

The Austro-Sardinian War (1859) and the Seven Weeks' War (1866) in Habsburg Schoolbooks*

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In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Habsburg government had a very complicated task of inventing some form of supranational identity as an alternative to nationalist programs in Cisleithania. It sought to craft this supranational identity first and foremost as part of the self-images of schoolchildren as future citizens. One of the major ways to create and solidify a notion of a common “Austrian” identity in school history classes was to highlight the Habsburg wars, triumphal and bloody battles, and military heroes as reminders of an integrated supranational past. Official instructions obliged teachers to emphasize the “heroic times of Austria,” its “glorious battles,” and its “valiant wars,” as emphasis on these episodes of the past, it was hoped, would further the development of “the idea of the integrated statehood in Austria.” In this article, I offer an example of this cult of the Austrian wars in school education by the ways in which the wars fought during the early period of Francis Joseph’s rule, namely, the Sardinian war of 1859 and the Seven Weeks’ War of 1866, were taught to later generations of schoolchildren. Ironically, the fact that Austria lost these wars was humiliating. Nevertheless, during the late period of Francis Joseph’s rule, narratives and visual depictions of the events of these wars in schoolbooks strongly contributed to the formation of a heroic image of the Austrian army and to the idea of just Habsburg rule. I focus in my discussion first on how the accounts of the wars in schoolbooks deviated from the historical facts and, second, on how these accounts nonetheless furthered the emergence of the “Austrian” identity.

Keywords: Habsburg Monarchy, Austria-Hungary, Francis Joseph, supranational identity, history of education, schoolbooks, history lessons

Fans of Habsburg history may well remember the story of Joseph von Trotta, “the Hero of Solferino,” from *The Radetzky March* by Joseph Roth. Trotta was appalled by an imprecise narrative about the battle of Solferino (1859) found in a schoolbook, which grossly overstated his own actions and represented them

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as great heroic deeds. Trotta found the situation intolerable, although people around him, including the emperor himself, delicately explained him that the story “is for children,” and “all historic events are rewritten for school use.” Moreover, they assured him, this was the “proper” way of doing things.¹

It is true that history schoolbooks represent a peculiar type of source. Like hardly any other medium, schoolbooks, which remain formative teaching aids in history instruction and civic education, convey official and quasi-official images of history to certain age groups of children and young people within the compulsory schooling setting.² Given their broad impact, schoolbooks have long been used in the service of the prevailing ideology and rhetoric. Political elites quickly understood that national memory could be most easily constructed in history classes which presented current issues in their (alleged or constructed) historical context. They also realized that public mass schooling inculcated a sense of national unity in pupils, as well as loyalty and obedience.³ For these reasons, history schoolbooks were broadly used by European governments as early as the nineteenth century in the invention and consolidation of a previously non-existent sense of national cohesion.⁴

Scholarship on civic education in Europe and the United States shows that many states saw public education as an essential tool for crafting national identity and national loyalty, which were by no means innate, the claims of primordialists notwithstanding. Eugene Weber and James Lehning argued that schools were a central force in cultivation of the patriotic loyalty of future French citizens.⁵ Troy Paddock claims that public education in imperial Germany served as a robust tool to build loyalty to the newly founded united empire.⁶ Paula Fass and Christina Ziegler-McPherson show that American educators of the nineteenth century utilized English and history courses in order to Americanize a diverse population and create a sense of loyalty to the state.⁷ Similar efforts were made to Russify and nurture patriotic sentiment among the subjects of the polyethnic Russian Empire.⁸

1 Roth, *The Radetzky March*, 7–10.

2 Weber, *Camillo Cavour*, 13.

3 Cvrček, *Schooling under Control*, 3–4.

4 Weber, *Camillo Cavour*, 13–16.

5 Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*; Lehning, *To be a Citizen*.

6 Paddock, *Creating the Russian Peril*.

7 Fass, *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education*; Ziegler-McPherson, *Americanization in the States*.

8 Komleva, “Obrazovatel'naya politika Rossiyskoy imperii.”

The creation of a patriotic and loyal citizenry was likewise one of the main concerns of the Habsburg government in Austria-Hungary. The Habsburg Monarchy faced the complicated task of inventing some form of supranational identity as an alternative to the programs of national elites, who had challenged the state's cohesion. The government identity politics exemplified an intended fabrication of history and myths to be used first and foremost to shape the self-images of schoolchildren as future citizens.⁹ Roth's character was right when he complained about the "pack of lies" in his son's reader: historical images in schoolbooks were narrated so as to foster patriotic feelings and dynastic loyalty in schoolchildren, and as part of this, exaggerations and understatements were not only permissible, but even welcome.

Habsburg identity politics and its effects on the society of the Dual Monarchy have long been the focus of academic discussion. Many prominent scholars published works on the development of Habsburg culture and civil society with a focus on the complexity of national identity.¹⁰ Their findings have led to a crucial revision of the previous assessments in the nationalist literature. The latter tended to define the Habsburg Empire as a kind of anacronism compared to the European nation states and a "prison of nations,"¹¹ which appeared unable to address the nationality conflicts facing it in the nineteenth century. In contrast, revisionist studies offer strong evidence that the Empire and its institutions were of great importance for its population, which showed a high degree of engagement. The recent book by Pieter Judson on "how countless local societies across central Europe engaged with the Habsburg dynasty's efforts to build a unified and unifying imperial state"¹² summarizes the most important finding of the revisionist works.

Moreover, the recent studies have shown that, despite their prominence in political parties, legislative institutions, and the press, national elites largely failed to awaken passionate attachments to national identity among the larger part of the population of Cisleithania.¹³ During the last decades of the Dual Monarchy,

9 For more details on the Habsburg schooling politics, see Bruckmüller's studies: "An Ehren und an Siegen reich"; *Nation Österreich*; "Patriotic and National Myths"; "Patriotismus und Geschichtsunterricht."

10 Due to the lack of space I will mention just a few of the relevant works: Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival*; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity*; Puttkamer, *Schulalltag und nationale Integration in Ungarn*; Bruckmüller, *Nation Österreich*; Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

11 Talmon, *Myth of the Nation*, 133.

12 Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 4.

13 Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*.

nationalists had to fight against apparent indifference to the national causes, and they were met with general loyalty to Habsburg non-national institutions and an embrace of multilingualism in the public and private spheres. Many researchers have stressed the paradoxically sustainable phenomenon of massive loyalty to the emperor and the ruling dynasty, the so-called *Kaisertreue*, which contributed significantly to the cohesion of the Habsburg Empire and moved its peoples look for options to preserve the unified state.¹⁴ This loyalty to the multinational empire was largely due to the various measures adopted and implemented by the Habsburg government and administration. Although in the traditional (national) literature, these measures were usually assessed as too limited and backward as responses to the challenges posed in the era of nationalism¹⁵ (a view which is still shared by some recent researchers),¹⁶ the revisionists tend to attach greater value to the efforts of Habsburg officials to achieve cohesion among the population of the composite state. A number of excellent works examine commemoration and celebration practices in the Habsburg Empire as a means of fostering loyalties to the state and the dynasty, as well as “invented traditions” at the Viennese court and the complex array of symbols which were intended psychologically to consolidate the citizens of the monarchy.¹⁷

In 1849, the Habsburg government embarked on a program that would lead to the creation of the most advanced and cutting-edge state schooling system in Europe.¹⁸ The structure and core principles of this system, which included the principle of equal language rights, are discussed in detail by Helmut Engelbrecht, Gary Cohen, and Hannelore Burger.¹⁹ Other scholars consider the important issue of the certification and translation of schoolbooks in their studies, as well as the content of history textbooks that was appropriate and reliable in the view of the Viennese Ministry of Culture and Education.²⁰ Scott Moore’s brilliant

14 Sugar, *The Nature of the Non-Germanic Societies*; Fischer-Galati, *Nationalism and Kaisertreue*; Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 2; Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics*, 181–82; Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 100.

15 Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 436–55.

16 Nemes, *Once and Future Budapest*, 185–86.

17 *Commemorations: the Politics of National Identity; Staging the Past*; Grossegger, *Der Kaiser Huldigungs Festzug*; Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics*.

18 Puttkamer, “Framework of Modernization,” 20.

19 Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesen*; Cohen, *Education and Middle-class Society*; Burger, *Sprachenrecht und Sprachengerechtigkeit*.

20 Hofeneder und Surman, “Wissen übersetzen”; Almasy, “Setting the canon.”

study explores how the civic education was utilized in Habsburg schools to cultivate the patriotism of its peoples and forge a complex, “layered” identity.²¹

One of the major themes of the patriotic version of the Habsburg past that was presented in schools was wars: narratives about the triumphal and bloody battles waged by the Austrian army and its military heroes were exploited as reminders of the shared supranational past of the Habsburg peoples. According to the *Instructions for Classes in the Gymnasien of Austria* (1884), emphasis was to be placed on “the heroic time of Austria” and “its glorious battles and valiant wars,” for they were “the moments through which the consciousness of common belonging to the peoples united under the scepter of Habsburgs” was awakened, and “the idea of an integral statehood in Austria” was developed.²² Stories about wars helped convey the memory of a common “glorious past under Habsburgs” through the emphasis that was placed on the triumphant battles, which had required united efforts. There was also room for mention of the bloodbaths and massacres that the the peoples of the monarchy had survived together and preserved in their collective memories as outrages and injustices inflicted by an external common enemy. Commemoration of the whole train of glorious military commanders who fought at the service of Habsburgs functioned as a means of offering narrative embodiments of the symbols of the “supranational” Austrian identity.²³ Along with the military heroes Prince Eugène of Savoy and Archduke Karl (who were the figures of Habsburg military history who were the most vigorously glorified by the Viennese court), Joseph Radetzky developed into the most prominent military hero in imperial Austria as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The latter functioned, according to Laurence Cole, as “the symbol of a patriarchal, conservative, patriotic ideology that wished to subsume class and national conflicts within a discourse of loyalty.”²⁴

In the discussion below, I focus on the narratives in Cisleithanian schoolbooks published between the 1860s and the 1910s about the wars in which the Austrian monarchy fought during the period of neo-absolutism, or in other words, the Austro-Sardinian war of 1859 and the Austro-Prussian-Italian war of 1866 (otherwise known as the Seven Weeks’ War). Both wars represented a vulnerable episode in the history of the Habsburg monarchy. The Habsburg forces failed miserably, suffering heavy losses, and the empire had to cede its vast

21 Moore, *Teaching the Empire*.

22 *Instructionen für den Unterricht*.

23 Riesenfellner, *Zeitgeschichtelabor*, 92.

24 Cole, *Military Culture*, 106.

Italian territories to Sardinia and its supremacy in the German Confederation to Prussia.²⁵ Some researchers even consider the defeat at Königgrätz “the death of the army.”²⁶ It is easy to exploit narratives concerning wars in which one's country emerged victorious for the benefit of the image of a “Great and Powerful Fatherland” of which every citizen or subject is proud. But how did the authors of schoolbooks craft narratives about these lost wars, given that they had to reflect on the defeat but without downplaying or undermining the greatness of the Fatherland? Were there any strong deviations from historical facts? Which persons and episodes were singled out or overemphasized, and which were sidelined and obscured? And finally, did the authors managed to preserve the image of a great and glorious Austrian monarchy under the wise rule of Habsburgs?

The research on which I have based my conclusions draws largely on the collections of schoolbooks kept in the library of the Austrian Ministry of Education, Art, and Culture in Vienna. I used only schoolbooks that addressed relatively recent political events and contained narratives about the wars in question, which means that I used the schoolbooks designed for the last three years of *Volksschulen* and *Bürgerschulen*, for middle and upper classes of *Gymnasien*, and for the last two years of teacher training colleges. I went through roughly 60 units published with the official sanction of the imperial and royal Ministry of Culture and Education. However, in the discussion below, I cite a limited number of these sources, as most of the units appeared to be unchanged reissues of the same narratives. The fact is, the Viennese Ministry was very vigilant about the narratives included in schoolbooks. A thorough inspection by ministerial officials preceded the decree of official approval to publish or reissue a particular schoolbook or translation, and only then could the schoolbook in question be used in schools.²⁷ Close attention was paid to the political views of the people who compiled textbooks, and the range of compilers was, therefore, relatively limited. Partly for this reason, textbooks were reissued eight to ten times on average and translated, most often from German, into the languages of the different nationalities. Translations were welcomed by the Viennese Ministry,

25 Fichtner, *The Habsburg Empire*, 52–57; Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 251; Mitchell, *The Grand Strategy of the Habsburg Empire*, 293–99; Taylor, *The Habsburg monarchy*, 94, 99, 126–27. In most details, the causes of the catastrophic Austrian defeat are reviewed in Dredger, *Tactics and Procurement*, 13–38.

26 Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 17–22.

27 Bruckmüller, “Patriotic and National Myths,” 28–29.

as they offered the reassurance that textbooks in the national languages also met the political requirements of the imperial center.²⁸

The authors of the upper level schoolbooks were professional historians who taught in *Gymnasien* and often held posts as university professors. Dr Theodor Tupetz, for example, the author of the schoolbooks cited in this article, had an impressive career, serving as a school inspector but eventually moving up to the position of court counselor. As professional teachers and historians, the authors of schoolbooks had their own views of historical events, which influenced the narratives they wrote, although they had to adhere to ministerial instructions and regulations. After the Compromise of 1867, some competences, including the compilation, translation, and distribution of textbooks, were transferred to the crownlands. Not all crownlands and languages were treated equally, however. While in Galicia, for example, the textbook certification system came under the control of the Polish-dominated Galician parliament,²⁹ Slovenian-language textbooks remained completely under the supervision of the Viennese Ministry until the fall of the monarchy.³⁰ In both cases, however, the final decision on approval was made in Vienna. Although the state publishing house in Vienna lost its monopoly to publish textbooks and schoolbooks were then published by private publishers (especially middle and upper level schoolbooks), the Ministry of Culture and Education in Vienna continued to supervise their content and language design.³¹

The narratives about the wars of 1859 and 1866 that I analyze in this article are mostly taken from the textbooks in German. Despite the December constitution of 1867 and the school reform of 1869, the language of instruction in many *Gymnasien* was still German, while the number of secondary schools with a minority language of instruction was growing slowly. In many cases, the books by German authors approved by the Viennese Ministry of Culture and Education were simply translated into the required language, and this was especially true for schools with Slovene and Italian as languages of instruction.³² Even in Galicia, where local authorities exerted a significant influence on the design of the educational system, the first Ruthenian-language history textbook that was translated not from German (but rather from Polish) was only published

28 Hofeneder und Surman, “Wissen übersetzen,” 145.

29 Ibid, 146.

30 Almasy, *Kanon und nationale Konsolidierung*, 92–94.

31 Hofeneder und Surman, “Wissen übersetzen,” 150–51.

32 Ara, “Italian Educational Policy,” 267; But, “Ital’ianskie shkol’nye soiuzy,” 312–13.

in 1895.³³ Thus, narratives from the textbooks in German, I would argue, are representative for the whole picture of the way in which the history of the Austrian wars in question was taught in Cisleithanian secondary schools. However, I also offer a few samples of narratives in Czech and Romanian languages for comparison. I tried to compare the narratives from three perspectives: the alleged causes of the wars, the course of the wars, and the outcomes of the wars. I also focus on the style and biases of the narratives.

In the Austrian textbooks published in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, the names of the wars differed from those used in contemporary literature. The Austro-Sardinian War of 1859 was most often referred to simply as the “war against Austria” or “the Italian War,” and the Seven Week’s War was called the “Prussian war.” The first mentions of the Sardinian war (1859) appeared in the schoolbooks as early as 1864. For example, in Gindely’s textbook on world history for upper classes of *Gymnasien*, one can read that the most important events since the 1848 revolt and Napoleon’s declaration of the French empire in 1853 were “the oriental war” (that is, the Crimean war) and “the Italian War.”³⁴ These early mentions were very short and succinct, little more than a few unbiased sentences with simple facts. However, with every passing year, the narratives got longer and increasingly detailed. In the 1880s, narratives about “the Italian war” of 1859 reached a page and a half or two pages, and the narratives devoted to the relationship between Austria and Prussia between 1859 and 1866 were three to four pages, even in the textbooks designed for the lower and middle classes in secondary schools.³⁵ In the schoolbooks published in the 1890s, narratives of the wars were most often blocked under the title *The War Years*. They also were three to four pages long and included a large portrait of the Austrian commander Archduke Albrecht, a photo of the monument to the Austrian admiral Tegetthoff, and a reproduction of a depiction of the battle of Lissa (1866). The narratives, moreover, were getting increasingly biased, vivid, and emotionally loaded.

In many schoolbooks, the narrative was also accompanied with a familiar portrait of Francis Joseph I in 1849, in which the young, good-looking emperor is wearing a military uniform with the insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece, the Military Order of Maria Theresa, and the Cross of Saint George of the

33 Hofeneder und Surman, “Wissen übersetzen,” 156.

34 Gindely, *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte für Obergymnasien*, 201.

35 See, for example: Loserth, *Leitfaden der Allgemeinen Geschichte*, 192–98; Loserth, *Grundriß der Allgemeinen Geschichte*, 90–93.

fourth class, which he was awarded by the Russian tsar Nicholas I “for pacifying the Hungarian riot in 1848–1849.” Narratives often included the contention that the adolescent emperor’s accession to power took place at a “terribly serious and pressing time,” when in most of Austria’s lands there was “disorder and confusion” and “even open outrage in several lands.” But the young emperor coped with the difficult situation and managed to keep Austria’s lands together, and a short period of peace then followed during which the emperor took trips to several crown lands, and everywhere the Habsburg peoples “cheered the new ruler and gave him evidence of unfeigned love and unshakable loyalty.”³⁶ However, a few years later, Francis Joseph “had to pick up his sword again [...] despite his pronounced love of peace.”³⁷ In some textbooks, the period of 1859–1866 was titled *Emperor Franz Josef I defends his lands*.³⁸

The Causes of the Wars

In the 1890s, considerable attention began to be devoted to the issue of the causes of the wars in question and, in particular, to the characteristics of aggressors and the interests they pursued. For example, in the most widespread Gindely’s reader on history for *Volksschulen*, which was revised by Gustav Rusch and appeared in seven editions without any significant changes between 1898 and 1910, it is stated that in 1859, King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia allied himself with “the ambitious French Emperor Napoleon III” and “urged Austria to go to war,” while in 1866, Prussia “seized the opportunity to declare war on Austria,” since “it had long been striving for vested interests in Germany,” and at the same time, the Danube monarchy was attacked by Italy.³⁹ One finds the same information in the Pennerstorfer’s textbooks on history designed for the same category and age of schoolchildren.⁴⁰

For the schoolchildren going to *Bürgerschulen*, Pennerstorfer explains that it was the death of Radetzky in 1858 that encouraged “the Sardinian king to try his luck with arms.”⁴¹ The image of a heroic commander who was so fearsome that the enemy did not dare attack while he was alive both reflects and contributes to

36 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für 6-, 7- und 8classige Volksschulen*, 116–17.

37 Ibid, 118.

38 Rusch, *Grundriß der Geschichte*, 74. The same narrative is in the reissues published in 1899, 1902, 1904, 1905, 1907, 1908, 1910, 1913, and 1918.

39 Ibid.

40 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für 6-, 7- und 8classige Volksschulen*, 118.

41 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Bürgerschulen*, vol. 2, 124.

the official Radetzky cult, which saw a resurgence between 1880 and 1914.⁴² For the children in the last year of secondary school, the same author wrote even more emotionally:

Victor Emmanuel was just waiting for an opportunity to wrest the provinces of Lombardy and Veneto from Austria. As long as Radetzky was alive, of course, he did not dare attack. But no sooner had the military general closed his eyes (1858) than he was again preparing for war. His ally here was the emperor of France, Napoleon III. With his help, he succeeded in defeating the Austria and obtaining the cession of Lombardy. [...] In a similar way, Victor Emmanuel came into possession of Veneto in 1866. This time, he allied himself with the king of Prussia, which threatened our Fatherland on two sides at the same time.⁴³

So Sardinia was commonly represented as the aggressor and the guilty party in both conflicts, with the Sardinian king Victor Emmanuel being the main culprit and Napoleon III and Frederick William IV of Prussia serving as his accomplices. The authors of the schoolbooks normally omitted the fact that it was Austria who officially declared war on Sardinia in 1859.⁴⁴ Still, there were several textbooks for secondary schools which mentioned that hardly trivial detail. For instance, Dr. Emanuel Hannak describes the *casus belli* more accurately in his schoolbooks and notes, "As Sardinia was arming and gaining reinforcement from France, the Austrian General Count Gyulai opened the war."⁴⁵

In his textbook on modern history, Hannak provides even more details, but he again maintains that in 1859, Austria was actually forced to go to war in response to the actions of Sardinia and France and the Sardinian government was the main aggressor in the Italian war of 1859. According to him, however, the aggressor in 1866 was not Italy, but Prussia with its unwarranted political ambitions and unjust territorial claims.⁴⁶ As a matter of fact, Austria rather than Prussia was the first officially to declare war on July 17, 1866, although sophisticated intrigues of Prussia did take place and hostilities preceded the official declaration of the war.⁴⁷

42 Cole, *Military Culture*, 96–103.

43 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Bürgerschulen*, vol. 3, 110–11. The unchanged editions were published in 1903 and 1907.

44 Schneid, *The Second War*, 34.

45 Hannak, *Österreichische Vaterlandskunde*, 99.

46 Hannak, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte*, 224–27.

47 See Hozier, *The Seven Weeks' War*, Book 4, Ch. 1.

The interwar conflict, namely, the Austro-Prussian-Danish war of 1864, was omitted in most textbooks for *Volkschulen*, but it was mentioned in the textbooks for *Bürgerschulen* and *Gymnasien*. In Hannak's textbook, for example, it is described quite accurately from a historical point of view and more or less unemotionally, although Hannak takes the opportunity to recall "the victories of the Austrians at Översee and Veile and the victory that Tegetthoff achieved at Helgoland over the Danish flotilla," which "form a glorious leaf in the laurel wreath of the Austrian army."⁴⁸

The most detailed and biased narratives about the wars in question are in the textbooks published after 1900. The main aggressor in the 1859 conflict had changed. This time, it was the ambitious "upstart" Napoleon III, although Victor Emmanuel II is also cast in unflattering light as not particularly honest and ready "to cede without hesitation the old ancestral land of his house, Savoy, to France" in exchange for assistance to "come into possession of the royal crown over Italy as far as the Adria."⁴⁹ The change of the aggressor can be explained by the different political setting at the turn of the century: Italy, unlike France, was now an ally of Austria-Hungary within the Triple Alliance framework and could not be directly accused of wrongdoing. However, it was not as closely allied with Austria-Hungary as Germany, and this made it possible for the narratives to include some veiled criticism of its political behavior. In contrast, Prussia's guilt for starting the war in 1866 is blurred and obscured for the same reason. The emphasis has shifted to the joint success of Austria and Prussia against the Danish king in 1864. The conflict of 1866 is exposed as an unfortunate misunderstanding between the two reputable powers defending their natural interests and leadership in the German Confederation.⁵⁰

In addition to narratives in schoolbooks, students also heard the narratives and explanations given by the teachers in classroom. The versions of events told by instructors may have been clearer and more memorable for schoolchildren, as they may have sounded more like the whole truth. Those stories probably exerted a strong influence on the political orientation of schoolchildren as they grew up. Teachers in turn presumably restated the information they found in the textbooks used in the teacher training colleges. For this reason, these narratives are also of interest from the perspective of this discussion. One of the most commonly used textbooks for the future teachers was the book by Tupetz. For

48 Hannak, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte*, 226–27.

49 Gindely, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Knabenbürgerschulen*, 57.

50 Ibid.

example, his textbook on the world history for the second-year students had eight editions that were published without any significant changes between 1890 and 1917. His textbook on world history for the third year students had eight unchanged editions, the last of which was published in 1918. For soon-to-be history teachers, Tupetz suggested a long narrative about the period of war in question, accompanied by many more details and a corresponding ideological bias.

In his discussion of the war of 1859, Tupetz depicts aggressive France and Sardinia as lands under the rule of unfair leaders, but he also stresses that “it was hoped on the Danube that an attack on a member of the German Confederation would be repulsed jointly by all German states,” and particularly Prussia. But for their disloyalty to the staunch Austrian ally, Austria would have kept her Italian possessions. Once more, Prussia employed underhanded tactics when it declined the “brilliant” proposals for a reorganization of the German Confederation by Francis Joseph, who was only seeking to maintain peace and justice among the German states. The king of Prussia did this on Bismarck’s advice, for “had the Austrian plan succeeded, Prussia would have had to give up hope of taking the lead in Germany for a long time, perhaps forever.”⁵¹ Thus, Tupetz delicately rebukes the German states, including Prussia, blaming them for the two main misfortunes that befell the Austrian monarchy in the 1860s, the loss of territories and the inability to preserve supremacy in Germany.

Tupetz also describes the conflict with the Danish king, who also proved covetous and unjust. His actions were illegitimate, and Austria could not tolerate this, as Austria remained loyal to the principles of the German Confederation and ready to defend the rights of any of its members.⁵² Thanks to the joint forces of Austria and Prussia, Denmark was forced to abandon its rapacious plans and cede the duchies to the victors, who soon started a dispute over the fate of the two German lands. Prussia was apparently inclined to deprive Schleswig-Holstein of its traditional independence, but Austria could not accept this. The war of 1866 “between the two great German powers” began because Prussia longed for supremacy in Germany. It concluded an alliance with Italy, and Austria saw itself attacked from two sides. “Most of the German states, on the other hand, feared the destruction of their previous independence from Prussia and sided with Austria, which had never infringed on their independence, but

51 Tupetz, *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte*, vol. 3, 191, 193.

52 Ibid, 193–94.

had always defended it.”⁵³ Based on this narrative and similar ones from other textbooks by Tupetz,⁵⁴ it can be supposed that the version most commonly heard by the Habsburg children in classrooms reiterated the information from most schoolbooks: the illegitimate ambitions of Sardinia and Prussia led to the bloody conflicts and induced Austria, under its peace-loving emperor Francis Joseph I, to wage wars.

The Course of the Wars

Most of the textbooks for *Volkschulen* did not contain any description of the course of the wars. The textbooks for younger children did not even contain any mention of specific battles during the Austro-Sardinian war of 1859, perhaps because none of the major battles were won by the Austrian army. These books make mention of only three battles that took place during the Seven Weeks’ War of 1866: the Battles of Lissa, Custoza, and Königgrätz. The names of the first two battles, in which the Austrian army triumphed even if these triumphs remained indecisive for the outcome of the war, are bolded in the text and described in detail, while the battle of Königgrätz, the decisive battle, in which the Austrian army suffered a crushing defeat, is referred to very briefly. One notices a clear difference between the textbooks for girls’ schools (*Mädchenbürgerschulen*) and the textbooks for boys’ schools (*Knabenbürgerschulen*). The latter, while following the same basic scheme of the narrative, contained more detailed descriptions of battles, hostilities, military maneuvers, armaments, troop numbers, etc. and more names of commanders. As soon as universal military duty was introduced by the 1867 constitution, schoolboys were obviously regarded as future soldiers and officers in the Austrian army, who needed deeper knowledge in the field of military history and warfare.

In connection with the Battles of Lissa and Custoza, the textbooks glorify Archduke Albrecht of Austria and Admiral Wilhelm von Tegetthoff as talented commanders and Austrian military heroes. The Austrian army acquired “new and everlasting fame”⁵⁵ under the leadership of Archduke Albrecht, “who had already given proof of fearlessness at Sa. Lucia in 1848 and, under Radetzky’s excellent guidance, matured into a capable warrior. Moreover, he was the son of

53 Ibid, 194.

54 See, for example: Tupetz, *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte*, vol. 2, 198–99; Tupetz, *Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, 205–10.

55 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für 6-, 7- und 8-classige Volksschulen*, 118.

the victor of Aspern and had inherited his father's general virtues."⁵⁶ On June 24, 1866, Archduke Albrecht won "a brilliant victory over Victor Emmanuel's army at the memorable site where Radetzky had once put the troops of Karl Albert to flight, near Custoza."⁵⁷

Thus, a relatively recent hero was presented in the textbooks in close connection with the earlier military heroes Radetzky and Archduke Karl. This perfectly supports Laurence Cole's claim that the Habsburg government sought to establish explicit continuity in terms of the representation of heroes within the military culture of the monarchy.⁵⁸ The heroes of relatively recent wars were finely interwoven into the general Austrian imperial cult of military commanders who were famous for their patriotism and their loyalty to the state and dynasty. Thus, the Habsburg state undertook "a conscious effort to promote a conservative patriotic agenda in the 1890s and 1900s, which presented the army as a positive, cohesive force within the multinational state,"⁵⁹ and the narratives in schoolbooks can be seen as a display of this effort.

In the same manner, compilers of schoolbooks praise the "glorious" Admiral Tegetthoff who "without hesitation" attacked "the much stronger enemy fleet and forced it to retreat," a "heroic deed [which] will not be forgotten".⁶⁰

The young Austrian fleet also took a glorious part in the battle against Italy. Its commander, Admiral Tegetthoff, attacked the far more numerous Italian fleet off the Dalmatian island of Lissa and forced it to retreat. Not one Austrian ship was lost in this battle, while the enemy lost three ironclad ships. The sea victory at Lissa was all the more honorable for Admiral Tegetthoff, as he could only oppose the iron-armored ships of Italy with wooden ones. Unfortunately, the glorious winner died in 1871 at the age of 41. The magnificent monument which Emperor Francis Joseph had erected to him in Vienna reminds us of his heroic deed.⁶¹

It is true that from the 1880s onwards, the state became increasingly involved in the propagation of Austrian military heroes' cult, for instance by unveiling

56 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Bürgerschulen*, vol. 3, 111–13. The unchanged reissues were published in 1903 and 1907.

57 Ibid.

58 Cole, *Military Culture*, 104.

59 Ibid.

60 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Bürgerschulen*, vol. 3, 113.

61 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für 6-, 7- und 8-classige Volksschulen*, 119.

monuments to them.⁶² Gestures of the Habsburgs' gratitude for the services to the Fatherland and inviolable loyalty to the ruling dynasty must have been very meaningful for the politics of identity, as long as they were included in the narratives which schoolchildren not only had to read but often had to learn by heart. The narratives were normally accompanied by large images of a half-page or a whole page size, which invariably included a photo portrait of Archduke Albrecht wearing the Austrian uniform and military rewards; the painting of the battle of Lissa, depicting the Italian ship *Re d'Italia* sinking after being rammed by Tegetthoff's flagship *Ferdinand Max*; and a photo of the monument to Tegetthoff on Vienna's Praterstern.

However, other Austrian commanders could be portrayed in a less flattering manner. In particular, Count Ferenc Gyulai, a Hungarian nobleman who commanded the losing Austrian army at the Battle of Magenta, was often blamed for failing to attack the French before they united with the Sardinians, for which reason the Austrian army suffered defeats at Magenta and Solferino.⁶³ Count Clam-Gallas, who commanded the right wing of the Austrian army at Magenta, was first to retreat, while the center and left wing of the army under other commanders "held each other brilliantly": "his Hungarian regiments failed and his instructions did not prove workable. Repelled by the French, he retreated so quickly from the line of attack that he completely lost touch with the undefeated parts of the army." At Solferino, "again it was the Hungarian regiments of the Clam-Gallas corps in the center that did not hold out."⁶⁴ It is difficult to say whether the specific blame placed on the Hungarian regiments here resulted from the personal beliefs of the compilers, but it was hardly an official practice or policy of the Viennese Ministry to generate a negative perception of Hungarians. A Hungarian aristocrat Tassilo Graf Festetics de Tolna, and Franz Graf von Thun und Hohenstein of non-Hungarian origin were also criticized for their actions at Königgrätz. The textbook claimed that, "against the orders of Benedek, [they] took part in the struggle against the Prussian center, weakened their forces, and left their basic positions," and "the third Prussian army therefore struck the right flank of the Austrians without hindrance and stormed Chlum, and thus the battle was lost."⁶⁵

62 Cole, *Military Culture*, 104.

63 Hannak, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte*, 224; Gindely, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Knabenbürgerschulen*, 53.

64 Gindely, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Knabenbürgerschulen*, 54.

65 Ibid, 58.

Nevertheless, the “heroic struggle” of the whole Austrian army was never subject to critique. In the victorious Battles of Custoza and Lissa, it were “the combative troops, the good spirit of the officers, the precise execution of the supreme commands, the cooperation and mutual support, and proper management” that “brought about the success.” In “the bloody but unfortunate battles of Magenta and Solferino,” the Austrian troops also “performed miracles of bravery and devotion.”⁶⁶ At Königgrätz, the Austrian artillery likewise “performed miracles of bravery”:

Particular fame was earned by the “Battery of the Dead” under Captain von der Groeben, which did not leave the place until Groeben himself, a second captain, and 52 of 60 artillerymen had died. The survivors saved the only gun that still had its equipment. On the battlefield, near a grove between the villages of Chlum and Lipa, a beautiful monument has recently been erected representing Austria, with the inscription: “To the Heroes of the Battery of the Dead.”⁶⁷

An amazing and breathtaking story is also narrated about an episode of the sea battle at Lissa:

One of the Austrian wooden ships, the “Kaiser,” also performed miraculous bravery. When this ship was surrounded and attacked by four enemy ironclad ships, Commodore Petz, who was in command of the ship, fired all the cannons to the right and left, with great force against the Italian ironclad in front. The shock was terrible for the wooden ship too: one of the masts broke and smashed the engine’s chimney; the sails that had fallen on the chimney began to burn. But the crew put out the fire and the ship escaped danger. But one of the enemy ironclads with which the “Kaiser” had fought—it was called “Afonatore” and had the commander in chief of the Italian fleet on board—was so badly damaged that it sank after returning to the port of Ancona. The Austrian fleet hardly lost a ship. Hardly has world history (before the World War) recorded a case when such wonderful success would have been achieved with so little means as in this one.⁶⁸

Should the schoolchildren have questions about why the Austrians were still defeated in particular battles after all their “heroic resistance,” the teacher was ready to provide reasonable explanations, which he could find in the textbooks used at the teacher training colleges:

66 Rusch, *Grundriß der Geschichte*, 74.

67 Tupetz, *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte*, vol. 3, 194–97.

68 Tupetz, *Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, 208–9.

In this war [of 1859], the French had the advantage over the Austrians that they already had “rifled” cannons, i.e. guns the barrels of which were provided with shallow indentations in the form of a helix, which gave the bullets a greater speed and enabled the French to shoot much further than was possible with “smooth” cannons. Nevertheless, the Austrians were long contesting the victories of their enemy at Magenta and Solferino; moreover, at Solferino, one Austrian wing under Field Marshal Lieutenant Benedek beat the opposing Sardinians.⁶⁹

A similar explanation was provided for the defeat in the Prussian war of 1866: it was Austria’s defeat that was characterized as the sad consequence of the Prussian military reform (general conscription), better armaments of Prussia (the Dreyse needle-guns), and the inadequate aid given by the small German states to Austria.⁷⁰ It is interesting that the author of a history schoolbook in Czech identifies additional causes of the Austrian defeat: the excellent Prussian military leader (Helmuth von Moltke the Elder) and general compulsory schooling in Prussia.⁷¹

The Outcomes and Consequences of the Wars

Although Austria’s defeats in war in the period between 1859 and 1866 were by no means obscured, but rather were accurately stated, all narratives about the wars in question end on an optimistic note. First, the war indemnity which Austria had to pay was moderate. Second, Austria did not lose any territory to Prussia. Third, in 1878, Bosnia and Herzegovina were “handed over to Austria for administration,” and as “New Austria,” they partially replaced the loss of land which Austria suffered in the war years of 1859 and 1866.⁷² Fourth, with the Peace of Prague, “the antagonism which had developed between Prussia and Austria with regard to German affairs came to an end,” and “it became evident how valuable an alliance could be for both parties.”⁷³ “In alliance with the German Empire, which was strengthened through personal meetings of the monarchs and expanded to include Italy,” Austria now asserted an influential

69 Tupetz, *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte*, vol. 3, 192.

70 Ibid, 194–97.

71 Konečný, *Učebnice Dějepisu pro měšťanské školy*, 63.

72 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Bürgerschulen*, vol. 3, 113–16.

73 Tupetz, *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte*, vol. 3, 197–98.

position in the European state system.⁷⁴ And last but not least, Francis Joseph “was now freed from the perpetually threatening danger of war” and “was able to devote all his energy to the internal development of Austria,” which resulted in a great progress “in all branches of popular welfare.”⁷⁵ After the war against Prussia in 1866, the emperor promulgated the December Laws (1867).⁷⁶ “A great boom in trade and industry, in the arts and sciences” is referred to as a direct consequence of these laws. For instance, the frigate Novara circumnavigated the earth in 1857–1859 and established trade connections with overseas cities and countries. Numerous roads and railways were built, with the Semmering, Brenner, West, Northwest, and Francis Joseph Railways being of particular importance.⁷⁷ In his textbook for soon-to-be teachers, Tupetz also suggested a very encouraging summary of the war years:

Avoiding war and all bloodshed, a prince of peace in the noblest sense of the word, Emperor Francis Joseph I found himself obliged to draw the sword to protect his empire against foreign enemies; in the wars which Austria was forced to wage, the Austrian armies acquired new laurels for their imperishable wreath of glory. [...] the victory which Field Marshal Archduke Albrecht, the son of the victor of Aspern, achieved at Custozza in 1866, the victory of Admiral Wilhelm von Tegetthoff, who unfortunately died early, at Lissa in the same year will live on forever in the memory of all Austrians.⁷⁸

Narratives in Languages Other than German

The discussion above offers a good general image of the wars in which the Austrian monarchy fought during the period of neo-absolutism as these wars were narrated in history textbooks in German. I would also like to provide a few samples of narratives in Czech and Romanian for comparison. Let me note, however, that it is not my intention to present a comprehensive analysis of the peculiarities that were typical of narratives in textbooks in other languages of the monarchy. I offer only a few examples as interesting illustrations of some of the differences in these narratives.

74 Hannak, *Österreichische Vaterlandskunde*, 101.

75 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für Bürgerschulen*, vol. 2, 124.

76 Ibid, 127.

77 Pennerstorfer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für 6-, 7- und 8-classige Volksschulen*, 119–22.

78 Tupetz, *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte*, vol. 2, 202.

From the textbook on the world history by professor Samuil V. Isopescul, designed for the lower classes of secondary schools and published in Romanian, the reader would similarly know that although Emperor Francis Joseph I was “not fond of wars,” he was still forced to wage many wars during his long reign. Isopescul considers Count Cavour, who was “pursuing with great energy the plan of the unification of Italy,” to have been the aggressor in the Italian war of 1859, and he claims that “King Victor Emmanuel, supported by Emperor Napoleon III, declared war on Austria in 1859.” The Austrian army was defeated near Magenta, “although it had fought with the greatest heroism.”⁷⁹ Isopescul particularly stresses the personal courage of Emperor Francis Joseph, who “exposed himself to fire like every other soldier.”⁸⁰ In a way similar to that in the German textbooks, Isopescul praises the glorious Austrian victors Archduke Albrecht and Admiral Tegetthoff, providing a few sentences of biography on each and describing in some detail the battles at Custozza and Lissa.⁸¹

As for the schoolbooks published in Czech, one also finds emphasis on reverence for Emperor Francis Joseph and praise for his personal courage during the war period. For example, in Šembera-Koníř’s textbook on world history, which was written for first-year students in the municipal schools, one reads that, even as a young man, he “showed special affection and dexterity for military service,” and he “went to Italy to get a vivid picture of war preparations and achievements, which were directed against the enemy by Field Marshal Count Radetzky at the head of the Austrian army.”⁸² In 1859 and 1866, he waged bloody wars, during which “our people gloriously defeated Italy on land at Custozza (under Archduke Albrecht) and at sea near Lissa (under Admiral Tegetthoff), but he had bad luck against the Prussians.”⁸³ The reference to “our people” distinguishes the narrative in this textbook. It made the Bohemian children perceive the Habsburg citizens as one solidary Austrian people, which was definitely the aim of the Habsburg government. The images of shared triumph and shared defeat contributed, without doubt, to the cohesion of the residents of the Habsburg lands. In the textbook by Šembera-Koníř intended for the second-year and third-year students in the municipal schools one finds praise of the worthy emperor, who “showed great bravery and fearlessness,” accompanied

79 Isopescul, *Manual de Istorie Universală*, 130.

80 Ibid., 130–31.

81 Ibid., 131–32, 134.

82 Šembera-Koníř, *Obrázky z dějepisu všeobecného*, vol. 1, 68.

83 Ibid.

by a portrait of him as a young man, as well as praise of “our” brave army.”⁸⁴ The reader also finds a cautious critique of the “indecisive” General Benedek, who, unlike in the German narratives, is portrayed here as a commander lacking in bravery who was incapable of making bold decisions.⁸⁵ The narrative also notes that, after the defeat at Königgrätz, the Prussians occupied Prague, a detail omitted from the German narratives. Šembera-Koníř underlines: “Although this war did not last long, it was terrible, and all the horrors took place in Bohemia. The loyalty of the Czech nation proved excellent in these difficult trials, which the noble monarch himself acknowledged when he visited Bohemia after the war.”⁸⁶ Thus, Šembera-Koníř emphasizes the outstanding loyalty and merits of the Czech people, although he regards the latter as an integral part of the whole Austrian people. “The outstanding loyalty” of the Czech nation is also stressed in the schoolbook by Š. M. Konečný.⁸⁷ The narrative on the war period concludes with a comment that later Austria was compensated for the loss of the Italian territories, when it acquired Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸⁸

The cult of wars and military heroes was widely employed by the Habsburg government in its effort to forge state loyalty and patriotic thinking in imperial Austria. It was propagated through various institutions, channels, and means. History classes in schools and history schoolbooks served as ideal means of spreading this cult. Narratives about wars led by the Austrian monarchy with a relevant focus and emphasis occupied a solid place in history textbooks in the different languages of the monarchy. While it was possible to select triumphant military conflicts from the remote past to be presented to schoolchildren and ignore clashes in which Austria was defeated, this approach was hardly applicable to relatively recent wars that could not be “hushed up.” For this reason, the narratives about the Austro-Sardinian war of 1859 and the Seven Weeks' War of 1866 found a due place on the pages of Habsburg schoolbooks, even though the Austrian army was crushingly defeated in those wars and the Austrian monarchy suffered territorial losses and the loss of its supremacy in the German Confederation.

However, the Ministry of Culture and Education in Vienna kept a stern eye on the focus of narratives about the wars to ensure that the image of the great

84 Šembera-Koníř, *Obrazy z dějepisu všeobecného*, vol. 2, 65–67.

85 Konečný, *Učebnice Dějepisu pro měšťanské školy*, 63.

86 Šembera-Koníř, *Obrazy z dějepisu všeobecného*, vol. 2, 67.

87 Konečný, *Učebnice Dějepisu pro měšťanské školy*, 63.

88 Šembera-Koníř, *Obrazy z dějepisu všeobecného*, vol. 3, 47; Šujan, *Učebnice Dějepisu*, 100.

Fatherland under its good ruler and heroic army was by no means challenged. The discussion I have offered above of the narratives in history textbooks published between 1860s and 1910s mostly in German but also in Czech and Romanian shows that no serious discrepancies between the narratives about the wars waged by Austria between 1859 and 1866 can be discovered in the textbooks designed for students at the secondary schools and teacher training colleges in Cisleithania. Although the recent literature considers the wars in question among the hardest and most humiliating for Austria, during the late period of Francis Joseph's rule, the ways in which these wars were presented in schoolbooks strongly contributed to the cult of the brave Austrian military and the heroic image of Austrian warriors, regardless of ethnicity and language. The authors of schoolbooks did not distort historical facts and did not deny the military defeats suffered by the Austrian Empire, but their narratives are clearly biased and one-sided, and they were clearly intended to foster patriotic feelings, in accordance with the instructions of the ministry. One can find clichés such as “the miracles of bravery” performed by the Austrian soldiers and sailors and stories about glorious battles fought under the leadership of brilliant Austrian commanders, accompanied by portraits of Archduke Albrecht and photos of the monument to Admiral Tegetthoff. The latter were glorified as new heroes of the Austrian army, but in close connection with the hugely popular Radetzky and Archduke Karl. This established continuity among military heroes who were famous not only for their deeds in battle, but also for their patriotism and their loyalty to the dynasty.

Although in the conflicts in 1859 and 1866 it was Austria who officially declared war, in the narratives in question, it was claimed that the major aggressors were Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia, Napoleon III, and the Prussian government. The wars were lost because of “unfortunate” circumstances, but with modest war indemnity losses and no territorial losses. Moreover, the outcomes of the wars led to the long-awaited monarchy's reorganization and its “finest achievement,” the Constitution of 1867. The personal bravery and achievements of Francis Joseph were particularly stressed, and a portrait of an emperor as a young man full of energy decorated most of the textbooks. The narratives in Romanian paid specific attention to the high virtues of the emperor, while those in Czech emphasized the alleged loyalty of the Bohemians to the emperor during the hostilities.

Thus, this discussion offers insights into one more episode in the Habsburg state efforts to promote a patriotic agenda and present the Austrian army as

a powerful and cohesive force guarding the multinational Fatherland, a force of which every citizen should have been proud. History schoolbooks can be considered an effective means of disseminating the cult of Austrian wars, since large masses of schoolchildren absorbed their narratives under the oversight of state-certified teachers, and these narratives could certainly strengthen patriotic feelings and influence the political views of children as they grew older, much as they could also contribute to the formation of their identities as imperial Austrians. This, in its turn, may offer further insights into the phenomena of military culture, popular patriotism, and dynastic loyalty, which are widely discussed in the recent secondary literature.

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