

For God and the Fatherland

Not all of Emperor Franz's subjects gave up their resistance to Napoleon after the Treaty of Vienna. In the Alpine valleys of western Austria, called the Tyrol, there lived a stout, freedom-loving peasantry who were loyal to the House of Habsburg and deeply devoted to their Catholic Faith. They would tolerate no one who would dare raise a hand against God or their emperor.

So it was a very bitter pill for the Tyrolese to take when, in 1805, the Treaty of Pressburg forced them to submit to Napoleon's ally, Bavaria. Yet, at first, all seemed to go well enough. Bavaria's King Maximilien Josef had promised that life in the Tyrol would go on as it had before, and for a while it seemed he would keep his word.

But Napoleon was pressuring Maximilien Josef; and in the end, the king broke his word. He laid new taxes on the Tyrolese, divided their country into French-style departments, and began drafting their men to serve in the Bavarian army. Worst of all, influenced by his "enlightened" advisors, the Bavarian king tried to crush Catholic worship and practice in the Tyrol. Churches were pillaged of their adornments and sacred vessels; and when priests resisted this tyranny, the Bavarian authorities imprisoned them. The bishop of Innsbruck, the chief city of the Tyrol, was himself exiled for protesting against the government's acts.

When Austria again was planning war against Napoleon in late 1808, the Emperor Franz's son, the Archduke Johann, began corresponding with Tyrolese leaders. In January 1809, three of these leaders went secretly to Vienna, where they met with the archduke. One of these Tyrolese leaders was Andreas Hofer, nicknamed the Sandwirth because he kept an inn (called a *Wirtshaus* in German) at Sand in the Passeyr Valley. Dressed in the Tyrolese costume (a colorful short coat, knee breeches with a richly embroidered belt, and a broad-brimmed hat), Hofer was imposing with his long, black beard. A



horse trader as well as an innkeeper, Hofer had traveled a good deal around the Tyrol. He knew his country well and thus was the natural leader for the rebellion he, his companions, and the archduke now were planning.

On April 9, 1809, Andreas Hofer called on his people to rise against the Bavarians. From all over Tyrol, tens of thousands of peasant men, and even women, answered his call. Other peasant leaders joined the uprising, including Martin Teimer, a tobacconist; Josef Spechbacher, a former poacher; and a Capuchin priest named Joachim Haspinger, who led men into battle holding a large ebony

crucifix instead of a sword.

Archduke Johann brought an Austrian force into the Tyrol to support the rebels.

Though they were not trained soldiers, the peasants were victorious in battle after battle against the combined French and Bavarian forces. But in May, a French and Bavarian army entered the Tyrol and began pushing the peasants back, burning villages, and massacring men, women, and children. Such violence only encouraged Hofer to further resistance. After the Austrian victory over Napoleon at Aspern, Hofer gathered a force, 80,000 strong, and moved against Innsbruck, where in a struggle on the Isel Berg (a hill overlooking the city), he defeated the French General

Lefebvre. On May 30, the Tyrolese entered Innsbruck, where they filed into churches to give thanks to God for their triumph.

To reward his faithful subjects, Emperor Franz I pledged never again to abandon the Tyrol. But after the Battle of Wagram in July 1809, Franz signed an armistice with Napoleon that did not mention the Tyrolese.

When Archduke Johann bade the peasants lay down their arms, Hofer refused. When the French and Bavarians again entered the Tyrol, burning and pillaging as before, the Sandwirth called for further resistance. "It is now not a question of saving our fortunes," he declared, "no! It is our holy religion that is threatened with open peril . . . For God, for the **Kaiser** Franz, conquer or die!"



Gathering another huge force, Hofer moved on Innsbruck, driving the French from the city on August 14. The next day, the Feast of the Assumption, the Tyrolese entered the city, where Hofer established himself as governor. Again Emperor Franz pledged his support to the Tyrolese, sending a gold medal to Hofer to recognize his leadership of the Tyrol.

But with the signing of the Peace of Vienna in October 1809, Franz again abandoned the Tyrol to Napoleon. Much stronger forces of Bavarians and French now entered the mountain valleys and drove the peasant army from Innsbruck. Hofer thought of surrender; but urged—and even threatened—by his own people, he continued the fight.

Still, all was lost. By December 1809, most of the Tyrolese chieftains had accepted amnesty from the French, Father Haspinger fled to Switzerland, and Josef Spechbacher escaped into the mountains. Hofer, now a wanted man, found refuge in a hut on a snow-covered mountainside near his home in the Passeyr Valley. He remained in hiding until mid January 1810 when, betrayed by one of his own people, he was captured and taken a prisoner to Mantua in Italy.

In Mantua, a court-martial tried Hofer; but admiring his courage and devotion to God and country, the judges could not agree on a sentence. After sending a message

to Napoleon to ask his will in the matter, they received this reply: Hofer must immediately be shot. The Sandwirth was, however, given one last chance. If he decided to fight for the French, said his captors, he could go free. But Hofer would not play the traitor. “I remain faithful to the house of Austria and the good Kaiser Franz,” he said.

Farewell, vain world; dying appears to me so easy that my eyes do not become wet.

These words Hofer wrote on February 20, 1810, the day of his execution. When led before the firing squad, the Sandwirth refused a blindfold. After being commanded to kneel, he said he would not. “I shall stand before my Creator, and standing I will render up my spirit to him, who gave it,” he said. He then let out a loud cry, “Long live Kaiser Franz!” and covered his eyes to pray.

After a few minutes Hofer dropped his hands and gave the command, “Take good aim—Fire!” Six shots rang out, and Hofer fell to his knees. “Ach!” he exclaimed, “How badly you aim!” A corporal then took out his pistol and, placing the barrel against Hofer’s head, fired.

In this way, Andreas Hofer at last found peace.

Kaiser: German word meaning “emperor” (like *tsar*, *Kaiser* is from the Latin, *Caesar*)

when Hungary's government collapsed in November, Lenin sent Kun with a large amount of money to organize a revolution in his homeland. In Budapest, Kun published a Bolshevik newspaper in which he criticized the Liberal government. Even after being imprisoned, he continued to spread Bolshevik propaganda and organize a Hungarian Communist party. By February 1919, the party numbered 30,000 to 40,000 members.

Upon his release from prison, Kun organized a coalition government with the socialists and on March 21, 1919, proclaimed the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Though Kun and his Bolshevik Communists were supposed to be sharing power

Death Comes for the Emperor

It was a cold day in late October 1921 when a small airplane from Switzerland landed in western Hungary. The airplane carried Karl, the emperor of Austria and king of Hungary, and his wife, the Empress Zita. Loyal troops of the Hungarian army greeted the royal couple and swore allegiance to them. After hearing an open-air Mass, King Karl, Queen Zita, their generals and troops boarded a train that would take them to Budapest, where Karl hoped to take up once again the government of Hungary.

Karl knew this would be no easy task. This was his second journey to Hungary since the end of the war. In March 1921, he, with his loyal followers, had entered Budapest, where he met with Hungary's regent, Admiral Miklós Horthy. But though he claimed to rule in the name of King Karl, Horthy was unwilling to give over the government to him. Karl, who had fallen sick, was forced to leave Hungary—but he promised he would return.

Thousands of Hungarians joyfully greeted the return of the king in October 1921. But though he had an army faithful to him, Karl faced tremendous difficulties. Since Horthy controlled the greater part of the army, he was very powerful. The regent also had the support of the British government, which did not want to see a Habsburg return to power anywhere in Europe. Finally, many of Karl's military leaders—men who had sworn allegiance to him—proved unfaithful. At last Horthy's army overran the troops faithful to Karl; and he, to avoid further bloodshed, withdrew from Budapest.

Karl and Zita were detained at Tihany Abbey in western Hungary until the Allies decided what to do with them. At Tihany, Karl received a visit from Hungary's

primate archbishop, Cardinal Czernoch. Czernoch later wrote that at Tihany he had expected to find "a broken, fearful, suffering king," but instead, he discovered that Karl needed no comfort. "I have done my duty, as I came here to do," he told the cardinal. "As crowned king, I not only have a right, I also have a duty. I must uphold the right and the dignity of the crown." The king said "Our Lord and Savior had led me" to try to regain the throne.



Karl I in Chernivtzi, Ukraine, July 6, 1917

On October 30, Allied authorities removed Karl and Zita from Tihany to a port on the Danube River, where they were placed on a British ship. They did not know their destination, but they would soon learn that it was Madeira, a Portuguese island in the Atlantic, 535 miles off the coast of Portugal. This would be the place of exile for the royal couple and their children. But Karl's sojourn on Madeira was short. In March, he caught a cold that soon turned to pneumonia. On April 1, 1922, Karl, the last reigning Habsburg emperor, died, while gazing on a crucifix Zita held for him in her hands. The emperor's last words were, "Thy will be done. Yes, yes. As you

will it. Jesus!"

Karl's title of emperor passed to his eldest son, Otto—who, as a man, later dedicated himself to work for the good of the peoples over whom his family once had ruled. Yet, though Karl and Zita's family lost the imperial power, a greater honor awaited them. On October 3, 2004, Pope John Paul II declared Karl "blessed"—the last step before being proclaimed a saint of the Catholic Church.

The Church remembers Blessed Karl on October 21, the day he and Zita were married in 1911.