At first her most powerful means of rule was a graciousness praised by all. Although this quality may have made it easier for her to govern, the storm approaching immediately after her accession was not to be exercised simply by the charm of feminine irresistibility.

#### CALAMITIES

In the very first year of her reign, war broke out with Prussia. King Frederick laid claim to Silesia on the basis of old treaties. At the Vienna court, the young ruler had the reputation of being merely a frivolous aesthete; and it was also under a misapprehension regarding the nature and power of his state, which he had inherited from his much-smiled-at father, the Soldier King. The war turned out unfavorably for Maria Theresa. Hardly had the Prussians defeated her only army when other states turned against her—Bavaria, Saxony, France, and the Spanish. The first and second Silesian wars represented Maria Theresa's most turbulent time as well as the truly heroic epoch of her life.

With endless courage she bore the blows following upon each other, although she was expecting her fifth child; her resilience did not

break when Silesia, Upper Austria, and Bohemia were lost one after another. She was inspired by a courage bordering on violence at that time, and she did not shrink from demanding the greatest sacrifices from her subjects. But by now the population was ready to follow its ruler who worked so hard in spite of the handicap of pregnancy and who was so human in her behavior toward them.

Notwithstanding all effort of will and statesmanlike sagacity, however, Maria Theresa was no match for Frederick. She was only too conscious of the fact that she was merely a woman; and if during the first Silesian war she once said that she would like best to mount a horse herself in order to ride against the enemy at the head of her army, she would have been the last to ignore the limitations set her by nature. A military leader like him she could never be, and so she had on the whole to be content with calling the troops to the colors and seeking to inspire them with enthusiasm, as well as with constantly spurring on her hesitating and irresolute generals. When opinions clashed in the war council, she sometimes found the right solution; but she was beyond reach of the actual campaigns, especially as she grew stout with the years. Hence part of Frederick's successes can be ascribed to his personal influence, an influence she was not able to exert.

The conclusion of the Dresden Peace Treaty (1745) sealed the loss of Silesia. What she got in return from Prussia was the recognition of her husband as German Emperor. This was a sad end to so long and tenacious a struggle. People of her environment spoke of seeing the first signs of the fading of the Empress's youth, although she was only thirty-one at that time. There was a slight, gradual change in her character. The bloom of youthful hopes and dreams was gone. No more than three years later she was heard to say that for nothing in the world would she want to begin life again. Resignation cast its first shadows over her. The crown weighed heavily on her head.

#### OPPOSED AND YET ALIKE

Maria Theresa wished for the devotion of her subjects, she wanted to be popular; she felt repugnance for the severe manner of Frederick, the hermit of Sanssouci, who disregarded the feelings of others and coldly went his own way.



EMPERESS MARIA THERESA

The whole rhythm of her governing was different. To her comfortable Austrian nature the Prussian character always appeared as something strange, much as she tried here and there to learn from this tremendously efficient state that ran like clockwork. Hence Maria Theresa must have been deeply hurt when even at her court admiration was expressed for the hated man and when her own son and later successor Joseph began to worship the great hero and his regnancy.

Implacable as Maria Theresa was in repudiating any community between her own ideology and that of Frederick, both of them, seen from the point of view of large historical trends, belonged closer together than the embittered woman would ever have admitted. No doubt her patriarchal rule was of an entirely different shading from that of King Frederick's; but as enlightened monarchs, as representatives of a moral conception of the state, they occupied more or less the same historical level: the motherly mistress of the Hapsburg Empire and the first servant of his state, as Frederick called himself. Both ruled in the enlightened style of mature absolutism, which strove for more than merely the unleashing of monarchical egoism; it wished rather to serve the country and the welfare of the subjects by setting limits to itself delineated by a sense of responsibility. Both rulers spent themselves in tireless work for the welfare of the whole as they saw it. In this way, they embodied a superior type of monarch. The free-thinking king of Protestant Prussia as well as the pious ruler of a preponderantly Catholic empire stood in the evening light of the period of the Enlightenment, although ideologically Frederick was more indebted to it than Maria Theresa. For that attribute which represented the best and most profound side of her nature was her motherliness. Full of warmth, it flowed from her innermost being into all the arteries of her empire.

#### MOTHER OF HER COUNTRIES

"The common and first mother of all her countries" was what Maria Theresa wanted to be, seeking her sole reward and sole happiness in the love of her subjects. In the letters of the ruler as well as of the mother is expressed her innermost nature in indefatigable solicitude for affairs both big and small. To see as much as possible with her own eyes, to keep informed about everything, was her ardent endeavor. Therein and in conscientious devotion to duty, she was fully equal to her opponent on the Prussian throne. Of course, strong-mindedness and energy were everywhere essential to the nature of absolutism. But in this case it happened to be inherent also in the nature of the ruler that, like a true housewife, she took an interest even in details: in war time, for instance, in the field bakeries, and in peace in

the punctual payment of some workman or other.

As, on the other hand, she was well aware of how much public opinion and the confidence of the subjects meant for any government, she made a point of not impairing it. In a truly feminine desire for recognition, she strove for the affection of her subjects, and she suffered when she saw her good intentions misinterpreted or believed to perceive that her popularity was waning. But she was not prepared to court the favor of the people or to sacrifice a measure she regarded as necessary just in order to quiet the crowd, for her actions were guided by a strongly developed sense of rulership and a feeling of moral responsibility. Indeed, in her fine, straight sense of what was right and what was attainable, she possessed a reliable barometer. In contrast to her century's enthusiasm for reason, she felt no inclination toward constitutional and philosophical considerations. Yet her glance did not cease to fly across to the man on the Prussian throne, who was at the same time a king and a philosopher. And the strong impression with its unpleasant secondary sensations he made upon her forced her to a certain extent to occupy herself spiritually with Frederick, with his ideology and his state. Her decision to instigate reforms in her country was deeply related to the painful lessons the hated man had inflicted upon her.

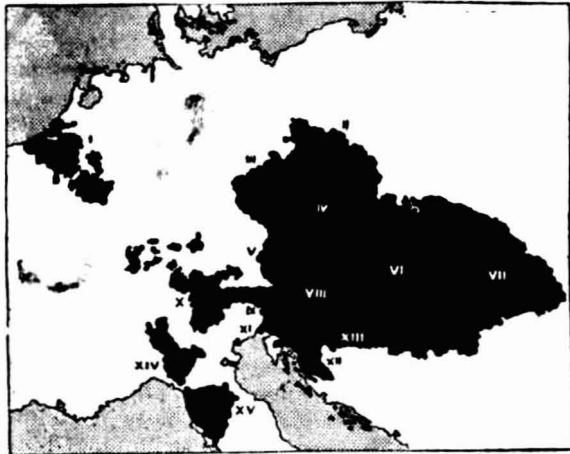
#### WORK OF PEACE

Out of the grave distress of the Silesian wars was born the state reform. Out of the great task of maintaining the Empire, which had managed with more or less trifling although bitterly felt losses to escape the threatened downfall, flowed the necessity of a reform of domestic conditions. The conservative principle of its foreign policy kindled the progressive principle of its domestic policy. In this respect, this quiet but magnificent work of peace, which lacked the heroic nimbus of the war years, also took on the coloring of a struggle or at least of a competition with that man up there in the north, and what the Empress decreed in the interior of her states was simultaneously the prologue to an approaching new conflict with Prussia.

Maria Theresa did not enter upon her work because of an illuminating reformatorial inspiration; she and her counselors hardly had any definite reform program in mind. Although her administrative deeds were most fertile and profound in their effect, she was not a woman of system: she acted on the spur of the moment, proceeding from experience and the knowledge that the traditional regime had failed and was to blame for Austria's defeat, that hence what she needed more than anything else was a more efficient army. This, in turn, required increased revenues and a better budgeting and administration of state finances. These were

obviously her primary considerations, and they led from one link to the next. Thus finally, without any architectonic plan, a chain revealed itself, a great network of reforms in all the spheres of administration, of social and economic conditions, and a powerful, life-giving will throbbled through the whole.

Prussia had to weld a sum of provinces into a uniform state structure; but essentially all these provinces were of German blood. Austria, on the other hand, embraced large countries and nations of the most diversified races, languages, and cultures, scattered as they



The Hapsburg Empire in 1740

(I) Austrian Netherlands; (II) Silesia; (III) Bohemia; (IV) Moravia; (V) Austria; (VI) Hungary; (VII) Transylvania; (VIII) Styria; (IX) Carinthia; (X) Tyrol; (XI) Carniola; (XII) Croatia; (XIII) Slavonia; (XIV) Milan; (XV) Tuscany.

were all over Europe, quite apart from the fact that Hapsburg had also to represent the imperial dignity in Germany and had to balance the requirements of this dignity with its own widely ramified requirements thrusting beyond Germany. Moreover, Prussia had had the inestimable good fortune of its dynasty already having produced in the course of the preceding century outstanding pioneers of the rank of the Grand Elector and King Frederick William, while Theresa's Austria could not look back on any prominent personalities on the throne.

It was in the traditional structure of the administration, in the independence of the countries and the privileged classes, that Maria Theresa had discovered the root of the evil, and so it was at this point that she began with her reforms. Above all, she worked for the independence and increase of the power of the Crown as represented by herself. The administrative system was to be the plastic expression of a uniform ruling activity and especially of her imperial will.

#### CONSOLIDATING THE MONARCHY

All over Europe at that time, the forms of absolute monarchy were being filled with the same ideas. Everywhere the expanding net-

work of the royal authority was tightened by the same moving force. Maria Theresa, too, was working toward unifying the government in her own hands, step by step and with sweeping success. Thenceforth the tasks of state were handled by five great central organizations: domestic administration, justice, finance, national defense, foreign affairs. This unifying influence was also felt in the reform of the provincial administration. A new spirit, adverse to territorialism and favoring the whole of the state, was wafted into these semi-independent bureaucratic governments in which professional officials came to rule as representatives of the Empress. At a lower level, finally, the Empress created the district offices, interpolating them between the authorities of the particular country and the centuries-old urban and rural administration with its traditional rights. The subjects, who had hitherto only known the power of the feudal lords, were now confronted by the state itself as embodied in the district chiefs. The new district offices waged a stubborn guerrilla war in the name of the monarchy against the vested nobility, magistrates, landowners, and church incorporations.

In this way, the monarchy and the state rose, and the provinces and aristocracy declined. Unity overcame manifoldness, special rights and privileges were pierced and leveled by the equalizing work of the newly trained officialdom under Maria Theresa. The position of the nobility was undermined, but on the other hand new possibilities were opened for it in the army and the state services. Half peacefully, half belligerently, the state and its servants penetrated into the hostile spheres of power.

The fact that no actual constitutional changes were needed was indicative of the rule of this mistress, but also of the weakness of those doomed structures. Maria Theresa proceeded gently and without destroying the traditional outward forms. Nevertheless, she was not spared friction with the heirs of feudalism. The pampered aristocracy, accustomed to acknowledge nothing in the world beside itself and prone to look down haughtily upon the reformers, especially if they were commoners, did not take to the changed conditions very easily.

#### STATE AND ECONOMY

It was the poor handling of finances on the part of her predecessors which the Empress, who found herself stripped of funds when she assumed power, blamed as the main source of her difficulties. To bring order into this confusion, into this welter of debts, was in her eyes the most important task next to strengthening her army. Although by nature she did not have much taste for matters of finance, the young ruler conscientiously familiarized herself with this thorny field. How much more un-

favorable was the ground here than in Prussia, which had systematically paid off its debts and by an iron rule of economy built up a reserve fund! While Prussia could, when hard pressed from outside, reap the fruits of the lifework of its great kings, Maria Theresa was almost prostrated by the burden of a worn-out tradition and a miserable system of state finances. Part of Maria Theresa's personal character was manifested in the attempts toward an improved and more modern taxation which endeavored to shift the burden onto stronger shoulders and hence was expanded to include the property of the nobility and the Church.

Not once did Maria Theresa dare to abuse public revenue for her own person or to satisfy some imperial whim. What she did insist upon was that her numerous progeny be fitted out in a manner befitting their station. In her own demands, however, she was on the whole modest. But she had the open hand of a real prince, giving gladly to the poor and rewarding services in her entourage. Endowed with the Austrian taste for comfortable living, she had none of the parsimony of the King of Prussia. As in the other European states, mercantilism provided the slogan for the economic life of Austria, too. Maria Theresa's generation embraced the theories to which Colbert had given classical expression. The system was more or less the same all over Europe. It was based on the privileges granted industry and on the promotion of native trade. It was aimed at stimulating and increasing the domestic production of goods, at keeping out foreign competition. The tremendous activity of the mercantilist governments was not lacking in Maria Theresa's government. A flood of decrees gushed forth over the countries of the Empire. Encouraging and guiding down to the last detail, the authorities intervened in the economic life in order to create a good market for domestic products. In its striving to make use of all resources, for economic consolidation and independence of foreign countries, mercantilism in Maria Theresa's empire, too, reflected the conception of concentration of power in the state.

In other fields also, the Empress made her choice among the general demands of the spirit of the times, with much tact and without boasting. Among them was the desire for a quick, cheap, and impartial administration of justice, which Maria Theresa felt as strongly as the other German rulers of that busy century. In a woman with a sense of justice as keen as hers, a response was bound to be found by ideas similar to those which stimulated her opponent Frederick to instigate the reform of the judicial system in Prussia. In Austria, too, the trend toward unity and uniformity gave birth to great plans of codification, as were so popular among the statesmen of that time.

So a new life made itself felt throughout the

administration, although it did not develop to full maturity everywhere. The spirit of the time hammered at outlived usages. The rhythm of the state may have been more leisurely, the inspiring will from above less cutting and less rationally colored than in Frederick's Prussia, but the final aim was kindred.

#### DIPLOMATIC SENSATION

During all this intense work to consolidate her state, Maria Theresa never took her eyes off her former opponent. She had created a well-armed, firmly united Austria. Progress had been made. Maria Theresa possessed a larger army than at the beginning of her rule. The army was better paid, better trained and equipped, and also more efficiently led than before. The artillery was no longer inferior to that of Prussia, as had been the case during the Silesian wars. Although she did not care for long travel and hated to leave her beloved Vienna—where she was idolized for her affability and where the people regarded themselves so to speak as members of the great imperial family—the Empress did not spare herself the trouble of following the maneuvers in Bohemia and Moravia on several occasions on horseback. On a medal struck during that time she was already called the "soldier mother."

Not once did she give up hope of regaining Silesia. At the very least she intended to smooth the way toward this for her successors. It is true that for a long time she avoided any conflict; her actions and her words were directed at maintaining peace. But a new turn was brought about by her Minister Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, whose rising influence had finally displaced the old Ministers. This strange, hermitlike *grand seigneur* with his long face and arrogant pale-blue eyes, a true representative of the Enlightenment and the rococo age, although without a trace of its gracefulness, took a decisive hand in shaping Austria's foreign policy and thus contributed his share toward changing the face of Europe. It was he who was responsible for the great reversal in the relationship between the Empire and France.

For more than two centuries the Hapsburgs had been fighting the Kings of France. This antagonism was one of the firm historical factors on the Continent; flaring up again and again into explosions, it overshadowed all other conflicts in which Austria was involved. This tradition seemed irrevocably rooted. That the two powers who had so often been adversaries could ever join hands seemed as improbable to the people of that time as for water and fire to agree. It was an unheard-of revolution in high politics when Kaunitz not only removed the former tension but actually buried the old enmity and gained the France of Louis XV as an ally for the Austria of Maria Theresa.

Kaunitz's motive power for this policy was the hostility toward the state of Frederick the Great, which he wished to destroy with every weapon at his disposal and with the aid of any ally he could get hold of. His entire foreign policy was directed toward this goal. For Prussia it was a matter of life and death in this struggle evoked over the head of its King by Kaunitz. Ingenious and far-flung was Kaunitz's network of alliances: Frederick's former ally France and the vast Russia of Tsarina Elizabeth were to join Hapsburg's side. Saxony—an old enemy of Frederick's which, although it had got away with trifling losses, still felt vindictive—had held out hopes of its joining in the party, and it was to be expected that in case of need Maria Theresa's husband, who wore the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, could reckon on the assistance of this empire. But the French trump card was the highest one held by the State Chancellor.

#### THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

The King of Prussia, however, surrounded like a stag at bay, anticipated his enemies by invading Saxony. This time it was not a matter of conquering a new province: he had to defend himself against political encirclement by a military attack. Prussia began the war, which Kaunitz had so carefully prepared, at an earlier moment than had been provided for in Vienna. Frederick did what the opposing side had long intended. Maria Theresa and her chief adviser may have rated their allies too high and their opponent too low: seen on the whole they were in an incomparably more favorable position. Militarily, they were well armed; politically, they could rely on their own strength and on foreign aid; and Europe's public opinion favored them more than Prussia. In reality, it was Austria which was preparing for war. But her encircled opponent, only feebly supported by England, did not hesitate to appear as the wicked aggressor in the eyes of the world. What was at stake for him was the maintenance of his newly acquired position in Germany and Europe—even more, the existence of his state. It was for this that the Seven Years' War flared up.

It was Kaunitz's suggestions that Maria Theresa followed in these momentous events. According to all human and political calculations, a policy so carefully planned was bound to lead to a successful issue. This time the forces were favorably distributed. But on the opposing side there was a genius, that is, the incalculable personified, and that was what finally counted. Incomparable, carefully applied diplomatic art foundered on the most profound, most intangible power in history, a great personality. The genius shattered the work of Kaunitz, the man of routine, and

with it the hopes of a feminine heart and ruler.

The original object of controversy, Silesia, was divested of much of its significance in the mighty struggle which ensued without, however, ever losing it entirely. The whole question seemed more like an episode embedded in the giant conflict between France and England for more precious things than the possession of Silesia. But Maria Theresa regarded this war entirely as her own, she was really conducting it as the third Silesian war, and those wider perspectives did not affect her.

#### DISILLUSIONMENT AND PEACE

During these years, too, her pluck never seemed to wane. Although she did not hesitate to make use of all the resources of her Crown lands, she could not but notice the weakening of their resilience; nor did she fail to perceive that her generals were also fed up with fruitless campaigns. She can hardly ever have felt any prolonged cheerfulness in all the fluctuating fortunes of war, and even in her brave, resolute heart a sense of disappointment gradually made itself felt. Although, as a rule, she intervened more briskly and effectively in diplomatic negotiations than in military affairs, she had to see Russia's defection and France's dwindling strength. She was not spared the realization that her war aim, the reconquest of Silesia, was an illusion, and finally she only continued to carry on the dying campaign to gain some slight advantage, a small piece of conquered territory or a fortress which could be used as a pawn in the peace negotiations.

She had fought and endured in her customary stout-hearted manner, but the *élan* of her earlier years had lost some of its vigor and, even more than after the first two Silesian wars, she was seized upon by resignation. She had only reached the middle forties, yet she felt like an old woman. The pathos of her early years did not carry her along in this war, and there was, after all, not so much at stake as there had been before, when her country was threatened with annihilation. Now she could afford to bear losses: it was no longer a question of life and death. Frederick always had the collapse and destruction of his state before his mind's eye. And perhaps life shines nowhere so brightly as in the reflection of death. The Empress was not granted this reflected light. Her great days were already past.

The Hubertusburg Peace, which put an end to the Seven Years' War in 1763, gave both opponents the intact maintenance of their states. But how differently this result weighed for each of them! In the last resort, it sealed a defeat of the Hapsburgs, although the Empress felt it less as such than as a renunciation

of the plans of her youth. On the other hand, this termination of the war consolidated Frederick's Prussia and definitely placed it in the ranks of the powers. The effect upon the history of Europe was considerable, for the retention of Silesia and maintenance of Prussia's newly won position were of inestimable benefit to the future of that country. The struggle between Hapsburg and Hohenzollern for predominance in Germany had begun, a struggle which was to be decided a century later.

#### WIDOWHOOD

The end of the Seven Years' War represented a deep incision in Maria Theresa's rule. Only now did her renunciation of Silesia become a final one. After having spent the best half of her life in unfortunate wars—she wrote in a letter to her daughter Maria Antonia of Saxony—she now hoped that God would allow her to close her eyes in peace. Torn this way and that by the hopes and fears, jubilation of victory and despondency, of the last few years, she was tired now. And soon after, in 1765, the death of her husband also destroyed her happy marriage.

Sixteen times in nineteen years had she become a mother, and she also demanded fertility and many children from her daughters and the wives of her sons. Apart from a few attacks of jealousy, she had been happy. She had given all the wealth of her heart to her husband and her children. Her grief over the loss of her husband effected the final change in her nature. She cherished the memory of the deceased, cut off her beautiful long hair, and wore the dark garments of widowhood until the end of her life. The world appeared empty to her, and her letters were now often pervaded by a spirit of melancholy. But she did not let herself go; outwardly she appeared calm and amiable. At times there were even traces of her old gaiety. She did not change the timetable of her day, her activity did not decrease; for self-control and the carrying-out of one's duties were, in her eyes, among the commands of Christian behavior. But she was no longer the same woman, her innate *joie de vivre* was dimmed, and there were recurrent hours of bitterness the clearer she perceived that her son Joseph was not as easy a coregent as her late husband. To have to suffer this was for her mother's feelings perhaps the worst pain inflicted upon her by a life so rich in disappointments.

#### TWO GENERATIONS

Of course, it was not only the mother but also the ruler who felt offended: she enjoyed ruling and jealously guarded her rights. Her will to maintain herself had by no means been broken by the death of the Emperor. Her husband had, after all, only had the leading voice in the family. But otherwise he, who

enjoyed life so much, could with his easygoing, cheerful temperament never cause her any trouble. But now a new will was penetrating into spheres which hitherto she alone had dominated. With all his soul Joseph—twenty-four years old at the death of his father—entered into his new position; full of bubbling enthusiasm, full of self-confidence, he stepped to his mother's side. No less ardently than the young Empress had once done, he held out his hand to grasp the reins of government. One personality stood opposed to the other. A woman who had suffered much grief, who lost her pluck and wished at most for deliberate progress, and a young, fiery spirit filled with eagerness to accomplish great things, carried on the work of the throne. To the side of the Empress who had experienced so much misfortune, who lived for that which could be achieved and knew by experience the inertia of all things, stepped the violent hotspur who would have liked best to take the second pace before the first, who proceeded from theories and ideals to force that which ought to be onto reality. She who had found peace and quiet in Catholicism now had the representative of the Enlightenment beside her, who was consumed with restlessness and desire for reforms.

Two worlds, this mother and this son, both aware of the contrast, suffering from it and endeavoring again and again to bridge it by attempts at coming to an understanding. But although Joseph never denied his mother the respect due her and tender feelings sprang forth over and over again on both sides, they both possessed too strong a nature and too lively a temperament to be able to ignore that which separated them; they said so openly, and as the years progressed, this contrast became more pronounced instead of being mellowed. The reciprocal irritability sometimes took on such proportions that in one of her letters to Joseph written during the last years of her life the Empress exclaimed: "It is cruel to love one another and torture each other." Although Joseph would, after such reproaches, often lapse into pensive introspection and repeatedly declared himself prepared to withdraw from the coregency, he did not deviate from his convictions. More than once, with a tired gesture, with inner reluctance, she gave in to his stronger will, to the fresh life that throbbed in him.

Both, belonging together in the history of Austria and of absolutism as two generations which served on the whole the same aim, sought for a profound spiritual motivation, a moral justification of their thoughts and actions. Maria Theresa wished to build up her rule entirely on her inborn benevolence and on the love of her subjects. Joseph's notion was that of a monarch-philosopher,

patterned after that lonely thinker of Sanssouci. Was not such adoration bound to open all the old wounds which Frederick had ever inflicted upon the Empress? Did not her own son keep alive the agony of defeat in the depths of her soul, in her mother love, which could only rebel against the invasion of that hated enemy into the sphere of her family? One can tell from her utterances how much she suffered from having to continue with mental weapons against her son the struggle in which she once knew defeat in the field. So, as a result of the admiration felt by Joseph in his young years for Frederick the Great, the old struggle went on.

#### THE SEED OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Joseph championed general principles of tolerance and freedom of conscience, which were bound to lead to friction with his mother's far narrower ideas of tolerance. He did not look so anxiously into the hearts of his subjects to see whether there might be any heresy in some crevice or other. In his eyes, it was more important for them to be good and useful members of the state, while Maria Theresa wrote vehement letters to condemn such lax principles as being undermining and the forerunners of serious inescapable upheavals. So even in this ancient, arch-Catholic ruling house, the seed of the French, English, and German Enlightenment was taking root. With consternation, Maria Theresa became aware of this process.

They stood in each other's way, and Maria Theresa was not entirely without blame for the growing acuteness of the situation. For she sought to limit the power of her coregent as much as possible, and yet, in spite of a few fits of fatigue of government, she did not lay down the scepter. Meanwhile, she was already surrounded by the supporters of her son, who were to set the tone when he was sole ruler. The new spirit found more and more followers and was thrusting forward against her throne; it began to make her uncertain of herself and contributed toward paralyzing her power of decision.

The squabbles of the factions echoed into the evening of her life. The domestic peace she longed for so ardently was denied her. Inclined as she was anyway toward half measures rather than harsh action, she sought to mediate; yet she could not conceal from herself the fact that she had almost been forced into the defensive. Business depressions and other annoyances were not lacking. The wheels of so artificially constructed a state machinery had never run very smoothly. Now even in the control of this machinery a sort of personal dualism had eaten its way in like a destructive rust, although the Empress always retained the deciding voice. But her suspiciousness grew.

It is almost touching to see how her trusting, warm, demonstrative nature sought to fight off cold, misanthropical moods. But in spite of all clouding of her spirit and all her longing for rest and quiet, Maria Theresa could even in her old age not become a devitalizing power for her empire. In her own way she faced up to new developments. Cautiously she continued her work at improving the state. There was a last wave of reforms during her old age. Among them was the educational reform.

#### SCHOOLS, ART, AND MUSIC

In common with absolutism, Maria Theresa anticipated a more lively feeling of national unity from an improved educational system that was organized as uniformly as possible to include as many children as possible. At the same time, quite in line with contemporary mercantilism, she also hoped for some valuable results in economic respects. Science for its own sake filled her with a slight feeling of dismay at its possibly dangerous effect, and she regarded it, if not as a waste of time, at least as rather fruitless. Hence she did not develop any organized promotion of purely scientific endeavor.

But in founding a national elementary-school system, which on the whole she carried out alone and out of her own impulse, some of Maria Theresa's innermost feelings found expression: her delight in children growing up, her desire to make her people happy, her mild adherence to the Enlightenment, as well as her sincere piety—which impressed upon the teachers the necessity of educating the children to be true Catholic Christians—but also her horror of all superstition, even in religious guise. Of all the achievements of her last years, this work, in spite of its imperfections, gave her the greatest personal satisfaction.

On the other hand, Maria Theresa was not one of those rulers, known since the Renaissance at German courts also, who stimulated artists to give their best. She was not by nature a patron of arts and sciences, as she was completely absorbed by the daily demands placed upon her by her government and took no personal interest in the questions of intellectual and artistic life. Hardly influenced at all by her, the creative spirits went their own ways. In her youth she went through the last stages of the baroque age; her supreme time was framed by the brilliant gracefulness of rococo; and in the days of her old age, artists began to seek for the simplicity and unostentatious greatness which enobled her own character.

Apparently, music appealed to her more than the arts. At least she introduced into the education of her children and into life at court those noble harmonies without which



Austria cannot be imagined. Gluck was court conductor and benefited from her patronage. A number of his works were written for her festivals. Later, by recommending him to her daughter Marie Antoinette, she smoothed his path in Paris, where the fiery German composer fought his bitter fight for his intensely moving, severe music against the ornamental, playful manner of the Italian opera.

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When in 1780 death called away Maria Theresa — she had met it with calm composure — the faithful mother of her children and her subjects could face her Maker with an easy conscience. The throne stood more securely founded than at the beginning of her reign. The empire she left her son was better consolidated, better administrated, and more modern than when she had received it from her father. Its unity and coherence had

been increased thanks to the laws and establishments she had created. Although she had not succeeded in everything she strove for, and the limitations of her nature were apparent here and there, most of the things she had taken in hand had been visibly blessed.

Her ultimate effect on history was profound and fertile, and her personality was unforgettable. In a mysterious way she remained alive in her empire, just as in the last resource a mother is never lost to her children. The name of this woman, who was thoroughly German, retained its warm, resounding ring throughout all the changes of national fortune. Those poets are right who speak of her, as of Haydn and Mozart, as something precious and indestructible from a world with which we are connected by deep bonds. Wherever German men and women and their achievements for the German nation and Europe are mentioned, Maria Theresa is not far off.

The wife of one of his officers appeared at an audience before Frederick the Great and complained that her husband ill-treated her.

Said the King: "Affairs that don't concern me."

"But he also abuses Your Majesty."

"Affairs that don't concern you!"

A Pomeranian clergyman had expressed doubt in his sermons regarding the resurrection of the body on the Day of Judgment. Now the parish wanted another preacher and had sent an appeal to this effect to Frederick the Great. Frederick wrote on the margin: "The preacher will remain. If he does not want to be resurrected on the Day of Judgment, he may stay in his grave."

When Frederick the Great started a campaign in 1740, his officers wanted to know something about the plans. When General von Kalkreuth asked the King, the latter replied with the question: "Can you keep mum?" "As mum as a grave, Your Majesty," eagerly answered the general. "So can I!" was Frederick's reply.

During the first Silesian War it had been suggested to King Frederick of Prussia to have the words *Pro Deo et Patria* (For God and Country) inscribed on the Prussian standards. Frederick, however, corrected the motto and struck out the word *Deo*: "One must not drag the name of God into the disputes of men. The war is for a province, not for religion."

A lackey, suddenly called away, left an unfinished letter on his table, which Frederick the Great found. He read: "Dearest Mary, I could not keep my appointment with you yesterday, as the old man had a big party and won't give me an hour off."

The excuse was invented. The King had the culprit come and dictated the end of his letter to him: "Today I won't be able to see you either, as the old man is having me locked up for eight days because of the above lie."