

## CHAPTER III

### The Eighteenth Century. Hapsburg versus Hohenzollern (1714-90)

The eighteenth century continued and sharpened the tendencies already observable in the seventeenth. This was the century of princely absolutism par excellence. The last significant vestiges of the old local diets or estates, which had constituted some check on the princes, disappeared. It was a century of dynastic rivalries culminating in the long struggle between the two principal German dynasties—the Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns—which was to be a principal issue in German history for over a century. Intellectually and artistically speaking, it was a century in which Germany made enormous strides and entered fully into the mainstream of western European thought. By the end of the period no Englishman or Frenchman could disregard the German contribution.

The most spectacular development of this era was the growth of the electorate of Brandenburg in the sandy wastes of the northeast into the powerful kingdom of Prussia, which by the end of the eighteenth century ranked as one of the great powers of Europe. This feat was made possible by several lucky inheritances and by the deeds of three Hohenzollern rulers of genius, Frederick William, the Great Elector of Brandenburg, King Frederick William I of Prussia, and King Frederick II, the Great.

The geographical basis of the kingdom of Prussia was composed of three separate areas spread loosely across the whole width of northern Germany, which came to the Hohenzollerns at different times and in different ways. The electorate of Brandenburg with its capital at Berlin was granted to Frederick of Hohenzollern by his friend, Emperor Sigismund, in the early fifteenth century. A century later the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, who was a member of the Hohenzollern family, secularized their lands and established for himself and

his descendants the duchy of Prussia, with its center in the town of Königsberg. The two branches of the family made a compact providing that if either branch died out, the other would inherit its possessions. The Prussian branch became extinct in the early seventeenth century, so the elector of Brandenburg also became duke of Prussia, for which he owed homage not to the Holy Roman emperor but to the king of Poland, the overlord of Prussia. The third component of the future Prussian kingdom was made up of the three small principalities of Cleves, Mark, and Ravensburg in northwestern Germany along the lower Rhine. They were a part of the complicated Cleves-Jülich inheritance, which was such an unsettling part of the diplomacy prior to the Thirty Years' War. The elector of Brandenburg was one of the principal claimants. When the inheritance was divided, he received the three territories mentioned above. The various Hohenzollern territories had no cohesion. Each had its own laws, customs, traditions, which it guarded jealously. Each had its own estates, or representative body, which was determined to resist any monarchical authority imposed from above.

In 1640 the young elector Frederick William came into a sorry inheritance. His lands had been the battlefield and playground of foreign armies for years. Brandenburg was one of the most ravaged areas of Germany, since the former elector had been a weak tool in the hands of the Swedes. Frederick William himself had been sent to well-organized Holland for his education. He did not forget what he learned there.

Frederick William began his reign by a policy of conciliation and a search for peace, necessitated by his weakness. He managed to get rid of many of the foreign soldiers on his lands and to reorganize his army into a small but respectable force, one of the few left in Germany. Thus his voice at the Peace of Westphalia was out of proportion to his strength. He received eastern Pomerania, Minden, Halberstadt, and the expectancy of the important archdiocese of Magdeburg when the administrator died. This was a notable increase of territory.

In 1655 the First Northern War broke out when King Charles X of Sweden attacked Poland. At first Frederick William remained neutral but took care to increase his army greatly and to demand recruits from all his territories even though they might be called upon to fight a long distance away. During the five-year conflict he was successively neutral, allied with Sweden, and allied with Poland. His army acquired a good reputation at the battle of Warsaw in 1656. When the eventual peace was signed at Oliva in 1660, Frederick William did not gain any land but instead the very important right that henceforward he was sovereign

in Prussia, where he now owed no allegiance to Poland, Sweden, or the Empire.

During much of his reign Frederick William was involved in bitter conflict with the estates of his various holdings, which insisted (especially in Prussia) on privileges and local peculiarities which had been granted them from time to time, so that it was impossible to establish any centralized administration. Frederick William was determined, in the spirit of his period, to erect a firm, centralized state, controlled exclusively by himself on the pattern of the state of Louis XIV. The details of the struggles are picturesque but need not detain us. By the end of his reign the elector had achieved extraordinary success and laid the foundation for the unified army and the efficient civil service which were to remain the hallmarks of Prussia thenceforward. He began the typical Hohenzollern policy of granting almost unlimited authority to the nobles on their estates so long as they recognized the prince's authority in war, foreign affairs, and national policy. He was a patriarchal ruler with the foresight to introduce economic reform in Brandenburg-Prussia, to welcome industrious Huguenot exiles from France, and to build canals and roads. He left a far stronger state than he inherited.

In his foreign policy Frederick William pursued a devious course in the complex diplomacy and wars of the time. He realized that Brandenburg-Prussia was not wealthy enough to support the big military establishment he felt necessary to defend her unusually long and ill-protected boundaries and to support her growing pride. Thus he supported his projects by a policy of subsidy from abroad. Although usually loyal to his Hapsburg overlord, he did not hesitate at times to ally himself with France if greater advantage appeared likely. He proved a competent general, especially at the battle of Fehrbellin in 1675 when he defeated a Swedish army. Frederick William did not add any territory to his domains in the latter part of his reign, but on his death in 1688 he left a state respected and feared.

His son and heir, Frederick III (1688-1713), had none of his father's great qualities. Ostentatious and extravagant, he dissipated much of the treasure his father had accumulated. He devoted himself to the beautification of Berlin, importing the great sculptor, Andreas Schlüter, and building palaces. He founded the Berlin Academy of Sciences, the University of Halle, and also attracted a number of learned men to his court. In foreign affairs he dabbled in the wars of his time, loyal to the Hapsburg interests but gaining only a few pieces of territory here and there. Probably his greatest achievement was the title of king. The elector of Saxony was king of Poland; the elector of Hanover could look forward to being king of England. Frederick wanted the

same rank. So he devoted much time and effort and, more important, the services of his soldiers to this goal. He finally achieved it and in 1701 crowned himself in the castle of Königsberg. Thus from that date he is styled King Frederick I. The royal title came from Prussia rather than Brandenburg because there he was sovereign. At first he was permitted to call himself simply king "in" Prussia, but the humiliating preposition did not stick.

King Frederick William I (1713-40) was again a great change from his father. This disagreeable, miserly, avaricious, coarse, vulgar, gouty, drill sergeant was amazingly competent and laid the foundations for Prussian power which his genius son was able to exploit. He scorned the artistic and intellectual interests of his parents and led with his big family a parsimonious existence taking pleasure only in smoking strong tobacco with his cronies or in drilling his tall soldiers on the parade ground at Potsdam.

Frederick William, like his grandfather, was determined to assert absolute authority—in his own phrase, like a "rock of bronze." To this end he was ruthless and resembles his contemporary, Peter the Great of Russia. His particular ability lay in civil and military administration, the pillars of Prussian greatness. For instance, in 1723 he established the General Directory for over-all administration, a remarkably neat and efficient institution, which however depended on the constant and minute supervision of the king. None of the ministers had any authority without the king; they were higher secretaries. This system worked with Frederick William in charge, and later with his son. These two were willing to give unlimited pains to public affairs. However, it broke down when less devoted and efficient men wore the crown.

The great joy of Frederick William's life was his army. The soldiers were his favorites, especially if they were tall. He formed units of men over six feet in height, and other sovereigns, anxious to win his friendship, would send him tall young men. He loved his army so much that he did not want to risk it in battle. During his reign the army was doubled in size to over 80,000 and became the best-trained in Europe, but it rarely fought. The king dallied with diplomacy, but it was usually over his head; he stuck to his wise policy of remaining at peace. His only campaign was a profitable one. The Great or Second Northern War raged for over twenty years involving Russia, Sweden, Poland, and some of the German states. Toward the end Frederick William entered temporarily and for his pains received an increase in his Pomeranian lands including the mouth of the Oder River and the important city of Stettin, which became the port for Berlin until it was removed from Germany in 1945.

Personal tragedy entered the Hohenzollern family with the conflict between Frederick William and his eldest son Frederick, later Frederick the Great. Their personalities were poles apart. The father was brutal, stingy, coarse; the son, artistic, literary, and dreamy. He liked to play the flute and to read and write poems and plays in French. The father felt that the son would destroy all his achievements and handled him with brusqueness and an utter lack of understanding. This situation culminated in an attempt by Frederick, accompanied by a favorite officer friend, to escape from Prussia. The fugitives were caught and imprisoned. Frederick was forced to watch the execution of his beloved friend. The king even talked of executing his son. Instead he imprisoned him for a year. Frederick spent this time learning about local administration and political affairs, and the father eventually released him and permitted him to come to Berlin. During the last years of the king's life the two managed to get along reasonably well. Frederick William presented his son with a palace, Rheinsberg, which he loved, and with a wife, whom he did not love since he never had any interest in women. At Rheinsberg Frederick spent several happy years reading, playing music, and writing a work on political philosophy, *Antimachiavel*, in which he refutes the doctrine of Machiavelli, of whom he was later to prove one of the best disciples. In May 1740 Frederick William died as a result of gout, and Frederick II ascended the throne he was to occupy until 1786.

The German situation in 1740 was dominated by the Hapsburg emperor's preoccupation with the succession to his far-flung family possessions. Charles VI's only surviving children were two daughters, the elder being the Archduchess Maria Theresa, a beautiful and deeply religious young woman. No woman had ever before inherited in the Hapsburg lands; Charles devoted his life to making sure that Maria Theresa would be an exception. Thus he promulgated a document known as the Pragmatic Sanction, which declared that the Hapsburg lands were indivisible and that in default of male heirs they should pass to Maria Theresa or to his other daughter. A good part of Charles' reign was then devoted to securing the recognition of this principle by the powers of Europe. He achieved the acceptance of the estates of the Hapsburg realms without very much difficulty, but each time that he secured an acceptance he had to make a concession. Thus his weakness forced him to cede some Balkan territory, including Belgrade, back to the Turks. Frederick William I made little trouble about accepting the Sanction. Spain agreed for a time. However, in the 1730's the short War of the Polish Succession broke out, in which the Sanction became an issue. It arose over a disputed election to the Polish throne, which was still elective. Emperor Charles supported the candidacy of Augustus III of Saxony, son of the

former king. The fighting was not serious, but the Hapsburg armies made a poor showing. At the Treaty of Vienna in 1738 Augustus received the throne of Poland. The losing candidate was given the duchy of Lorraine for his lifetime, after which it was to revert to France. The former duke of Lorraine, Francis, received compensation for his loss in Tuscany, where the Medici family had just become extinct. The Hapsburgs granted back to the Spanish royal family some of their former Italian possessions which they had obtained in 1714, receiving some smaller ones in return. Charles received the acceptance by the powers, especially France, of the Pragmatic Sanction, but at a considerable cost. Francis, the dispossessed duke of Lorraine was soon thereafter married to Maria Theresa. It looked as if the succession were secure. Five months after the death of Frederick William I in 1740, Charles VI also died, and Maria Theresa claimed her inheritance of the Hapsburg realms.

It soon became clear that Charles' work had been in vain. Within six weeks the new king of Prussia invaded Silesia, and Europe started a quarter century of warfare. Very soon three claimants, the elector of Bavaria, the elector of Saxony, and the king of Spain, disputed Maria Theresa's right to the Hapsburg succession. Frederick asserted as his excuse for the invasion some old claims of the Hohenzollern family to various parts of Silesia, but there is no question that they were mere pretenses. He wanted Silesia and he wanted glory.

Frederick achieved immediate success and occupied the whole of Silesia by the spring of 1741. By this time the Silesian war had spread and had become part of the general War of the Austrian Succession, which was to last for eight years in Europe and overseas. France, Bavaria, and Spain allied against Maria Theresa, while Britain supported the lady. The beautiful young princess appealed to the chivalrous Hungarian nobility, who enthusiastically rallied to her cause. An Austrian army entered Silesia, and Frederick retired to meet it. The first of Frederick's many battles, Mollwitz, was a Prussian victory although the king, fearing defeat, rode distractedly into the night.

When the electors of the Empire met in 1742, they passed over Maria Theresa's husband, Francis, and chose as emperor the elector of Bavaria who took the name of Charles VII (1742-45). This was the only occasion since the fifteenth century that a non-Hapsburg was elected. A few days after his coronation an Austrian army captured his capital, Munich; wits parodying the old phrase *aut Caesar aut nihil* ("either Caesar or nothing") commented about Charles *et Caesar et nihil* ("both Caesar and nothing").

From the outset Frederick showed himself an undependable ally to the French and Bavarians. His interests were centered solely in Silesia

and he had no intention of wasting his good army to fight the battles of the French. Twice before 1742 he negotiated with Maria Theresa and promised to get out of the war if she would cede Silesia to him. After two Prussian victories in 1742 Maria Theresa unwillingly agreed to this proposal and signed the Treaty of Berlin with Prussia. This freed the Austrians and their Anglo-Hanoverian allies to operate against their other enemies, which they did successfully, especially at the battle of Dettingen where George II of England defeated a French army. These Austrian successes frightened Frederick, who knew that Maria Theresa in her heart was not reconciled to the loss of Silesia. Therefore in 1744 he re-entered the war and invaded Bohemia.

In the beginning of 1745 the unfortunate Emperor Charles died, and his successor in Bavaria offered to get out of the war and abandon his father's pretensions. He was restored to his lands and dignities and promised to vote for Francis of Lorraine in the coming imperial election. Sufficient votes were acquired, and Francis I (1745-65) was duly elected. Militarily, it was an unhappy year for the Austrians because Frederick won the battles of Hohenfriedberg and Soor, while the French general Maurice de Saxe (an illegitimate son of Augustus II of Saxony-Poland) defeated the Austrians badly in the Austrian Netherlands at the battle of Fontenoy. Maria Theresa was again forced to deal with Frederick and in the Treaty of Dresden confirmed her loss of Silesia.

From this time on the war in Europe petered out. The British had to bring their troops home to face the invasion of Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender. The principal interest of the war was now the colonial contest between Britain and France, which did not concern Germany. A treaty was finally signed at Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) in 1748, which confirmed Maria Theresa in her inheritance and also her cession of Silesia to Prussia. It was an inconclusive peace to end an inconclusive war.

Both Maria Theresa and Frederick II spent the eight years of peace between 1748 and 1756 reorganizing their realms and setting the tone for an important period intimately connected with their two very different personalities. During the war Maria Theresa had proved to be a woman of determination and forcefulness, with high qualities of leadership. She far overshadowed her ineffectual husband, who is important only because he fathered her numerous children. She had observed the weakness latent in her domains, a weakness which was to lead to their collapse in the twentieth century, namely their multiplicity and variety in government, customs, and traditions. She attempted a partial cure of this weakness. Not being a child of the Enlightenment, as her eldest son was, she did not have his single-minded reforming instinct. Her reforms were

tempered with gentleness and an understanding that one cannot make changes too rapidly. She attempted centralization, mostly in Austria and Bohemia, of such things as tariffs, the army, finances, and justice, where the awkwardness was most glaring.

Maria Theresa set the tone for the laughing, gay Vienna that was to become so beloved by the world in the nineteenth century. In her elaborate rococo palace of Schönbrunn on the outskirts of Vienna she welcomed to her court musicians and poets who created much of the artistic taste of Europe, as the court of Louis XIV had done at Versailles a century before. This was the Vienna of Haydn and Gluck, later of Mozart and Beethoven, which was to make the word music almost synonymous with Vienna.

Frederick II had different and, on the whole, simpler problems to deal with. He had inherited from his father an extremely efficient administration; it was necessary only to keep it operating and to integrate into it Silesia and also East Friesland, which had fallen to Frederick by inheritance during the war. The mature Frederick proved himself as competent an administrator as he was a general. He devoted the same constant and selfless attention to the minutiae of public affairs that his father had. He was if possible even more despotic than his father, rarely seeing his ministers and spending his time reading and annotating the endless written reports they were required to submit to him. Yet it was a despotism animated by extreme intelligence and by an understanding of economic and social forces rare in his time. During the years of peace Frederick built his lovely little palace of Sans Souci in Potsdam, where he was happiest. There, when work was done, this lonely, cynical, unscrupulous, and shrewd recluse would sit with a company of men distinguished in the letters and sciences and make music, listen to poetry, or read aloud his own prolific if mediocre literary output.

Maria Theresa was still not reconciled to the loss of Silesia; Frederick realized this and knew that there would no doubt be another conflict before the matter was settled. Thus the years from 1748 to 1756 were filled with diplomatic maneuvers culminating in the so-called Diplomatic Revolution. One of its principal architects was Prince Kaunitz, who after 1753 was the empress' chancellor. Kaunitz recognized that Great Britain was an undependable ally for a purely continental nation like the Hapsburg realm. Her interests were almost exclusively concerned with her struggle with France for possessions overseas. Kaunitz, who had spent some years at Versailles as Austrian ambassador, was convinced that an influential pro-Austrian party could be formed there under the aegis of Madame de Pompadour, the powerful mistress of Louis XV. Maria Theresa had drawn close to Empress Elizabeth of Russia. Thus the pos-

sibility loomed of a great continental alliance composed of Russia, Austria, and France, which would seal Frederick's fate.

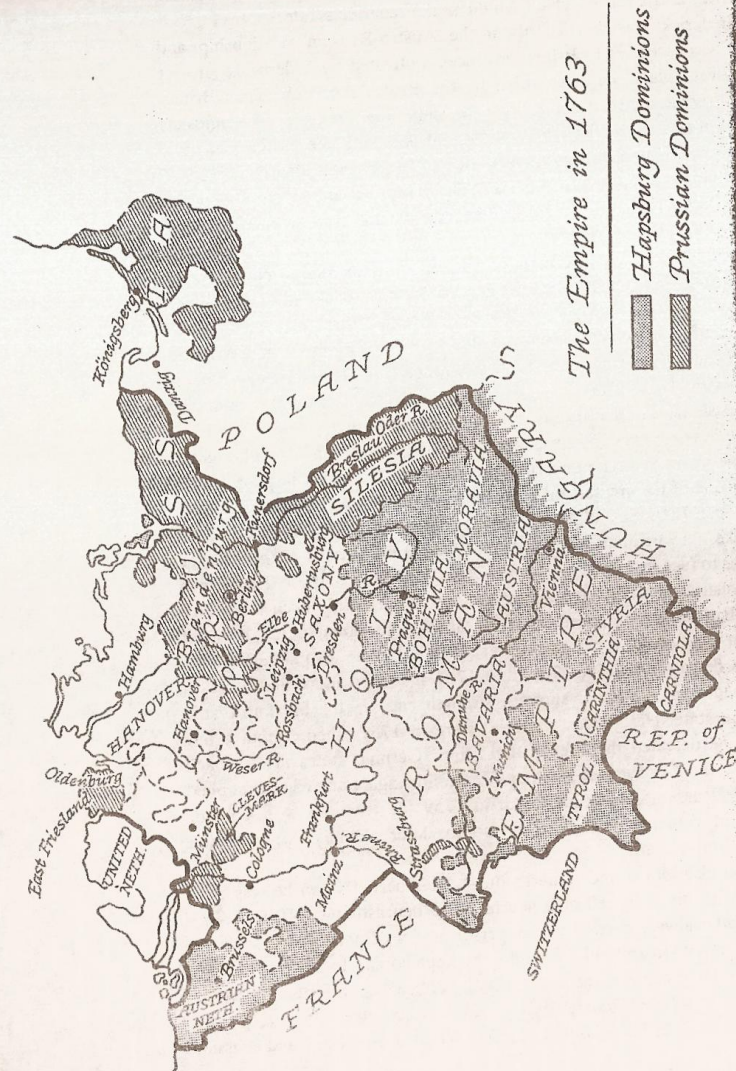
Frederick was worried about the Austro-Russian relationship and thus was receptive to British advances motivated by a desire to protect Hanover, which was also ruled by the British monarch. Thus Britain and Prussia signed a neutrality agreement, the Treaty of Westminster, which much irritated France, already at war with the British overseas. Kaunitz exploited this irritation to obtain French acceptance in 1756 of a defensive treaty with Austria. The centuries-long conflict between French and Hapsburg rulers was ended, and the two prepared to fight as allies.

Frederick was not the man to wait until his enemies were ready to attack him. In August 1756 he invaded Saxony to use it as a base for an attack on Bohemia and launched the Seven Years' War (1756-63). Within a few months the opposing alliance was completed and Frederick found himself at war with Austria, France, and Russia, as well as a number of the smaller German states. Help from Britain was reluctant and spasmodic, in the form of subsidies, not of armies.

The Seven Years' War was an epic struggle between a small country and the three greatest continental powers. In it Frederick displayed himself as one of the greatest military geniuses of all time. The loving attention which Frederick William I had given his army bore fruit. Frederick was like a swordsman who confronts several enemies at the same time and has to face first one way, then another, to defend himself. The French and Austrians were to the southwest and south, while each summer a large Russian army appeared from the east to threaten the heart of Prussia. Frederick won victory after victory, but he also suffered some serious defeats; in 1759, 1760, and 1761 it looked more and more as if he had to perish under superior strength and see the breakup of the Prussian state. His greatest victories were in 1757 when, within a few weeks, he defeated the French and minor German states at Rossbach and then the Austrians at Leuthen. The following summer he triumphed over the Russians at Zorndorf, but in 1759 the Russians won a major victory at Kunersdorf and a few months later actually occupied and burned Berlin itself.

Frederick's letters and remarks during this period when he was constantly with his army tell of a neurotic and neurasthenic, often sunk in gloom, who always carried on his person a vial of poison in case worst came to worst. In spite of everything he kept hoping for a miracle.

The miracle came in the first days of 1762, when Empress Elizabeth of Russia, who hated Frederick, died and was succeeded on the throne by her nephew, Peter III, who had nurtured a cult of Frederick and Prussia.



Peter immediately made peace and, indeed, an alliance with Prussia. In the west, France, which had been defeated both in India and in Canada, was ready to make peace with Britain and was no longer interested in the war in Europe. This war too was petering out. Frederick continued to win victories over the Austrians, and finally the two combatants signed the Treaty of Hubertusburg on February 15, 1763, which confirmed the situation before the war. Maria Theresa had to recognize the final loss of Silesia. Prussia gained no territory, but there was henceforth no question that she was one of the great powers of Europe and that no general question could be settled without consulting her. This was Frederick's greatest achievement in the international field.

After 1763 Frederick II had had enough of war, and except for a short campaign in 1778 Prussia was at peace for the remainder of his reign. He did not neglect his army, however, and was happiest when reviewing his troops. He kept an intimate watch on everything that happened in his kingdom, traveling constantly through it and noting even the most insignificant details on his estates. He built the New Palace at Potsdam and continued his evenings of music and poetry. Frederick became very popular with his people during these years when they spoke of him as *der alte Fritz* and laid the groundwork for the legend which became so persistent and influential in later years.

Frederick had learned in the Seven Years' War how dangerously exposed Prussia was, and he was determined not to risk again the near disaster of those years. His role became that of a peacemaker, but he managed to maneuver it into one of great profit for Prussia. The most impressive example of this was the First Partition of Poland in 1772. The Russian empress, Catherine II, was waging a successful war against Turkey, and the expectation was that she would make large demands on the Turks when the peace was arranged. This seriously worried Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II (1765-90), who had succeeded his father as emperor in 1765 and ruled jointly with his mother in the Habsburg lands. They feared an increase of strength for Russia in the southeast to such an extent that a war between Austria and Russia seemed very possible. This prospect worried Frederick, who was afraid that Prussia might be drawn into the struggle. He sought some alternative plan whereby Russia might make gains which would not affect Austria. Obviously he hoped for Prussian gains as well. The perfect situation seemed to exist in Poland, whose weakness made her a possible prey for aggression. Frederick's idea was simplicity itself, namely that Russia and Prussia (and if necessary Austria) should each take a slice of the old kingdom of Poland. Thus Catherine would have her glory without the danger of a European war. Frederick sent his brother Henry on a visit to St. Peters-

burg with instructions to sound out Catherine. She was delighted with the idea and it was implemented right away. Maria Theresa was shocked at such uncloaked robbery but was afraid not to take her share. Thus she received the province of Galicia, while Frederick received the bishopric of Ermeland and the province of West Prussia (without Danzig and Thorn), so that now East Prussia was joined geographically to the bulk of the kingdom. This was an important accretion and gave Frederick the pleasure of organizing an efficient Prussian administration for the new territories.

The one war which Frederick undertook in the later years of his reign arose, as usual, over a problem of succession, this time in Bavaria. The elector of Bavaria died in 1777, leaving no direct heirs. The legal heir was Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine, who also had no direct legitimate heirs. The presumption was that eventually the lands would go to still another branch of the Wittelsbach house, whose head was Charles, duke of Zweibrücken in the Saar area. Emperor Joseph, anxious to increase his German holdings, persuaded Charles Theodore for various favors to cede to him about one third of Bavaria. Frederick had no notion of watching Joseph succeed in so considerable a project, so he persuaded Charles of Zweibrücken to make objection, which both Prussia and Saxony supported. Negotiations came to nothing, so war was declared. It was a comic opera war dubbed by the soldiers the "Potato War," for they insisted they spent most of their time foraging for supplies during the cold winter months. There were no battles, merely a few skirmishes. In early 1779 Maria Theresa took the initiative and opened a correspondence with Frederick. This interchange resulted in the Treaty of Teschen by which the Austrians got only a very small part of what they had anticipated.

Joseph was not satisfied with the rebuff; in 1785, having been freed of the tutelage of his mother by her death five years before, he tried another plan. This time it was to be a straight trade. Charles Theodore was to cede Bavaria to Austria in return for the Austrian Netherlands, which was proving a nuisance to the Viennese government. Once again Frederick took action, but on this occasion no war developed. To help Charles of Zweibrücken, who once again resented the loss of his Bavarian expectancy, Frederick founded the League of Princes (*Fürstenbund*) composed of most of the important north German states. The pressure of this group forced Joseph to give up his ambitious plan. Some Prussian historians have seen in this action a step toward the unification of Germany under Prussian auspices. Actually it was just a pose for Frederick in his long struggle against Austria and his attempt to maintain the old ramshackle character of the Holy Roman Empire which so

conveniently made possible the expansion of the Prussian state. Frederick did not live very long to enjoy his new triumph; he died in August 1786.

Only the decade of the 1780's was granted to Joseph II to carry out his contemplated reforms in the Hapsburg dominions. As long as Maria Theresa lived, she was clearly the senior partner who made the major decisions. Unlike his mother, Joseph was a full child of the Enlightenment and should be counted in the list of the enlightened despots with Frederick II, Catherine II of Russia, and Charles III of Spain. Joseph hated the untidy and cumbersome structure of the lands he had inherited, in which his position differed from place to place according to the customs and traditions in a particular area. He wanted to establish a centralized unitary monarchy in the neat eighteenth-century sense. He realized that his principal enemies were the corporate vested interests of the aristocracy and the church. In his attack on them Joseph ran the danger of encouraging those in the nonprivileged classes who believed in popular sovereignty according to natural law. These people became the so-called Austrian Jacobins, who were prosecuted during the nineties.

It is difficult to be unsympathetic to some of Joseph's goals, but he had the faults of his virtues. He was one of those reformers who try to do too much too soon at the expense of offending attitudes and beliefs that have grown up over the centuries. Thus he failed in nearly all his efforts. On his epitaph he described himself as one "who, with the best of intentions, was unsuccessful in everything that he undertook."

Joseph decreed the abolition of serfdom, he tolerated the private celebration of Protestant services, he drastically cut down the number of monasteries, and he withdrew most of the censorship so that criticism of the possessory classes could be published. In spite of his personal strong Catholicity, he paid little attention to Pope Pius VI, who traveled to Vienna to protest his actions. But constantly he was rebuffed by a population which was not willing to welcome the new order. He had even more difficulty when he tried to integrate the various nationalities into a centralized government. For instance, he removed the crown of Hungary to Vienna as a symbol of his intentions. The Hungarians reacted violently, and the crown had to be returned. He had even more trouble in the Austrian Netherlands where he revoked the constitution of Brabant. The Belgians in 1789 broke into open revolt, a movement which in the following years merged into the greater French Revolution. Joseph died in 1790, a failure whose reforms died too within a few years. At least he had addressed himself to the problems which all Austrian rulers after him had to face, especially the nationality problem which was to become so intense in the nineteenth century. Austrian imperial history