The Relationship between Austria-Hungary and the United States in 1918

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INTRODUCTION

The last year of the First World War was indeed a decisive year. It appeared for a long time that the Central Powers would be victorious. In the fall of 1917 they succeeded in eliminating Russia from the war and also hit the Italian front hard (the so-called 12th battle of the Isonzo). It was in this critical period, however, that the true impact of the United States' participation in the war became apparent. The U.S. provided material and military aid to the Entente, thereby deciding both the military and the political outcome of the conflict.

The United States of America played an undeniably pivotal role during the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. After the end of the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson was termed one of the architects of the new Central Europe. In the "victorious" successor states, his participation in the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary was highly appreciated. Namely in Czechoslovakia, many public places and buildings, including Prague's main train station, bear the name of Woodrow Wilson. Nevertheless, it remains to be answered whether the role of the USA and its President corresponded to this veneration which was encouraged by the highest authorities. One of the principal objectives of the present article is to shed light on this issue.

This article demonstrates the fact that President Wilson was, until the last months of the war, hesitant to support the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. He gradually changed his standpoint over the spring and summer of 1918. It also proves that the Secretary of State Robert Lansing had a major effect on the President's decision making. In contrast, the secret Peace Inquiry Bureau, or the group of experts named *The Inquiry,* established by Colonel House with the aim of tackling the issues of peace settlement, lacked inner coherence in terms of the future of Austria-Hungary after the war. The group's representatives were long in favour of federalization, rather than of the empire's dissolution.

The article also largely examines Austro-Hungarian policy toward the USA, which to this day has not been thoroughly studied in specialized literature. Yet, before the spring of 1918 and to a certain extent even later, Vienna regarded the USA as a possible partner in its efforts to conclude peace. Studying Austro-Hungarian sources, the article will analyse in detail the development of Austro-Hungarian policy, which lacked, as will be demonstrated, a unified theme. In this respect, the article will also

mention the devastating effect of the Sixtus Affair (April 1918) on the reputation of Austria-Hungary in the USA. Another conclusion of this article will be the findings that in Austria-Hungary in the spring and summer of 1918, surprisingly scarce attention was paid to the US policy vis-à-vis Central Europe.

In this regard, we need to tackle numerous questions which are of crucial importance for a better understanding of Washington's policy to Central Europe during the last year of WWI. First of all, we will need to analyse what circumstances drove Washington to give up hope for a separate peace with Vienna and for the federalization of the monarchy. What were the reasons Wilson's administration ended up supporting the needs of the exile representatives of certain nations of the empire?

The examination of documents in Austrian archives was carried out with the aim of uncovering how the United States had been perceived by the authorized Austro-Hungarian government officials, to what extent their approach had been coordinated or how the differences among the key representatives (the Emperor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs) had affected Vienna's policy vis-à-vis Washington. We also need to ask how Vienna interpreted the negative change in US policy in the spring and summer of 1918. Did Vienna attempt to be more active toward the USA? These are the questions that have not to date been sufficiently answered by historians.

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This article deliberately does not deal with the final weeks of the existence of Austria-Hungary in the autumn of 1918. This period is in fact thoroughly described in literature and is of a complicated nature. The examination of it would thus require an independent study. In order to achieve my goals, I needed to study documents deposited in US and Austrian archives. For that reason, I did extensive research at the U.S. National Archives in College Park, Maryland, in the Library of Congress in Washington D. C., in the libraries of Harvard and Yale Universities and in the archives Österreichisches Staatsarchiv in Vienna.[1] I studied official documents, as well as private papers.

In the USA, I examined mainly the estate of the Secretary of State Robert Lansing, and his deputy William Phillips. I also researched the estate of President Wilson's confidant Colonel Edward M. House, an important diplomat and, before the outbreak of the war in 1917, the USA's last chargé d'affaires to Vienna Joseph C. Grew, and others. As regards Austria-Hungary, I studied the estate of the former Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Count Leopold Berchtold and Count Ottokar Czernin, then the private papers of the chief deputy to the Foreign Minister, Baron Ludwig Flotow, former Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Great Britain, Count Albert Mensdorff-Pouilly-Dietrichstein and others.[2] Interestingly, while in the USA private papers are an important source of information about the subject, Austro-Hungarian private papers are but a minor source. When facing domestic problems, as well as peace negotiations

1 My work in these archives was possible thanks to the kind support of the Charles University in Prague (research support scheme PRVOUK No. 12/205 605).

2 Individual private papers will be dealt with in detail in the body of this article. All are deposited in Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna.

with Russia, Ukraine and Romania,[3] complicated relations with the allies propelled by Germany, along with the situation at the fronts, the people concerned paid only scant attention to the Unites States even in 1918.

I

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy has absorbed the attention of historians, who have examined the topic from various angles. Unsurprisingly, some of them focused their attention on the policy of principal western powers. The role of the USA's relations to Central and Eastern Europe has been extensively analyzed, especially by Victor S. Mamatey and Betty M. Unterberger.[4] They have scrutinized the relation of Wilson's administration to the exile representatives of the monarchy's individual states. On the other hand, they have paid scant attention to Washington's policy toward official Vienna. They both overlooked the documents in Austrian archives.[5] Although Unterberger examined the secret negotiations between Vienna and Washington, which took place in the winter of 1918, she only studied them from the US administration's perspective.[6] The relationship of the Unites States of America to Austro-Hungarian government circles has in fact long been overlooked by historians.

Communication between the two powers after April 1917 was hindered by the fact that Austria-Hungary curtailed diplomatic relations with the USA following Wilson's declaration of war on Germany. In spite of that, unofficial contacts remained uninterrupted. Having said that, it might seem rather surprising that historical studies have paid only minor attention to them. A thorough analysis from the Austro-Hungarian point of view has been carried out only by Heinrich Benedikt.[7] He concentrated on the contacts of the "Meinlgruppe" (Meinl Group) which pushed through a rapid peace with western negotiators.

Similarly, Wilson's biographers were little interested in Vienna's policy. This applies also to the monumental five-volume study by Arthur S. Link who, however, examined the President's political career only until the year 1917.[8] The gap has not been filled sufficiently by more recent works written by US and Austrian historians either. In his biography of President Wilson, Kendrick A. Clements mentions Austria-

3 Regarding peace talks with Soviet Russia cf. W. BIHL, Österreich-Ungarn und die Friedenschlüsse von Brest-Litovsk, Wien/Köln/Graz 1970; V. HORČIČKA, *Rakousko-uherská politika vůči sovětskému Rusku v letech 1917–1918*, Praha 2005.

4 V. S. MAMATEY, *The United States and East Central Europe 1914–1918: A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda*, Princeton 1957; B. M. UNTERBERGER, *The United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*, Chapell Hill 1989.

5 Cf. V. S. MAMATEY, *The United States and the Dissolution of Austria-Hungary*, in: Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1950, pp. 256–257.

6 UNTERBERGER, p. 99 and hereafter.

7 H. BENEDOKT, *Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe 1917–18: Die Bemühungen um einen Verständigungsfrieden nach Dokumenten, Aktenstücken und Briefen*, Graz 1962.

8 Cf. i.e. A. S. LINK, *Wilson: Confusions and Crises, 1915–1916*, Princeton 1964.

Hungary only in two places and only generally.[9] By the same token, Francis R. Bridge in his book The Habsburg Monarchy among the Great Powers, 1815–1918 provides an inspiring but factually incomplete picture of US-Austro-Hungarian relations in 1918.[10] Austrian historian Manfried Rauchensteiner's study on the dissolution of Austria-Hungary provides few new facts regarding the issue of US-Austro-Hungarian relations and the interpretation he puts on it is not particularly innovative.[11] A far more detailed picture was drawn by Ingeborg Meckling in her older study. However, Meckling based her research on Austrian and German sources and examined Austro-Hungarian Foreign policy only between November 1916 and April 1918 when Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Ottokar Czernin, retired.

Consequently, a complex treatise on the subject of Austro-Hungarian and US relations in the last year of the First World War has not been undertaken to date. Although a certain number of unpublished, well-researched theses have been produced, for instance, at the University of Vienna, they cannot sufficiently fill in the gap.[12] On the other hand, useful studies have been published in recent years, which have cast light on partial aspects of the two countries' mutual relations, as well as on the subject of the self-determination of the Austro-Hungarian nations.

Among these is one piece by Milan Babík who has addressed the eschatological foundations of Wilson's foreign policy. He debates a generally accepted viewpoint (i.e. E. H. Carr or N. Gordon Levin), which attributes only minor importance to religious factors in the President's policy. He is right to set forth Wilson's alliance with the visionary George D. Herron, who played a major role in relations between the USA and Austria-Hungary.[13]

In contrast, Trygve Throntveit, in his valuable monograph, indirectly questions Babík's conclusions.[14] Unlike Babík, Throntveit underlines the importance of Wilson's hesitations regarding his support of the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy. While Throntveit argues convincingly that the President had long attempted to provide the nations of Austria-Hungary with the right of "self-government", Babík regards Wilson, in spite of his ambivalent public policy, as a fervent proponent of their "self-determination".

In the past twenty years, many studies have been written which examined the issue of the nations' self-determination and the attitude President Wilson had ad-

9 K. A. CLEMENTS, *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson*, Lawrence 1992.

10 F. R. BRIDGE, *The Habsburg Monarchy among the Great Powers, 1815–1918*, New York/Oxford/Munich 1990.

11 M. RAUCHENSTEINER, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 2nd Ed., Graz/Wien/Köln 1994.

12 Among these especially the study by R. PUFF, *Uncle Sam und der Doppeladler: Die Beziehungen der USA zu Österreich-Ungarn zwischen Sarajewo 1914 und Kriegserklärung 1917*, MA Thesis, Vienna 2004. Puff worked only in Austrian archives.

13 M. BABÍK, *George D. Herron and the Eschatological Foundations of Woodrow Wilson Policy, 1917–1919*, in: Diplomatic History, Vol. 35, No. 5, 2011, pp. 837–857. For more information on Herron see also M. P. BRIGGS, *George D. Herron and the European Settlement*, Stanford 1932.

14 T. THRONTVEIT, *The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination*, in: Diplomatic History, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2011, pp. 445–481.

opted in this respect. However, as regards Austria-Hungary, the conclusions of these studies are inconsistent and at times not quite convincing. Take for instance Derek Heater, who came to the conclusion that the President in the winter and spring of 1918 was on the horns of a dilemma *"between the diplomatic need to maintain the (Austro-Hungarian — author's note) Empire* [...]*"* on the one hand, *"and the practical military need and idealistic commitment to encourage nationalist separatist agitation on the other"*.[15] While Heater admitted that Secretary of State Robert Lansing took the credit for Wilson's reconsideration in support of the monarchy's dissolution, he paid only scant attention to the fact that this change of heart had been extremely hesitant and reluctant. Neither did he explain the "diplomatic need" to preserve the monarchy, which had allegedly been in conflict with Wilson's personal determination to support "self-determination".

According to Heater, the President was clearly dedicated to the *"idealistic commitment to national self-determination"*, which was nevertheless confined by rational considerations, such as the determination of the borders of new national states.[16] A similar view of Wilson's policy was adopted by Frederick S. Calhoun, who does not provide a thorough examination of its motives, yet underlines the President's support of self-determination after the USA's entry in the war in spring 1917.[17] This thesis was, in contrast, questioned by the aforementioned Throntveit study. The present article, too, will provide a critical examination of the thesis by looking at a concrete example of the relationship between the USA and Austria-Hungary.

Another critique concerning the President's support of self-determination was made by David Steigerwald. In his study on Wilsonian idealism he did not describe in detail the President's relationship to Austria-Hungary; nevertheless, he was very convincing in casting doubt on Heater's thesis of the President's *"commitment to national self-determination"*. Steigerwald showed evidence that the President's intention had not only been to enforce the right of self-determination, but "to create a world in which independent nations joined in harmonious order".[18] He pointed out that permanent peace, according to the President, could not be based on the recognition of the *"special or separate interest of any single nation or any group of nations..."*[19]

Another very skeptical view of Wilson's alleged support of nations' right for self-determination was taken by Lloyd E. Ambrosius. According to him, his support had been conditional and selective. The President allegedly *"did not advocate the destruction of the Habsburg Empire"*.[20] Wilson's reluctance to consent to the dissolution of the monarchy was also described by Betty M. Unterberger. She mentions a critique of the President's policy, which was made in late June 1918 by the leader of the Czechoslovak anti-Austrian exiles, Tomáš G. Masaryk. In a conversation with Lansing, the future

15 D. HEATER, *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy*, Houndmills/Basingstoke/London/New York 1994, p. 51.

16 Ibidem.

17 F. S. CALHOUN, *Uses of Force and Wilsonian Foreign Policy*, Kent 1993, p. 112.

18 D. STEIGERWALD, *Wilsonian Idealism in America*, Ithaca/London 1994, pp. 36–37.

19 Ibidem, p. 37.

20 L. E. AMBROSIUS, *Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations*, New York 2002, p. 125 and hereafter.

first Czechoslovak President complained that although Wilson had affirmed that *"no people should be forced to live under any sovereignty repugnant to them"*, he did not want *"in any way to impair or to rearrange the Austro-Hungarian Empire"*.[21]

The ongoing discussion of the President's policy in the matter of nations' self-determination is, as rightly observed by Thomas J. Knock, among other things also a consequence of *"Wilson's inability to invent a consistent standard for self-determination..."*[22]

One of the aims of the present article is to unravel the real motives behind and the genesis of the President's policy vis-à-vis Austria-Hungary. In this respect, it was necessary to examine also the policies of the USA's allies, namely that of Great Britain, which actively sought to influence Wilson's policy for its own benefit. Great Britain, for instance, supported the desires of immigrants of Slavic origin in the USA with the aim of curbing the influence of the local German and Irish communities. As was proven by Kenneth J. Calder, until the spring of 1918 Great Britain had not dismissed concluding a separate peace with Austria-Hungary and its support of the exile communities was merely one of the options.[23] Furthermore, Italy's policy had a partial effect on Wilson's policy, as well. Italy, which, among other nations, engaged in the practice of psychological warfare, attempted to undermine the morale of Austro-Hungarian troops. It was mainly Mark Cornwall who recently studied the methods of Italian propaganda. However, he did not study in American archives, so his otherwise invaluable research provides only little new information about the USA's policy toward Austria-Hungary.[24]

II

Wilson's policy vis-à-vis Austria-Hungary underwent remarkable development during the First World War. However, T. Throntveit's statement that the President had shifted from strict neutrality to entering into the war is somewhat oversimplified.[25]

The present study does not aim to provide a detailed analysis of the President's policy of neutrality.[26] Nevertheless, in view of the mutual relations between the USA and Austrian-Hungary, it is significant that Vienna's doubts about Washington's strict neutrality mounted as the war proceeded. Austro-Hungarian authorities were critical of the USA's actual pursuit of the neutrality policy. In the autumn of 1914 the monarchy's diplomats with Wilson's confidant, Colonel Edward House discussed that the USA might assist in mediating the peace, albeit no decision was made.[27]

21 UNTERBERGER, pp. 228–229.

22 T. J. KNOCK, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*, New York/Oxford 1992, p. 249.

23 K. J. CALDER, *Britain and the Origins of the New Europe, 1914–1918*, Cambridge 1976, pp. 217–218.

24 M. CORNWALL, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle of Minds*, Houndmills 2000.

25 THRONVEIT, p. 455.

26 Regarding Wilson's neutrality policy cf. i.e. P. DEVLIN, *Too Proud to Fight: Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality*, New York 1975.

27 Peace feelers initiated by Colonel House progressed with the approval of the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Count Leopold Berchtold. Berchtold to Dumba, October 31, 1914, No. 89,

In October 1914, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to the USA Constantin Dumba complained to the Secretary of State William J. Bryan that the USA enabled Canadian reservists to travel to Europe from US harbours.[28] It was in January 1915 that Dumba protested against the exports of some submarines to Canada.[29] Later in April 1915, the news about the growing number of US supplies to the enemy, along with an accommodation position towards British naval policy steered Dumba into a declaration that the *"President has completely lost the confidence of our group, as well as the possibility to act as a peace mediator playing a role to which he feels qualified"*.[30]

In accordance with that opinion, the Austro-Hungarian Embassy gained the approval of the Foreign Minister Count Stephan (István) Burián and got involved in the German-driven efforts to undermine the US arms industry. Constantin Dumba attempted to justify his actions in his memoirs. He wrote that after the official appeals for redress failed to succeed, it had been his duty to *"work against war supplies and namely the supplies of ammunition to the enemy"*.[31] However, the efforts failed leading to Dumba's withdrawal from power in September 1915.[32] In the meantime, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry had resolved to submit an official protest against the US war supplies to the Entente.[33]

The then popular and widespread view among US diplomats was that Austria-Hungary was Germany's "lap dog". With regards to this, it comes as a surprise that the protest note was drafted in Vienna without Berlin's co-operation. It was only shortly before the note was submitted to the US Ambassador to Austria-Hungary, Frederick C. Penfield that Germans learnt about its contents.[34] The question of Austria-Hungary's alleged or existing dependence on Germany thus continued to increasingly preoccupy Washington. In fact, Wilson dismissed the Austro-Hungarian protest.[35]

Presumably, the wording of the response was affected by a change at the Department of State (although Bryan had backed the note).[36] In June 1915 the Secretary of State William J. Bryan was replaced by the former Counselor of the Department of

Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien (hereafter HHStA), Politisches Archiv (hereafter PA), Karton (hereafter Kt.) 952 Liasse Krieg 25 b-i Friedensverhandlg. (hereafter Kt. 952 P. A. I).

28 Dumba to Bryan, October 12, 1914, in: *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1914, Supplement (hereafter Suppl.), Washington 1920, p. 568.

29 House, a diary entry, January 24, 1915, in A. S. LINK et al. (Eds.), *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (hereafter *PWW*), Vols. 30–51 (Vol. 32), Princeton 1979–1985, pp. 117–118.

30 Dumba to Burián, April 12, 1915, No. 16 A-D/pol., HHStA, PA, Kt. 897 P. A. I.

31 C. DUMBA, *Dreibund- und Entente- Politik in der Alten und Neuen Welt*, Wien 1931, p. 400.

32 For more information on the Dumba Affair or Archibald Affair see V. HORČIČKA, *On the Brink of War: The Crisis Year of 1915 in Relations Between the USA and Austria-Hungary*, in: Diplomacy & Statecraft, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2008, pp. 187–209.

33 Note des k. und k. Ministers des k. und k. Hauses und des Äussern an den Botschafter der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika in Wien, June 29, 1915, HHStA, PA, Kt. 843 P. A. I Liasse Krieg 4c Deutschland 1915 (hereafter 843 P. A. I).

34 Hohenlohe to Burián, June 23, 1915, No. Z. 56/P-B, HHstA, PA, Administrative Registratur, Fach 36, Kt. 359 Krieg 1914–1918, Dep 7, Affaire Kolischer Amerik. Kriegslieferungen (hereafter Kt. F36/359).

35 USA's Note, August 16, 1915, No. 2758, HHStA, PA, Kt. 843 P. A. I.

36 D. M. SMITH, *Robert Lansing and American Neutrality 1914–1917*, Berkeley 1958, p. 97.

State, Robert Lansing. In spite of certain controversy regarding naval policy, Lansing was an adherent of the Entente.[37] Lansing's appointment to the post did in fact give an immense boost to proponents of the USA's entry in the war in Wilson's administration.

From among Wilson's entourage it was namely Colonel House who, being very fond of Great Britain, became a friend of British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey. In September 1914 House had written to the President that unlike Germany, Great Britain was not misusing its power for its leaders were democratic.[38] Furthermore, House had been solidly convinced since the very beginning of the war that Austria-Hungary was controlled by Germany and would consent to signing peace upon Berlin's request.[39] It comes therefore as no surprise that the Colonel did not visit Vienna on any of his travels to Europe during WWI.

Later on, in 1916, the mutual relations of the USA and Austria-Hungary were not inhibited by any serious crises. Although they temporarily turned sour in autumn 1915 following the sinking of the Italian ship *Ancona* by a German submarine operating under the Austro-Hungarian flag, Vienna sent an apology and tensions rapidly diminished.[40] The monarchy apologized even though it had originally taken a hard-line stance, responding sharply to the USA's protest note. Washington's appeal to Austria-Hungary, the wording of which Wilson had personally participated in drafting, urged it to follow the rules of submarine warfare agreed previously without Vienna's presence between Washington and Berlin.[41] To Wilson's great relief, Vienna eventually gave in, as a result of pressure from Berlin, which had not been consulted in advance regarding the originally negative response to the US protest. The German Foreign Office, worried by the escalation of the dispute, feared the interruption of diplomatic relations between Austria-Hungary and the USA and consequently urged Burián to act moderately.[42] The President had in fact been reluctant to adopt House and Lansing's recommendation that the U.S. respond by suspending diplomatic relations with Austria-Hungary, and also took into account the opinions of the Congress and the

37 Notes, July 11, 1915, Library of Congress, Washington D. C. (hereafter LC), The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

38 Colonel House to the President, September 6, 1914, in: C. SEYMOUR (Ed.), *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House: Behind the Political Curtain 1912–1915*, Vol. 1, Boston 1926, p. 323.

39 From Edward Mandell House, July 31, 1914, in: *PWW*, Vol. 30, p. 323.

40 For more information on the sinking of the Ancona see i.e. G. H. DAVIS, *The 'Ancona' Affair: A Case of Preventive Diplomacy*, in: The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1966, pp. 267–277. For more information on Austro-Hungarian naval policy see L. SONDHAUS, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism*, West Lafayette 1994.

41 Lansing to Penfield, December 6, 1915, in: *FRUS* 1915, Suppl., pp. 623–625. Americans meant the agreement concluded after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May and the *Arabic* in August 1915 and claimed that Austria-Hungary had been informed about the agreement. Germans then promised to cease attacking passenger ships and pay compensations to the families of US victims. R. R. DOOERRIES, *Washington — Berlin 1908/1917: Die Tätigkeit des Botschafters Johann Heinrich Graf von Bernstorff in Washington vor dem Eintritt der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika in den Ersten Weltkrieg*, Düsseldorf 1975, pp. 134–136.

42 HORČIČKA, *On the Brink…*, pp. 187–209.

public.[43] Wilson closely monitored the *Ancona* crisis and it can be said that it constituted one of the important foreign policy issues he tackled in the November and December of 1915.

After the *Ancona* case had been solved, Austria-Hungary practically disappeared from the attention of Wilson's administration. Vienna took a more prudent course regarding the dispute over its naval policy. To Vienna's relief, the Germans in May 1916 promised they would not in the future sink civilian ships without prior warning.[44] Austria-Hungary feared that Washington could side with the Entente and the Foreign Ministry was of the opinion that *"in current conditions the USA's entry in the world war would surely lead to our defeat"*.[45]

On November 21, 1916, the Emperor Franz Joseph I died and his successor Charles I declared in his "An meine Völker" proclamation that he would attempt to conclude peace.[46] Towards the end of December 1916, the Emperor appointed Count Ottokar Czernin the new Foreign Minister. The removal of Burián and Czernin's promotion came as a great surprise to US diplomats in Vienna.[47]

Its timing came at an extremely sensitive period when the Central Powers with their allies (the Quadruple Alliance) made public their peace feeler, which was closely followed by President Wilson's own peace feeler on December 18, 1916. A detailed analysis of the background of these actions is yet again not the objective of the present study.[48]

The rejection of the Quadruple Alliance's peace feeler led to a deterioration of the situation at sea. On January 9, 1917, Germany's military and political leaders decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare. Austria-Hungary reacted by warning Berlin against this move. Theoretically, Austria-Hungary was free to decide not to follow Berlin at sea, but de facto it could not risk a serious deterioration of relations with its closest ally, especially as on January 10, 1917, the Entente responded to Wilson's peace feeler by announcing their aggressive war aims, which, according to Czernin, aimed for *"the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and Turkey"*.[49] Although at negotiations with a high-positioned German delegation, Czernin and other personalities voiced qualms about unrestricted submarine warfare, at the meeting of the Crown Council on January 21, 1917, they decided in the presence of the Emperor that Austria-Hungary would join Germany.[50] The separate peace and the monarchy's withdrawal from the war were indeed not on the horizon at that time.

43 To Robert Lansing, December 29, 1915, in: *PWW*, Vol. 35, pp. 406–407; From Edward Mandell House, November 21, 1915, in: Ibidem, Vol. 35, p. 234.

44 Burián to Hohenlohe, May 4, 1916, No. missing, HHStA, PA, Kt. 844 P. A. I.

45 Molden, memorandum, October 4, 1916, No. missing, HHStA, PA, Kt. 503 P. A. I Liasse XLVII/3 (15–16): Krieg 1914—1918 (hereafter 503 P. A. I).

46 An Meine Völker!, November 21, 1916. A flier, reprinted for example in E. FEIGL, *Kaiser Karl I.: Ein Leben für den Frieden seiner Völker*, Wien 1990, p. 86.

47 Penfield to Lansing, December 26, 1916, No. 2331, National Archives College Park, Maryland (hereafter NA), Record Group (hereafter RG) 59, Microcopy 695, reel 5.

48 For more information on the relation between the peace initiative of the Quadruple Alliance and Wilson's initiative cf. i.e. DEVLIN, p. 575.

49 Czernin to Karl I., January 1917, No. 1, HHStA, PA, Kt. 261 P. A. XL (Interna, Korr. d. Ministers 1911–1918 (hereafter 261 P. A. XL).

50 The German Secretary of State Arthur Zimmermann and head of the German Navy General Staff, Admiral Henning von Holtzendorff, arrived in Vienna. A meeting with

Nevertheless, it was the monarchy's withdrawal from war that President Wilson, Lansing and House attempted to achieve. Consequently, in early February 1917, following the official announcement of the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, they decided not to interrupt diplomatic relations with Austria-Hungary but with Germany.[51] Key secret talks were held by Ambassador Penfield and Minister Czernin. Vienna was prepared to negotiate, but only under certain conditions. Czernin demanded that the Entente abandon their recently published war aims, namely *"the liberation of the Italians, Slavs, Romanians, and Czechoslovaks"* from foreign domination. Furthermore, he was not willing to accept the separate peace but only general peace with Germany's participation. Yet, he did not disclose this second condition to Penfield until March 1917. However, we know that Czernin had already clearly spoken against the separate peace among his confidants in October 1916. [52]

Lansing considered the first condition acceptable, and because he had not been informed about the second one, he did not rule out the success of the peace negotiations.[53] Therefore, he applied great pressure on the UK to make them guarantee the monarchy's territorial integrity. *"It is the President's view,"* Lansing told the US Ambassador to London, Walter H. Page, *"that the large measure of autonomy* [...] *is a sufficient guarantee of peace and stability in that part of Europe* [...]*"*.[54] British Prime Minister David Lloyd George at first hesitated. The reasons behind this standpoint of the British Prime Minister are explained by several authors, such as August Hecksher, by the fact that Lloyd George had allegedly anticipated that Austria-Hungary's economic dependence on Germany would in the future stand in the way of German war efforts.[55] The real reason for Lloyd George's hesitation was the effort to communicate with Vienna independently.[56] However, he promised to preserve only the central parts of the monarchy, namely the Alpine countries, Bohemia and Central Hungary.[57]

The discussions between Penfield and Czernin were still fruitless. The Minister submitted a memorandum to the Ambassador in which he underlined that *"it is absolutely out of the question to separate Austria Hungary from her Allies..."*[58] Offers

the Emperor, Czernin, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Count István Tisza, the Austrian Prime Minister Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic and others took place on January 20, 1917. Aufzeichnung über eine am 20. Jänner im k. u. k. Ministerium des k. u. k. Hauses und des Aeussern stattgehabte Besprechung, January 20, 1917, HHStA, PA, Kt. 1092a P. A. I Nachlass Czernin, Nachlass Demblin (hereafter 1092a P. A. I). For more information on the meeting of the Crown Council see Ministerrrat, January 22, No. G. M. K. P. Z 532, HHStA, PA, kt. 313 P. A. XL Interna — Gemeins. Ministerrrats. Prot. 1916–1917 III.

51 From the Diary of Colonel House, February 1, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 41, pp. 86–89.

52 G. W. SHANAFELT, *The Secret Enemy: Austria-Hungary and the German Alliance, 1914–1918*, New York 1985, p. 110.

53 Two Letters from Robert Lansing, February 10, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 41, p. 185.

54 To Walter Hines Page, February 8, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 41, p. 158–159.

55 A. HECKSHER, *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography*, New York 1991, p. 426.

56 W. FEST, *Peace or Partition: The Habsburg Monarchy and British Policy 1914–1918*, London 1978, p. 53.

57 Page to Lansing, February 21, 1917, No. 5752, in: *FRUS: The World War*, 1917, Suppl. 1, Washington 1931, p. 56.

58 From Frederic Courtland Penfield, March 13, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 41, pp. 398–399.

from Washington with a very uncertain outlook for success could hardly prevail over the actual importance of the alliance with Germany. Although Emperor Charles was willing to take the negotiations further than Czernin (in winter 1917 he secretly acknowledged France's claim to Alsace-Lorraine),[59] he was neither willing nor able to influence the dialogue between Penfield and Czernin significantly. We only have little information about his attitude toward them. Nevertheless, we know he had been meeting the US Ambassador frequently. As Empress Zita remembers, *"Penfield was one of our best personal friends. We would often invite him and his wife for tea. He would do everything he was entitled to for us; he would go to the limit and perhaps even beyond* [...] *Penfield loved Austria and we would do anything to add to this fondness. The major concern was to prevent conflict between Austria-Hungary and the United States — we had always been convinced such a fateful turnaround would finally seal our fate..."*[60]

After that, the United States did not continue its initiative, the principal reason being doubts about Austria-Hungary's independent relation to Germany[61] and, presumably, the monarchy's reluctance to distance itself from unrestricted submarine warfare.[62] The involvement of Austria-Hungary in unrestricted submarine warfare resulted in the President's refusal to accept the credentials of the new Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to the USA Count Adam Tarnowski at the end of March 1917. On April 6, with the consent of the Congress, President Wilson declared war on Germany, the principal reason being the use of unrestricted submarine warfare. The decision of the President and of the Congress triggered Vienna's severance of diplomatic relations with Washington.[63]

III

It is uncertain whether the suspension of diplomatic relations between the USA and Austria-Hungary was inevitable. Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary's ally, for instance, preserved them until the end of the war. On the other hand, we need to note that Germans were desirous of Vienna's solidarity.[64] Otherwise, the Entente might have arrived at the conclusion that the conflict among the Central Powers had spread, which was contrary to Vienna's interests.

President Wilson, for his part, was convinced that Germany had coerced Emperor Charles and Czernin into this move.[65] It is beyond any doubt that the perception of the

59 E. P. KELEHER, *Emperor Karl and the Sixtus Affair*, in: East European Quaterly, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1992, pp. 63–184.

60 J. GALANDAUER, *Karel I.: Poslední český král*, Praha 2004, p. 150.

61 Tarnowski to Czernin, March 13, 1917, No. A, HHStA, PA, Kt. 1047 P. A. I Liasse Krieg 61a U-Boot Krieg (hereafter 1047 P. A. I).

62 Tarnowski to Czernin, March 8, 1917, No. 51, HHStA, PA, Kt. 1047 P. A. I.

63 V. HORČIČKA, *Austria-Hungary, Unrestricted Submarine Warfare, and the United States' Entrance into the First World War*, in: The International History Review, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2012, pp. 245–269.

64 Czernin to Hohenlohe, February 12, 1917, No. 74, HHStA, PA, Kt. 1047 P. A. I.

65 A Memorandum by John Howard Whitehouse, April 14, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 42, pp. 65–69.

monarchy as an appendage of the stronger Germany tarnished its reputation over the Atlantic. The conviction that Austria-Hungary was dependent on Germany had deep roots which stemmed, as has been stated earlier, from the period before the First World War. This opinion was favoured by the British. In winter 1917 Prime Minister David Lloyd George made a point of this to the USA's Ambassador Walter H. Page.[66]

However, the monarchy was not that largely dependent on Germany in 1917. As it has been proved earlier, Austria-Hungary maintained room for manoeuvre in its policy towards the USA. Czernin, for instance, did not respond to Berlin's pressure and before the USA entered the war, he did not remove Ambassador Tarnowski from his post. Nevertheless, the Austro-Hungarian policy was strongly marked by its regard for Germany. In spite of several hidden conflicts, Vienna was forced to give in to its ally on many occasions, even though it had been able to display its defiance. This can be illustrated by the disputes between Vienna and Berlin during the peace conference in Brest in the winter of 1917/1918. [67]

A break in relations with Germany was not conceivable for various reasons. It would have resulted in a serious internal political crisis, while the guarantee of territorial integrity provided by Lloyd George was not sufficient, leaving ample room for the territorial claims of the monarchy's neighbours — especially Italy. All this was happening at the time when Austria-Hungary wished to terminate the war without thinking it lost.

In spite of a theory widespread in Washington about the dependence of the monarchy on Germany, the USA was still rather accommodating towards Austria-Hungary, even after the severance of their diplomatic relations. At the audience held on the occasion of Tarnowski's departure, Lansing assured him he was not a believer in the monarchy's dissolution.[68]

In his speech given on the occasion of Flag Day, in contrast to secret agreements of the Entente regarding the distribution of enemy territories, Wilson underlined the values respected by the United States in the war. He asserted that the Central Powers were de facto only one power, claiming that Austria-Hungary was dominated by Germany. Much as Austria-Hungary's and Germany's bond was onerous, it still allowed wide space for cherishing the hope of a separate peace with Vienna. In his speech, Wilson spoke of the freedom of nations, yet not about their independent existence as states.[69] Slowly and gradually, the State Department began to enforce a reverse standpoint.

Albert H. Putney, the chief of the department of the Middle East drafted a memorandum upon Lansing's request, in which he recommended a considerable reduction in the monarchy's territory. Furthermore, he was in favour of creating independent states — Poland, Bohemia, and a joint South Slav state from the areas inhabited by

66 From Robert Lansing, with Enclosure, February 13, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 41, pp. 211–214.

67 At that time, Czernin threatened repeatedly that he would conclude a separate peace with Bolshevik Russia if Germany did not review its, according to Vienna, excessive demands towards Russia. Cf. e.g. V. HORČIČKA, *Austria-Hungary and the Peace Talks with Ukraine in 1918*, in: Przegląd Historyczny, Vol. 103, No. 3, 2012, pp. 499–526.

68 Lansing, notes, May 1, 1917, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

69 A Flag Day Address, June 14, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 42, pp. 498–504.

Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.[70] The reasons behind this radical opinion may lie in Putney's close relationships with Czech and Serbian politicians in Washington. He was convinced that the establishment of a strong Polish, Czech and South-Slavic state *"would be a death blow to Germany's dreams of Drang nach Osten"*. [71]

Gradually, Putney's opinions gained in popularity. In the summer of 1917 Washington could still not rule out the possibility of concluding a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. Worrying news about the bad results of the crops boosted the monarchy's willingness to split from Germany.[72] Nevertheless, the situation was not positive for Austria-Hungary's withdrawal from the war. In July, Austro-Hungarian troops managed to defeat the Russian "Kerenski" Offensive and launched a counter-attack. Meanwhile, German Emperor Wilhelm urged Emperor Charles not to pursue his "separatist tendencies".[73]

Meanwhile, the Emperor sent more peace feelers to the USA and the Entente. In August 1917 he even consented to launch talks in France, backed in this move by Czernin, who had been extremely skeptical as to the outcome of the war.[74] Besides that, to Switzerland he sent an assistant of the "Meinl Group",[75] Professor Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, who was a well-known adherent of peace among the Slavic nations and Germans in the Habsburg monarchy.[76]

In Zurich Foerster met Wilson's confidant, professor George D. Herron.[77] Foerster's report about the opinions of Emperor Charles was indeed rather unconventional. Firstly, Charles allegedly criticized Germans, and then he promised to provide for the autonomy of Poland, as well as support democracy and meet the demands of Czech political parties that the monarchy be federalized.[78]

President Wilson regarded the news from Bern and Paris as a proof of the crisis of the Central Powers. Yet he was still convinced that *"the Dual Monarchy would continue to exist, but each people of the confederation would have liberal autonomy"*.[79]

70 MAMATEY, *The United States...*, pp. 91–93.

71 Ibidem.

72 Stovall to Lansing, July 24, 1917, No. 1280, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 46.

73 A. POLZER-HODITZ, *Kaiser Karl: Aus der Geheimmappe seines Kabinettschefs*, Zürich 1929, p. 456.

74 For more details see F. ENGEL-JANOSI, *Die Friedensgespräche Graf Nicolaus Reverteras mit Comte Abel Armand, 1917/1918*, Graz 1966. Austria-Hungary and France did not want to disappoint their allies, however by offering a separate peace they intended to break the enemy's unity.

75 The "Meinl Group" concentrated round "Austrian Political Society" established by the industrialist Julius Meinl in December 1915. Among its members were the last Austrian Imperial Prime Minister Heinrich Lammasch and the Finance Minister in his government Josef Redlich.

76 For more information about Foerster cf.: M. HOSCHEK, *Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869–1966) mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Beziehungen zu Österreich*, MA Thesis, Wien 1999.

77 For more information about Herron cf. i.e. BABÍK, *George D. Herron...*, pp. 837–857; BRIGGS, *George D. Herron and the European Settlement*, Stanford 1932.

78 Stovall to Lansing, August 21, 1917, No. 1476, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 50. Stovall to Lansing, August 27, 1917, in: *FRUS*, 1917, Suppl. 2, pp. 201–202.

79 A Translation of a Letter from Baron Moncheur to Baron Charles de Broqueville, August 14, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 43, pp. 465–470.

Not surprisingly, in September 1917, Italian Foreign Minister Baron Sidney Sonnino insisted that the USA declare war on Austria-Hungary.[80] The Austro-Hungarian army had recently defeated the 11th Italian offensive at Isonzo and Rome worried about the morale of its soldiers. Sonnino's repeated pleas had fallen on fertile ground in Washington. Meanwhile, Wilson had been emphasizing the theory about Austria-Hungary's complete dependence on Germany.[81] Needless to say, this view of the monarchy suited Rome. Why, in fact, could the USA not declare war on the Habsburg monarchy, as it was a mere appendage of Germany, with which they were already at war? Even so, Germany did not have absolute control over Austria-Hungary, as much as Wilson did not have absolute control over the Entente, which had relied on the USA's help.

The exaggerated tie between Austria-Hungary and Germany became the cause of Lansing's slowly changing opinion regarding the future of the Dual monarchy. In autumn 1917 he came to the conclusion that new, densely populated countries should be established at the Eastern border of Germany, regardless of the territorial losses that Austria-Hungary and Russia would suffer.[82]

A leading role in Washington's shift in opinion was played by a successful offensive of the Central Powers, which on October 24, 1917, broke through Italian lines near the city of Caporetto. Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando and Foreign Minister Sonnino pressured Wilson to declare war on Austria-Hungary.[83] The President had presumably long hesitated because only on November 14, 1917, did Assistant Secretary of State William Phillips receive the information that the President was considering a declaration of war against Austria-Hungary.[84]

The President's decision may have been precipitated by Joseph C. Grew's weekly overview of the Central Powers' situation, which he received from Lansing several days later, on November 12, 1917. Grew was convinced the offensive in Italy had cemented the alliance of Vienna and Berlin.[85] Thus, the belief that the monarchy had been controlled by Germany in spite of its peace appeals was confirmed.

Lansing was aware that the United States would find it difficult to provide reasons for war with Austria-Hungary. A memorandum, elaborated by the Law Adviser of the Department of State, Lester H. Woolsey, reveals that "[...] *nothing has occurred since the declaration of war against Germany* [...] *involving direct and wanton violation of the rights of American citizens on the part of the Austro-Hungarian Government*". The memorandum cited only several "enemy actions" of the monarchy. These were cases which had been solved long ago (e.g. Dumba, the sinking of the *Ancona*) as well as the attack on the US ship *Marguerite* on April 4, 1917. The latter, however, was a highly disputable pretext for a declaration of war. In fact, Woolsey admitted that the ship had been sunk by an unknown submarine whose crew had been speaking the "Austrian language".

80 T. Page to Lansing, September 11, 1917, No. 1079, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 52.

81 An Address in Buffalo to the American Federation of Labor, November 12, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 44, pp. 11–17.

82 Lansing, Notes, October 24, 1917, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

83 Phillips, a diary entry, November 12, 1917, Harvard University Library (hereafter HUL), William Phillips Papers, box 1.

84 Phillips, a diary entry, November 1917, HUL, William Phillips Papers, box 1.

85 From Robert Lansing, with Enclosure, November 12, 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 45, pp. 30–38.

Hence, *casus belli* is perceived by Woolsey in the operations of the Austro-Hungarian army in Italy. While affecting the Unites States only indirectly, since US troops did not operate in Italy, they had a serious impact on US national interests and were thus *"no doubt a good ground for a declaration of war against Austria by the United States"*.[86]

Lansing was well aware of the weaknesses of Woolsey's memorandum. He sent it to the president, but pointed out that *"we have not a very strong case against Austria so far as hostile acts are concerned"*. He also hinted that the consequences of war needed to be viewed from the perspective of the nation's security, as a large number of immigrants from the monarchy's territory lived in the USA.[87]

Needless to say, legal obstacles could not have prevented the war and in fact, Lansing was not directly opposed to it. On November 1917, *The New York Times* wrote that at the Congress meeting that would be held in two weeks' time, it was to be expected that war against Austria-Hungary would be declared.[88] The newspaper had presumably been acquainted with the reasoning of Woolsey and Lansing because several days later, it cited various reasons in favor of and against the war, including a consideration of immigrants of Austro-Hungarian origin.[89]

As it turned out, the President had decided to take a risk. In early December, the well-informed *The New York Times* analysed his reasons. According to the newspaper, Wilson had allegedly hoped that should he avoid declaring war on Austria-Hungary, it may, at an opportune moment, open the door to concluding favourable peace terms with Germany. Austria-Hungary, wrote the paper, had grown tired of the war and its influence could contribute to its earlier termination. However, the administration had come to the conclusion that the war had to be maintained by all possible means until the destruction of German autocracy.[90] According to *The New York Times*, the importance of the monarchy for American political strategy had decreased. Indeed, Wilson had not let go of his hope to conclude a separate peace with Vienna, but that was to be just a means to achieve the USA's principal goal — the total defeat of Germany.

IV

When on December 4, 1917, at 12:30 p.m. the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson began the State of the Union Address his audience being the two chambers of the Congress, the majority of those present expected that he would merely recommend approving immediate front assistance to the war-struck Italy. His request for a declaration of war against Austria-Hungary acted "like a thunder-clap". The present Senators and Congressmen jumped out of their seats and applauded the President.[91]

86 Unfriendly Acts of Austria, Summary of Attached Memorandum, November 20, 1917, LC, The Papers of Lester H. Woolsey, box 13. The consent was agreed on October 6, 1917.

87 Lansing to Wilson, November 20, 1917, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 62.

88 *Nearing War with Austria*, in: The New York Times, November 23, 1917, p. 3.

89 *Austria and the United States*, in: The New York Times, November 28, 1917, p. 12.

90 *Congress Opens, Members Favor War on Austria*, in: The New York Times, December 4, 1917, p. 1.

91 Phillips, a diary entry, December 4, 1917, HUL, William Phillips Papers, box 1.

The astonishment in the room can have two explanations. Either, those present had not taken the information in the press seriously, or the President, until the last moment, had not given clear signals about his plans. The reason lies in the fact that Phillips, who was usually well-informed, noted in his diary about the President's request for a declaration of war — *"no one expected (it) — not even his cabinet"*.[92]

Wilson's speech met with nearly everyone's approval. The Congress approved the President's request on December 7, 1917. A total of 74 Senators and 365 Congressmen voted in favour. On December 11, 1917, Wilson declared war on Austria-Hungary.[93] In spite of the official proclamation of war against Austria-Hungary, the President was still willing to distinguish between the monarchy and Germany.[94] The US administration had not yet decided what the monarchy would become after the war. Regardless of the disappointments which were brought by the year 1917, the White House still hoped to conclude a separate peace with the monarchy. According to the US Secretary of State Robert Lansing, the monarchy was about to collapse and it was high time to plan for its future after the war.[95]

It was not a bolt out of the blue for Vienna when the USA declared war on it. However tardy the signals on the precipitating catastrophe were, Czernin would not have been able to prevent the threat even had he been alerted in time. Rumours circulated in Switzerland and Scandinavia in late November 1917 that Austria-Hungary was redeploying its troops from the East and even from Italy to the western front, which would have allegedly been a *casus belli* for Italy.[96] The Emperor, too, was cautioned about the approaching threat.[97] He was extremely anxious and in the coming days repeatedly asked for details.[98]

The USA's entry into the war against Austria-Hungary should have served as serious warning to its governing circles. In fact, it indicated that the President might in the future change his opinion about the future of the monarchy. Emperor Charles drew relevant conclusions from the declaration. He told Count August Demblin, the representative of the Foreign Ministry at the Imperial court, that according to the Armeeoberkommando (hereafter AOK), there were 50,000 Americans with artillery on the western front, but that German submarines had not sunk a single US transport ship. Before May 1917, the Emperor estimated these numbers would grow to 700,000. He thought the Central Powers would not *"most likely be able to adequately counterbalance this power"*.[99]

Hence, the Emperor acknowledged Lansing's evaluation of the situation. However, the think tank concentrated around Wilson's confidant House was of a different opinion. In September 1917 in New York, *The Inquiry* was established under its

92 Ibidem.
93 *PWW*, Vol. 45, Note 1, p. 224.
94 Phillips, a diary entry, December 12, 1917, HUL, William Phillips Papers, box 1.
95 Lansing, Notes, December 31, 1917, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.
96 Czernin to Storck, December 1, 1917, No. missing, HHStA, PA, Kt. 898 P. A. I.
97 Tagesbericht, December 2, 1917, No. missing, HHStA, PA, Kt. 59 P. A. XL Interna. Tagesber. d. Min. d. Äuss. 1917 IX–1918 IV (hereafter 59 P. A. XL).
98 Demblin to Czernin, December 6, 1917, No. 15, HHStA, PA, Kt. 263 P. A. XL Interna. Telegr. von Demblin 1917–1918 (hereafter 263 P. A. I).
99 Demblin to Czernin, December 19, 1917, No. 36, HHStA, PA, Kt. 263 P. A. XL.

auspices. The principal aim of the organization was to supply the President with information from different parts of the world, and especially to elaborate plans on the post-bellum organization of the world.[100]

The President used the information gathered by *The Inquiry* when formulating the USA's war aims. He based it on a memorandum published on House's request in December 1917 by the members of the executive committee of *The Inquiry* with its chief Sidney Mezes. The principal war aim of the USA was thus going to be the *"liquidation of Prussian Central Europe"*. This was to be achieved via a democratization of Prussia while increasing the independence of Austria-Hungary whose alliance with Germany was to be broken.

According to *The Inquiry*, the Habsburg monarchy was to be affected mainly by its chaotic internal conditions, namely the dissatisfaction of Czechs and South Slavs. *"Our policy"*, they believed, *"must therefore consist first in a stirring up of nationalist discontent, and then in refusing to accept the extreme logic of this discontent, which would be the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary"*. USA's policy was to aim at the federalization of the monarchy. Nevertheless, Austria-Hungary was to sustain some territorial losses, namely to Italy.[101]

The memorandum of the Inquiry served as the basis for the President's speech in the Congress. On January 8, 1918, he outlined the USA's war aims in fourteen points. Austria-Hungary was dealt with especially in point X: *"The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development."*[102]

It was with tremendous admiration that the Congress heard the President's speech. Even the President himself was surprised by the ovation he was given.[103] It remains to be said that the admiration was not universal. Privately, it was Lansing who disagreed with some of its sections. He believed, for instance, that the importance Wilson attributed to preserving the existence of Austria-Hungary was not wise and would likely have to be abandoned. He was convinced that the United States of America should start considering the establishment of the Polish and Czech states, as well as the dismemberment of Hungary.[104]

Unsurprisingly, the leaders of the Czech foreign resistance movement were, as Viktor Mamatey deduced on the basis of their reports, *"deeply disappointed in the Fourteen Points"*, because *"there could be no further doubt, Wilson was not a partisan of the destruction of the Monarchy..."*[105] From the powers of the Alliance, the greatest critic of the President's speech abroad was Italy.[106] While the Italians were

100 L. L. GELFAND, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917–1919*, New Haven 1963, p. 79.

101 A Memorandum by Sidney Edward Mezes, David Hunter Miller, and Walter Lippmann, December 1917, in: *PWW*, Vol. 45, pp. 459–474.

102 An Address to a Joint Session of Congress, January 8, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 45, pp. 534–539.

103 Phillips, a diary entry, 8. 1. 1918, HUL, William Phillips Papers, box 1.

104 Lansing, Notes, 10. 1. 1918, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

105 MAMATEY, *The United States...*, pp. 214–219.

106 Lansing to Wilson, January 25, 1918, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 743, reel 1. Lansing informed the President that his speech in Rome had been accepted with *"discontentment or at least disappointment"*.

discontented, Austro-Hungarian government circles should have been pleased. Count Czernin had in fact decided (probably under the Emperor's pressure) to use Wilson's speech to begin a discussion with the United States. His first move was to charge diplomatic representatives in neutral countries with sending a positive message to America.[107] On the domestic front, Czernin spoke in more detail. On January 24, 1918, he gave an important speech to the Foreign Committee of the delegation of Austrian Parliament (*Reichsrat*). The President's speech, he asserted, made him strongly believe that a general peace could be achieved in the near future. In the same way, he refused Wilson's appeal that Austria-Hungary implement various internal policy reforms.[108]

In the United States, Czernin's statement was accepted rather positively, in contrast to a parallel proclamation by the Chancellor of the German Empire Georg von Hertling.[109] Soon after that, Colonel House came to the conclusion that Wilson's fourteen points had served their main purpose, which was *"to create chism (sic!)"* among the Central Powers. At a meeting with the President, they agreed they would pursue this path. Wilson was to speak again in the Congress and give von Hertling a firm response. The approach to Austria-Hungary, the two men agreed, would be much gentler.[110]

Nonetheless, Vienna had become aware of the President's intention, which helped confirm Czernin's fears as to the main objective of enemy negotiators. It had now become clear that the USA was aiming to sow the seeds of discord among the Central Powers.[111] This correct conclusion was not called into question even by the incorrect reports made by Austro-Hungarian diplomats that the President "absolutely refused" to respond to Czernin's speech.[112] However, the truth was different.

While the President was drafting another speech, Washington received from Bern some important news about Austria-Hungary's new peace appeal. At the beginning of February 1918, Lansing's acquaintance, Professor Heinrich Lammasch, an Austrian specialist in international law, arrived in Zurich where he tried to meet Wilson's confidant, Professor George D. Herron. It is not an objective of the present article to follow in detail the dialogue between these two important men.[113] It is sufficient to note two facts. Firstly, Lammasch was acting on behalf of the Emperor, who had become increasingly worried about the growing number of US soldiers at the front,[114] albeit not on behalf of Czernin. And secondly, he promised Herron the monarchy would federalize and implement internal policy reforms. He also implied

107 Hadik to Czernin, January 17, 1918, No. 48, HHStA, PA, Kt. 964 P. A I Liasse Krieg 25/29–30 Friedensverhandlg. (hereafter 964 P. A. I).

108 Czernin's speech at the Foreign Committee of delegations, January 24, 1918, No. missing, HHStA, PA, Kt. 583 P. A. I Delegationsakten 1917–1918.

109 Lansing to W. H. Page, January 29, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 51–52.

110 From the Diary of Colonel House, January 29, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 46, pp. 167–168.

111 Musulin to Czernin, February 1, 1918, No. 72, HHStA, PA, Kt. 964 P. A. I.

112 Franz to Czernin, February 1, 1918, No. 70, HHStA, PA, Kt. 964 P. A. I.

113 It had already been done by BENEDIKT, *Die Friedensaktion…*, pp. 1–308.

114 Demblin to Czernin, December 19, 1917, No. 36, HHStA, PA, Kt. 263 P. A. XL Interna Telegr. von Demblin 1917–1918.

Austria-Hungary's willingness to conclude a separate peace under certain circumstances.[115]

In spite of this development, US diplomats in Bern remained cautious. Hugh Wilson was right to remind his bosses that both the Emperor and Lammasch were facing strong opposition, which might prevent them from implementing *"any portion of their program"*.[116]

In the forthcoming weeks, it was Herron who became the principal advocate of the agreement with Austria-Hungary. He stayed in touch with Lammasch and the Meinl Group until mid-March when contact was suspended by the Austro-Hungarian party for an unknown reason. Herron attributed it to German intrigues.[117] Furthermore, the Emperor never did make the planned steps, concentrating instead on seeking other means of contacting Washington.

Secretary of State Lansing, too, thought highly of Lammasch's mission. He spoke of Lammasch as an *"honest and sincere"* advocate of a rapid peace conclusion. The Emperor had, according to Lansing, identical goals. However, the Secretary of State, similarly to H. Wilson, was in doubt as to whether they would be able *"to resist the political power of Austrian statesmen under German influence* [...]*"*.[118] His caution was to become obvious in the second half of February 1918.

Meanwhile, President Wilson continued to prepare his speech to the Congress. Contrary to allegations put forward by M. Babík, he had not yet decided to disappoint Austria-Hungary.[119] He was actually planning to distinguish between Germany and Austria-Hungary. The truth is that if the public had found out that the President was expecting the Habsburg monarchy to continue, it might have led to the demoralization of Slavs striving for the dissolution of the empire.[120]

It was Dr. Edvard Beneš, General Secretary of the Czech National Council in Paris, who informed the USA about the mood among Austrian Slavs. Presumably, Beneš sought to clearly indicate to the US diplomat that it was unnecessary to regard Vienna as a spent force during the negotiations.[121]

115 Herron, Memorandum of Conversation, February 3, 1918, Hugh Robert Wilson to Robert Lansing, with Enclosures, in: *PWW*, Vol. 46, pp. 241–247.

116 Hugh Robert Wilson to Robert Lansing, February 6, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 46, pp. 261–263. The most detailed information about the meeting Herron-Lammasch was sent by H. Wilson to Washington on February 8, 1918. However, it arrived only on March 7, 1918, and the President could not use it during the preparation of his response to Czernin's speech at the Foreign Committee of the Austrian delegation.

117 Stovall to Lansing, April 22, 1918, No. 2879, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 381.

118 Germans had been informed about the contents of the meeting Lammasch-Herron and urged Czernin to make an effort to terminate these initiatives. Notiz, February 18, 1918, No. missing, HHStA, PA, Kt. 175 P. A. III Preussen Weisungen, Varia 1917–1918.

119 BABÍK, p. 850.

120 Arthur James Balfour to Edward Mandell House, February 7, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 46, pp. 271–272.

121 H. Wilson to Lansing, February 8, 1918 (arrived on February 10, 1918), in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 105–107. Beneš somewhat tendentiously informed about the "Three Kings Declaration" of Czech Deputies of Provincial Assemblies and of the Imperial Council.

Undoubtedly, Beneš had excellent contacts especially in France. However, within Wilson's administration and US diplomatic circles, Czechoslovaks were paid little attention. The documents of the US Department of State as well as the documents of important people had devoted only scarce attention to them before the spring of 1918. While they had their advocates in the USA, namely the father and the son Crane, their influence on US political activity was not significant. As Kenneth J. Calder demonstrated, although supporting the needs of the exile representations of the various nations of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was a constituent of British efforts to restrict the influence of German and Irish immigrants in the USA, in fact it was an *"issue of secondary importance"* for London until the spring of 1918.[122] It was similar in Washington, in spite of the support of the efforts of the exiles by certain influential personalities close to the administration.

One of these personalities was a close friend of Masaryk, Charles Crane, who was an important donor to the Democratic Party. His son Richard was Lansing's Personal Assistant since the summer of 1915. Charles Crane was a wealthy entrepreneur, the owner of the Crane Plumbing and Manufacturing Company. He had already become acquainted with Masaryk before World War I and invited him to lecture at the School of Slavonic Studies at the University of Chicago, which he had established.[123]

Beneš's efforts were in vain. President Wilson had decided to seize the opportunity to respond to Czernin's and Hertling's speeches. As a result, on February 11, 1918, President Wilson was quoted as saying to the two chambers of Congress that he *"seems to see the fundamental elements of peace* [...]*"*.[124] Wilson was not too critical and conceded that Czernin's response to his speech from January 8 had been formulated in a "friendly tone". The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry and the Emperor especially noticed the praise of Czernin's speech. Furthermore, they overlooked the fact, clearly stated by the President, that the peace terms of the USA had only been a draft of the principles and methods of their application. They decided to take the opportunity to address the President.[125] They selected the King of Spain, Alfonso XIII, to act as intermediary.

Emperor Charles sent a telegram to Alfonso on February 17, 1918, asking him to pass on to Washington a request to launch negotiations between Austria-Hungary and the United States. In his own message to the President, the Emperor touched upon four points which the President had addressed in his speech at the Congress in February 11, 1918.[126]

Charles accepted the first point requesting a just peace without reservations. However, points 2 and 3, which dealt with territorial and national questions, were not as unambiguous. The Emperor claimed peace without annexations and contributions. His main priority was to prevent the implementation an unrestricted right of self-

122 CALDER, p. 218.

123 Charles Crane as a member of the Root's mission in Russia again met Masaryk. J. KALVODA, *Genese Československa*, Praha 1998, p. 179. The book was originally published in the USA as *The Genesis of Czechoslovakia*, Boulder 1986.

124 A Revised Draft of an Address to a Joint Session of Congress, February 8–10, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 46, pp. 291–297.

125 O. CZERNIN, *Im Weltkriege*, Berlin 1919, p. 262.

126 In the message, the President's speech carries a wrong date of February 12, 1918, instead of February 11, 1918. The same mistake was made by Czernin in his Mémoirs.

determination to the nations. All in all, Charles had only little to offer Wilson and had not brought forwards anything strikingly new. His message did not indicate whether he was willing to conclude a separate peace or just a general peace. Nevertheless, the President entered in negotiations with Charles.

Wilson waited until he received a telegram from the British Foreign Minister, Arthur Balfour, and only after that did he give his official response. The British Minister recommended pursuing the negotiations via the existing channel between Lammasch and Herron. According to him, the Emperor's message to Wilson did not actually reflect the monarch's real opinions, and had been affected by Germany. He urged the President not to respond to Charles' message, nor to inform the other allies about it.[127] Balfour had been skeptical about the option of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary already since the end of 1917 and his stance became gradually accepted also in the British government before March 1918.[128]

Contrary to the British Foreign Minister's recommendation, the President planned to respond to the Emperor as quickly as possible.[129] The text approved by the President on February 28, 1918, said that the United States welcomed Charles' agreement with the four principles published on February 11, 1918. Furthermore, Wilson called on the Emperor to specify his own peace conditions. Last but not least, the President took no specific standpoint regarding internal policy reforms in the monarchy. He thus overlooked the aforementioned requests of the Czechoslovak exiles, stating only that he agreed with the Emperor regarding the re-establishment of Polish independence.[130]

In mid-March 1918 under constant pressure from the Emperor, Czernin completed the draft response to Wilson. It was a much more voluminous document compared with the first letter. It stated that a mutual agreement of opinions had grown between the United States and Austria-Hungary, allowing the two countries to launch a debate on peace terms. In reaction to Wilson's question, the Emperor promised to meet the *"justified national aspirations of all Slavic nations"*. He agreed with the President it was not possible to use the territory against the will of local people. Finally, the Emperor wrote that Italy and France's goals for annexation were the main obstacle to peace. If Wilson ensured that these two countries withdraw from their annexation goals, he said, peace would be very close.[131]

127 Balfour to House, February 27, 1918, in: SEYMOUR, Vol. 3, Boston 1928, pp. 375–377. Presumably, Czernin consulted on the text of the message with Berlin. However, this can be said with certainty only about Charles' second message from March 17, 1918.

128 CALDER, pp.123–127. The reason, among others, was the failure of negotiations of the British emissary, General Jan C. Smuts with Austro-Hungarian negotiator Count Albert Mensdorff-Pouilly-Dietrichstein. Cf. also I. MECKLING, *Die Aussenpolitik des Grafen Czernin*, Munich 1968, pp. 318–320.

129 Lansing, Memorandum on the President's Proposed Reply to the Emperor Karl's Personal Communication, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

130 A Draft of a Telegram to Alfonso XIII, February 28, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 46, pp. 486–487. The Austro-Hungarian Policy towards Poland during the First World War see J. ŽUPANIČ, *Rakousko-Uhersko a polská otázka za první světové války*, Praha 2006.

131 Emperor Charles I to Alfonso XIII, March 23, 1918, No. missing, HHStA, PA, Kt. 964 P. A. I.

The German offensive (March 1918) gave a serious blow to the USA's hopes for peace with Austria-Hungary. Wilson became convinced that Germany and Austria-Hungary had been bluffing in showing interest in peace.[132] Nevertheless, he did not want to change course and in the speech he gave on April 6, 1918, he levelled most of his criticism toward Germany while taking a more moderate stance toward Austria-Hungary.[133]

The fighting on the western front is closely linked to another move made by Count Czernin, which later undermined the credibility of the monarchy and resulted in his own downfall. On April 2, 1918, he gave a speech to members of Vienna's town council in which he openly criticized his domestic and foreign adversaries. He commented on Wilson, saying it seemed as if he were trying to draw a division between the Central Powers. However, he labeled his four points as a basis for negotiations. The principal point of Czernin's speech though was about France. French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau had allegedly offered to launch talks with him, but the negotiations never took place owing to France's unwillingness to relinquish its hold of Alsace-Lorraine.[134]

It is unclear why Czernin spoke in this manner. We do not know whether he followed a certain goal or simply made a mistake.[135] Clemenceau protested fiercely and published Charles' letters to Prince Sixtus from March and May 1917 in which the Emperor, among other things, agreed with the French claim over the Alsace-Lorraine.[136] The damage was massive.

The outcome of the Sixtus Affair utterly ruined the monarchy's reputation in the USA. The Chicago Tribune recommended with a hint of sarcasm that German Emperor Wilhelm advise Charles to cede the monarchy's own region of Trentino instead of someone else's Alsace-Lorraine.[137] The President on the other hand thought that Clemenceau's decision had been a huge mistake.[138]

At first, Lansing, too, was among the critics. The publication of Charles' letter from March 1918, in which he spoke positively of the French right of Alsace-Lorraine, was according to him *"a piece of the most astonishing stupidity, for which no sufficient excuse can be made"*. Although he was aware that Clemenceau had managed to prove Czernin had been lying, he simultaneously drove Austria-Hungary into Germany's arms.[139]

132 William Howard Taft Memorandum of Conference with President Wilson, March 29, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 47, p. 202.

133 The Speech of President Wilson, April 6, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 200–203.

134 Garett to Lansing, April 3, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 189–195.

135 R. A. KANN, *Die Sixtusaffäre und die geheimen Friedensverhanglungen Österreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Wien 1966, p. 15.

136 It concerned especially an undated letter which was submitted to Sixtus on March 23 or 24, 1917. It was written by the Emperor personally and Czernin most likely never read it. However, Czernin participated in the negotiations to some extent. Ibidem, pp. 8–9.

137 *Austria is Willing*, in: The Chicago Tribune, April 13, 1918, p. 6.

138 MAMATEY, *The United States…*, p. 238.

139 Lansing, Memorandum on the Making Public by M. Clemenceau of the Austrian Emperor's Letter to Prince Sixtus de Bourbon, April 12, 1918, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

It goes without saying that Lansing's fears came true. On April 16, 1918, Baron István Burián (or Count as of May 1918) returned to the post of Foreign Minister, replacing Czernin, whose reputation had been damaged.[140] Germans regarded the Emperor's letter to Sixtus as a confirmation of their old worries about the reliability of their Austro-Hungarian ally, which is why they were asking for guarantees. In mid-May 1918, the Emperor and Burián traveled to the German headquarters, at that time located in Belgium's Spa, and agreed to concessions that the monarchy had vigorously opposed until then.[141] Former Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Leopold Berchtold made a terse note in his diary: *"We wanted emancipation from Berlin but now we are more dependent on Germany than ever before."*[142] For Americans, the Entente and the critics of the monarchy, this move was a clear sign. The politicians in exile had triumphed.

April 8–11, the Italian government organized a congress in Rome for the "suppressed" nations of the Habsburg monarchy. Representatives of Italy, Poland, Romania, Czecho-Slovakia and South Slavic nations declared Austria-Hungary a *"tool of German domination"* and called for their *"own united national states"*.[143] Immediately after the congress Italian Prime Minister Orlando gave Czecho-Slovaks his approval to set up their own army in Italy.[144]

Similarly, US diplomacy took a parallel course. U.S. Envoy Minister to Switzerland Pleasant A. Stovall gave his support to the *"oppressed racial unities of the Dual Monarchy"*.[145] This shift in attitude was to be linked to Herron's recall to the USA. However, the President rejected it as he did not want to lose a reliable contact with Vienna.[146]

Lansing agreed with Stovall's opinions to a great extent. He urged the President to regard the situation with only one goal in mind — winning the war. Lansing pointed out he was under growing pressure by exile representatives and had to give them an answer. He personally suggested the response should be a positive one. Thanks to emphasizing the right of self-determination and fomenting individual nations against each other, he said, Germans managed to overwhelm Russia and knock it out of the war. The same thing, *"whether we like the method or not"* could be achieved in Austria-Hungary.[147]

Even so, the President prevaricated, reluctant to substantially change his policy vis-à-vis the Habsburg monarchy. Yet the rapid train of events in the spring and sum-

140 Burián's appointment came as a surprise. Former Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza or the long-standing Ambassador to Constantinople Marquis Pallavicini had been the expected candidates. A. DEMBLIN (Ed.), *Minister gegen Kaiser: Aufzeichnungen eines österreichisch-ungarischen Diplomaten über Aussenminister Czernin und Kaiser Karl*, Wien 1997, pp. 80–81.

141 R. LORENZ, *Kaiser Karl und der Untergang der Donaumonarchie*, Graz 1959, pp. 459–460. Alliance including the co-operation of the two armies was to be increased and first steps made toward the creation of a customs union.

142 Berchtold, a diary entry, April 14, 1918, HHStA, Nachlass Berchtold, Kt. 5.

143 Thomas N. Page to Lansing, April 12, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 796–797.

144 KALVODA, pp. 242–243.

145 Stovall to Lansing, April 15, 1918, No. 2845, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 86.

146 Lansing to Stovall, April 23, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 458.

147 Lansing to Wilson, May 10, 1918, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 743, reel 1.

mer of 1918 caused him to retreat. In fact, it was not just diplomats who supported the change in policy line. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker recommended that *"all proper encouragement should be given to this Czecho-Slovak movement"*.[148]

Nevertheless, Vienna was still not convinced the United States intended to wage war with all their strength. The Armeeoberkommando in its situational report admitted that the redeployment of US troops to Europe had accelerated. But according to his confidants, Wilson had allegedly advised his European partners to conclude peace before the summer of 1918.[149] The sources of the AOK obviously had not received certified corroborated information.

Another factor that contributed to the increasing importance of the Czecho-Slovak resistance movement was the news about battles between the Bolsheviks and Czecho-Slovak legionnaires in Russia. On May 14, 1918, an incident occurred in Chelyabinsk which marked the start of a long fight between the legions and Bolsheviks.[150] Stovall advised the State Department to provide moral support to Czechs and others.[151] In a dialogue with US diplomats, Beneš asked for the same.[152] As Viktor Mamatey demonstrated, it was only in May 1918 that Congress and the press became interested in "Austrian Slavs".[153]

Lansing sent the draft proclamation to the President on May 13, 1918.[154] Wilson was thus left with a single option, to accept the new reality. In late May 1918 the President told the liaison officer for the British government, Sir William Wiseman, that it was "a thousand pities" and that a confrontation between Czernin and Clemenceau had taken place. *"Now we had no chance of making a separate peace with Austria and must look to the other way — the way which he disliked most intensely — of the Austrian people against their own government by plot and intrigue.* [...] *He intended to support the Czechs, Poles and Yugo-Slavs."*[155]

It remains to be said that Lansing's influence on the policy of the White House vis-à-vis Austria-Hungary was noticeable in the spring and summer of 1918.[156] Wilson's later disapproval of the Secretary of State cannot change this fact, even though

148 Baker to Lansing, May 24, 1918, No. WPD 10702–13, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 88. Masaryk included Baker among important contacts acquired during his stay in Washington (as of May 9, 1918). T. G. MASARYK, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations*, London 1927, p. 221.

149 AOK, Über die Lage XII, 23. 3. bis 25. 4. 1918, No. Op. Geh. Nr. 1492, HHStA, PA, Kt. 500 P. A. I.

150 UNTERBERGER, pp. 173–174.

151 Stovall to Lansing, May 23, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 806–807.

152 Frazier to Lansing, May 28, 1918, in: Ibidem, pp. 807–808.

153 MAMATEY, *The United States...*, p. 258.

154 Lansing to Wilson, May 13, 1918, in: *FRUS: The Lansing Papers 1914–1920,* Vol. 2, Washington 1939, p. 128.

155 Wiseman to Drummond, August 31, 1918, in: V. H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914–1918*, London 1971, pp. 225–226.

156 For instance Lansing, in July of 1918, made the President agree to provide assistance to Czechoslovak troops (known as legions) which were in conflict with the Bolsheviks in Russia. UNTERBERGER, pp. 236–240.

it supported the historians' distorted image of the relationship of the two men.[157] On May 29, 1918, Lansing issued the following brief: *"The Secretary of State desires to announce that the proceedings of the Congress of Oppressed Races of Austria-Hungary, which was held in Rome in April, have been followed with great interest by the Government of the Unites States, and that the nationalistic aspirations of the Czecho-Slovaks and Yugo-Slavs for freedom have the earnest sympathy of this Government."*[158] On June 4, 1918, Lansing's declaration was joined by the governments of the Entente. Apart from that, they also announced they would be in favour of establishing an independent Poland with access to the sea.[159] Undoubtedly, the different approach towards individual Slavic nations of the monarchy was obvious.

Lansing, for his part, thought his declaration from May 29 had not been sufficient. Upon hearing the news about the Emperor Charles' action in Spa, Lansing believed that *"separate peace was vain"* with Austria-Hungary and that it was necessary to reconsider even more substantially their earlier policy. The monarchy, he thought, had lost its right to exist. It was to be *"practically blotted out"* and *"partitioned among the nationalities of which it is composed"*. This intention, according to Lansing, needed to be announced in public.[160]

While the Secretary of State was in favour of the dissolution of the monarchy, the declaration itself allowed for other interpretations and did not rule out a solution within the monarchy itself. Vienna's authorities understood that, too. After initial hesitation, they resolved to stress that the United States and the Entente had pronounced their fondness for the Czechoslovaks and the South Slavs but did not support their separatist plans. On June 11, 1918, Fremdenblatt affirmed that Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Orlando had understood that the congress in Rome of the "traitors" had gone too far and that was why Czechs and South Slavs were offered *"instead of resolutions and clear war aims, only ambiguous clichés"*. Neue Freie Presse was convinced that the Versailles declaration meant that the Entente had removed their liberation from its plan.

US diplomats in Switzerland believed that *"Austria cunningly manipulated the declaration of Versailles and may have succeeded in offsetting its influence on the irredentist elements"*.[161] Vienna still lived the illusion of the importance of Wilson's former fondness for the monarchy. This had been a problematic statement from the start because the President's principal aim until April 1918 had been to drive a wedge among the Central Powers, conclude a separate peace with Austria-Hungary and consequently attain a speedy termination of the war, but some of the President's statements justified such an illusion. The Danubian capital refused to believe the warning of their

157 The relations of the two politicians largely worsened during the peace conference in Paris. T. J. KNOCK, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*, New York/Oxford 1992, p. 205.

158 Lansing to T. N Page (and several other missions), May 29, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 808–809.

159 Frazier to Lansing, June 4, 1918, in: Ibidem, pp. 809–810.

160 Lansing, Memorandum on Our Policy in Relation to Austria-Hungary, May 30, 1918, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

161 Stovall to Lansing, June 17, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 96.

chargé d'affaires to Copenhagen, Baron Otto Franz that *"in the USA all important people* [...] *are strictly convinced that once a project is launched, it definitely needs to be drawn to a victorious end"*.[162]

In reality, the idea of Austria-Hungary's dismemberment did not enjoy massive support in the USA. Among the skeptics of the plan for the monarchy's dissolution were several representatives of *The Inquiry*.[163] In May and June 1918 they examined different methods of Austria-Hungary's internal reform. On May 25, 1918, the head of their Austro-Hungarian department, Charles Seymour, submitted three memoranda in which he discussed the post-bellum organization of the monarchy. He suggested two options — replacing the dual character with a Polo- or South Slavic trilateral character of the empire, or that the monarchy should federalize. It was the variant of Polish trilateral character that Seymour favoured.[164]

In contrast, Seymour's subordinate Robert J. Kerner, who was of Czech origin, promoted federalization and did not even rule out the monarchy's dissolution.[165] In his memoranda from May and June 1918 he still took into account the possibility that Austria-Hungary could survive the war. In that case, he thought, universal suffrage should be enacted into all elected bodies at all levels. Furthermore, a reform of territorial distribution was to be implemented. Austrian districts and Hungarian counties were to be reduced to create compact units of single nationalities.[166] Kerner sympathized with the desires of the Czecho-Slovak exiles and agreed with the combination of the historic (Czech Lands) and nationalist (Slovakia) principles.[167]

The influence of the supporters of the monarchy's preservation quickly deteriorated in the course of the spring and summer 1918. The United States intensified its co-operation with the Czecho-Slovak resistance movement in organizing a propaganda campaign against Austria-Hungary.

The first steps were taken already in April 1918. The President's scruples which had influenced him less than a month had to be set aside. Wilson's policy was to maintain America's distance and not be drawn into the Alliance's machinations. In keeping with this, representatives of the Committee on Public Information (abbr. Compub), who were responsible for American war propaganda were not allowed to participate in the meeting of the Inter-Allied Commission, which from Padua organized propaganda directed at the monarchy. They did, however, contribute to its activities unofficially.[168]

162 Franz to Burián, May 29, 1918, No. 218, HHStA, PA, Kt. 898 P. A. I. Franz was informed by his source, who had just come back from the USA.

163 GELFAND, p. 203.

164 One memorandum is in the archives of the State Department in the section designated to *The Inquiry*. Austria-Hungary Federalized within Existing Boundaries, NA, RG 256, Microcopy 1107, reel 28. The rest is in the Yale University Library.

165 UNTERBERGER, p. 95.

166 R. J. Kerner, Résumé of Memorandum on Minorities in Austria-Hungary, Elements of a Just Solution, June 1918, NA, RG 256, Microcopy 1107, reel 18.

167 R. J. Kerner, Résumé of a Brief Sketch of the Political Movements of the Czecho-Slovaks Tending toward the Federalization or Dismemberment of Austria Hungary, May 17, 1918, NA, RG 256, reel 18.

168 For more information on the Padua Commission see CORNWALL, p. 202.

Among others, they strived to enforce their plan to send balloons over Austro-Hungarian territory. The headquarters in Washington instructed its representatives at the Apennine Peninsula to try and conclude its implementation with the Italian military.[169]

The cooperation with Italians was sluggish due to the American absence from the commission in Padua. Moreover, local authorities were very strict and any propaganda material had to be given to them for approval. The distribution of the material was carried out by volunteers of South Slavic, Czech, Polish and Romanian origin, who transported it through the no-man's land to Austro-Hungarian troops. Aircraft was used as well.[170] The preparation of the balloon campaign continued, but slowly due to technical and organizational problems.[171]

Lansing's proclamation expressing sympathy with the suppressed nations of the monarchy was a major impulse for Compub's activities in Italy. Its approach to the commission in Padua was reviewed by Washington which decided to use the help of the Czechoslovak resistance movement because[172] Americans were in pressing need of collaborators speaking Slavic languages.[173] Compub decided to address the Czechoslovak Information Bureau and Captain Emanuel Voska. Yet to cooperate with Czechoslovaks, Compub needed the approval of the State Department.[174] The approval process dragged on for a long time, probably also because of the rivalry between the two institutions.[175] It was not until mid-July that the decision came to send Czech writer and legionnaire Ferdinand Píseckéý to Italy. Compub's headquarters in Washington pointed out to its staff in Europe that he was an *"excellent man with the full confidence of the government"*.[176]

Nevertheless, the decision about sending Písecký on his mission came late in view of the war's progress. However, the presence of Czechoslovak legionnaires at the front *"has produced a great impression among the Czech troops in the Austrian army and has led in some cases to grave indiscipline"*.[177] They were in fact scouts deployed at low Piava. Still, the Czechoslovak division, which had not been trained, suffered from desertions and bad discipline.[178] In spring and summer 1918, the Alliance's acute need to disintegrate

169 Lansing to US Embassy Rome (Irwin to Rogers), April 8, 1918, No. 1154, NA, RG 59, box 0732.

170 T. N. Page to Lansing (Bass to Irwin), May 3, 1918, No. 1574, NA, RG 59, box 0732.

171 Lansing to T. N. Page (Irwin to Gibson), May 7, 1918, No. 1261, NA, RG 59, box 0732.

172 Lieutenant Franck was sent to Padua. Lansing to T. N. Page (Irwin to Merriam), May 31, 1918, No. 1380, NA, RG 59, box 0732.

173 Lansing to Sharp (Irwin to Sisson), June 5, 1918, No. 4344, NA, RG 59, Box 0732.

174 Kennedy to Grew, June 5, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Box 0732. For more information on Voska's activities in Italy cf. I. BROŽ, *Masarykův vyzvědač*, Praha 2004, pp. 123–127.

175 Heads of diplomatic missions, for instance, were jealous of the independence of Compub's agents and were of the opinion that The President did not display confidence in their own work. Polk to Willard (Madrid), February 12, 1918, No. missing, LC. The Papers of Willard Family, box 97.

176 Polk to T. N. Page (Irwin to Merriam), July 15, 1918, No. 1555, NA, RG 59, box 0733.

177 Summary for Week Ending 8th June, 1918, LC, The Papers of Tasker H. Bliss, box 320.

178 K. PICHLÍK, *Bez legend: Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918:* Zápas o československý program, Praha 1991, p. 390.

the Austro-Hungarian military while acquiring new troops not only for the Italian front largely contributed to the advancement of the aims of exile representations.

In June 1918, when the German offensive in France peaked and Austria-Hungary executed an unsuccessful attack against Italy, Washington continued to review its policy towards the monarchy. It was under the pressure of its allies. In the middle of June 1918, shortly before the start of the Austro-Hungarian offensive, it eventually promised Italy it would send American troops to the Apennine Peninsula.[179] In July, the 332nd (part of the 83rd Infantry Division) Infantry Regiment was transported to Italy where it took a position at Lago di Garda and later in Piava.[180] It was but a symbolic presence because the USA could not send more of its soldiers to Italy due to the critical situation at the western front.[181] Nevertheless, it was until October 1918 that Rome repeatedly laid down requirements for reinforcing the troops of the United States. The failure of the Austro-Hungarian offensive and news about the worsening situation in the Austro-Hungarian rear gave hope to Italy that it might be possible to execute a successful attack on Austro-Hungarian lines. Although this viewpoint was backed by Ambassador T. N. Page, Washington did not change its stance and insisted on the priority of the Western front.[182] The same approach was adopted by Germans who in June 1918 made Austria-Hungary send their troops to the French front. Two divisions were sent there.[183]

At the start of June 1918, Great Britain informed the State Department about its plans to recognize the Czecho-Slovak army as an organized unit operating with the Allies and the Czechoslovak National Council as its political leadership. London was, in fact, following in the steps of the French and Italian governments, which had already recognized the Czecho-Slovak army in December 1917 and April 1918, respectively.[184]

Meanwhile, the French had advanced further. In mid-June 1918, Paris confidentially told the USA it was soon going to recognize the Czechoslovak National Council as a de facto government and asked the US President for his opinion.[185] Immediately, Lansing charged the Ambassador to Paris, Sharp, to gather information about the Council and its recognition by different governments.[186] In view of the given situation, these were extraordinary instructions. The State Department had clearly very little reliable news about the Council for the simple reason that Americans had paid only scant attention to the exile structures before the spring of 1918.

For, in fact, it was Lansing, who had encouraged Wilson to entirely cease his previous benevolence towards Austria-Hungary.[187] The President agreed that *"we can no*

179 Baker to Lansing, June 14, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, Reel 94 and Lansing to T. N. Page, June 12, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, p. 257.

180 Cf. www.worldwar1.com/itafront/dbsitaly.htm; [cit. 2015–01–14].

181 Lansing to W. H. Page (London), July 19, 1918, No. 298, NA, RG 59, Box 6888.

182 T. N. Page to Lansing, July 9, 1918, No. 1824, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, Reel 97.

183 GALANDAUER, p. 250.

184 British Embassy to the State Department, June 7, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 810–811.

185 Jusserand to Lansing, June 15, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 94.

186 Lansing to Sharp, June 18, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, p. 814.

187 To Robert Lansing, with Enclosures, June 26, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 48, pp. 435–438.

longer respect or regard the integrity of the artificial Austrian Empire".[188] On June 28, 1918, the USA declared that all Slavs had to be completely free from Austrian rule.[189] On July 4, 1918, at Mount Vernon, the home of the USA's first President, George Washington, Wilson made an important speech in which he again touched upon the current war aims of his country. While there was no mention of Austria-Hungary, certain parts of his speech concerned the topic very directly. Wilson declared that the post-bellum peace organization needed to be permanent. For that reason, no compromises and half-way solutions ought to be taken. In line with tradition, the President summarized the war goals in four points, which however, were defined very generally. As for Vienna, the second point was the most pressing, in which the President insisted that the solution of any issue — whether that be territory, sovereignty, economy or political situation, had to be achieved *"upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned* [...]*"*.[190]

Notwithstanding the clear resolution of the United States and the Entente about the future of the nations of Austria-Hungary, contacts between Vienna and Washington were definitely not hindered. Herron, once more, acted as intermediary. Professor Foerster recommended a Bavarian journalist to him, Dr. de Fiori, who had been a correspondent of the Neue Freie Presse in Rome before the war. At a meeting, which took place in mid June 1918, de Fiori stated his actions were undertaken with the knowledge of the Bavarian king, Foreign Minister and the Minister of War. He presented to Herron the Bavarian peace plan, which consisted of the restitution of Belgium, the change of the status of Alsace-Lorraine, etc. The two gentlemen also held lengthy discussions regarding Austria-Hungary.

Yet, de Fiori was not well informed. He told Herron that the Sixtus Affair had been planned by Czernin and the Germans. The former Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister and Berlin had allegedly been informed about the contents of the Emperor's letter and resolved to undermine Charles' authority, thus *"closing the Austrian channel once and for all"*. This action had allegedly been triggered by Lammasch's negotiations in Switzerland. Herron confirmed that *"Germany had closed the Austrian door forever"*. The United States had, he noted, come to the conclusion that *"Germanism is an enemy of the human race"*, and therefore needed to be destroyed. In this respect, wrote Herron: *"We must make the world the sphere of democratic and self-governing nations, federated together in a world society wherein war has no place. We actually believe,"* he continued, *"that we have gone to war for the salvation of humanity"*.[191]

In the coming weeks, Herron pursued the talks with de Fiori, although without any important outcome, except for one. This was the fact that Lansing had agreed with the talks. He imagined a connection between the Central Powers and Washington should be preserved. By contrast, he did not have much hope for de Fiori's peace initiative. It was in fact difficult to envisage that *"any serious movement for peace could*

188 Ibidem.

189 Lansing to various diplomatic missions, June 28, 1918, in: *FRUS*, Vol. 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, p. 816.

190 A Speech of President Wilson, July 4, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 268–271.

191 Stovall to Lansing, June 17, 1918, No. 3519, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 382.

come from Bavaria at this time".[192] Furthermore, the negotiator of Bavaria did not have the necessary confidence. Herron's acquaintance, Dr. Muehlon, as well as the Italian and French secret services thought he was an agent of the German AOK.[193]

Clearly, the Herron–de Fiori talks were not ignored by the allies' agents in Switzerland, which is why Stovall, with Lansing's approval, acquainted the mission of the Entente with their agenda.[194] On August 9, 1918, William Phillips urged President Wilson to suggest that Herron hold back as much as possible.[195] Later, Lansing's deputy-in-chief Frank Lyon Polk and Phillips, once more tried to convince the White House that Herron would best be removed from Switzerland. Surprisingly, Wilson rejected their appeal. Later though, he had a note sent to Herron that he would not consider any other than official initiatives for peace.[196]

Herron's comment that the Austro-Hungarian door had been closed was justified. Indeed, mutual contacts in the summer and autumn of 1918 were hardly able to provide a turnaround. The monarchy had been brought to its knees and Americans did indeed notice. Since the winter of 1918, the Cisleithanian government, headed by Ritter Ernst Seidler, had been on the verge of a crisis, which deepened after the aforementioned effort to reform the geographical and administrative articulation of Bohemia. US diplomats reported from Switzerland that the Polish club in Austria's Imperial Council had joined the opposition. Internal and external factors played a major part here. Among these was the February peace with Ukraine, which contained an article about the split of Galicia into Polish and Ukrainian parts and undermined the Poles' faith in the monarchy. It was in this atmosphere that Austrian Poles acknowledged the statement of the Entente supporting Polish independence.[197]

On the other hand, the problem of an independent Poland demonstrated that Wilson had not yet assumed the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy. When asked by Lansing what he thought about a possible resolution by Congress supporting Polish aspirations, he responded *"it is not wise to take much action piecemeal about the items of a final settlement"*.[198] Paradoxically, although the President in January 1918 did mention the establishment of an independent Poland as the thirteenth of 14 points, he recognized the Polish army as an allied military body only as late as November 1, 1918, or two months after the Czechoslovak army.[199]

While the future of the Czechoslovak legions became a topic of interest among the political and military leaders of the Entente and the USA, Americans at the western front managed to block German troops. In the three-month period between May-June 1918, more than 800,000 soldiers were transported to France from the New World.[200]

192 Lansing to Stovall, July 18, 1918, No. 2307, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 382.
193 Stovall to Lansing, July 18, 1918, No. 3998, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 382.
194 Lansing to Stovall, July 29, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, note 2, p. 288.
195 Phillips to Wilson, August 9, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 382.
196 Phillips, a diary entry, August 13, 1918, HUL, William Phillips Papers, box 1.
197 Stovall to Lansing, June 17, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 367, reel 96. For more information on the Peace Treaty with Ukraine cf. HORČIČKA, *Austria-Hungary…*, pp. 499–526.
198 Wilson to Lansing, July 8, 1918, No. missing, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 382.
199 Wilson to Dmowski, November 1, 1918, in: *FRUS*, 1918, Suppl. 1, p. 880.
200 R. H. FERRELL, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917–1921*, New York 1985, p. 53.

Eventually, at the end of July the last German offensive was repulsed, followed by a successful counter-offensive of the Allies on August 8. The war on the west had thus been decided.

The massive redeployment of American troops to France was not unnoticed in Austria-Hungary. In early July of 1918, former Foreign Minister, Count Czernin told his predecessor in the office, Berchtold: *"We won't stand this deployment. That is out of question."*[201] General Arthur Arz von Straussenburg, Chief of General Staff to the Austro-Hungarian Army told the representative of the Foreign Ministry at AOK that Germany's reliance on submarines had come to naught and the inflow of American troops to Europe had boosted the Entente's prevailing superiority over the Central Powers.[202] On July 11, 1918, Pester Lloyd reported on the size of the superiority and admitted losing hope for victory. The Central Powers had allegedly pondered whether to pursue their pro-active war conduct or to resort solely to defense.[203] Yet in fact, there was no choice for them other than a brisk conclusion of peace. Burián, indeed, was aware of this fact and on July 15, 1918, he made public his foreign situational report, which had actually been targeted at the two Prime Ministers. He had been largely motivated by Wilson's speech delivered on July 4, 1918, at which the Austro-Hungarian Minister had desperately clutched at. He had opted for the unusual form because *"in those days it was quite impossible to address the hostile powers directly"*.[204]

In the report, Burián split the war aims of the enemy into three groups. In his opinion, the primary aim of the Allies was to enforce a freedom of nations, which would then unite into "a world union" that would in the future prevent new military conflicts. Secondly, he stated that the enemy was striving for annexations and what is more, for *"the parcelling of Austria-Hungary"*. Finally he admitted that the adversary also pressed for the punishment of war crimes and wanted to destroy militarism.

Interestingly, it was only the second aim of the Entente that troubled Burián. While open to discussing any point, he strictly refused to accept the enemies' claims for "Alsace-Lorraine, Trentino and Trieste". Moreover, he denounced the enemies' efforts to undermine the monarchy's territorial integrity. Nevertheless, he was right in recommending facing these claims with a little more ease since they, according to Burián, revealed a certain weakness of the enemy, rather than its strengths.[205]

American diplomats were of the opinion that Burián's statement had been the *"first major pacifist manoeuvre"*. They recommended the government not accept the Austro-Hungarian offers and that it pursue the offensive course. They were convinced Burián was not being honest and thought he was motivated by an ambition to demonstrate to the disillusioned Czech public that he was doing his best to achieve a speedy termination of the war. According to the diplomats, the attention that Burián had given to the Entente's propaganda which had been directed at the monarchy's interior

201 Berchtold, a diary entry, July 2, 1918, HHStA, Nachlass Berchtold, Kt. 5.
202 Trautmannsdorff to Flotow, August 10, 1918, No. missing, HHStA, Nachlass Flotow, Kt. 1.
203 Stovall to Lansing, July 22, 1918, No. 3923, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 100.
204 S. BURIÁN, *Drei Jahre aus der Zeit meiner Amtsführung im Kriege*, Berlin 1923, p. 278.
205 Situational reports, July 15, 1918. BURIÁN, pp. 330–334.

clearly indicated how seriously Austro-Hungarian government circles had taken it. In short, the mission recommended not changing the political line and waiting for the collapse of the enemy.[206]

It remains to be said that the Austro-Hungarian chargé d'affaires to Christiania, Norway, Count von Hoyos was right to warn Burián, shortly before he delivered the speech, not to cherish hope for the USA. The public in the United States was, he said, eager to sustain "inconceivable sacrifice" in order to seize victory. Although Count von Hoyos did not perceive the situation of the Central Powers as critical, he pointed out that the strength of the New World's power would eventually become rather noticeable on European battlefields. In this respect, he warned his superiors that *"with increasing urgency is the American nation claiming the removal of all monarchies while it calls for the republicanisation of the world"* including an unconditional capitulation of Germany.[207]

By way of comparison, Austro-Hungarian chargé d'affaires to Bern, Baron Léon de Vaux was less pessimistic. Similarly to Hoyos, he believed that the United States was determined to defeat Germany literally at any price, but unlike him he had not abandoned his illusions about the USA's relation to Austria-Hungary. The USA had allegedly not been hostile to him, but refused to enter into negotiations with him because they took him for a vassal of Germany. The primary objective of Washington, as de Vaux correctly understood, was a democratization of Central Europe. According to de Vaux, Wilson's intention was not to enforce a destruction of the monarchy, but instead he wished for *"a mere acknowledgement of the political and national efforts of the Slavic nations of Austria-Hungary"*. In his opinion, should Vienna not attempt to satisfy this wish, it would be facing the worst. Apart from that, Baron de Vaux noted at that time the USA still wished that Austria-Hungary would produce an initiative for peace mediation.[208] He was in fact wrong. However, it was as late as at the beginning of October of 1918 that Burián still hoped the USA would be willing to negotiate with Vienna.[209]

In late July of 1918, the government of Cisleithania led by Seidler resigned. On July 25, former Minister of Education, Baron Max Hussarek von Heinlein became the new Prime Minister.[210] Unfounded rumors circulated that the new cabinet had entrusted Lammasch and an influential deputy of the Imperial Council, Josef Redlich, with elaborating the draft of a constitutional reform, which would support the autonomy of individual nations. Albeit unfounded, the rumours were of outstanding importance.[211] For that matter, American diplomats in Switzerland were well aware that *"Czechs and South Slavs would never consent to such a plan (for federalization)"*. They

206 Stovall to Lansing, July 22, 1918, No. 3923, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 100.

207 Hoyos to Burián, July 27, 1918, No. 33/ P.–B., HHStA, PA, Kt. 898 P. A. I.

208 De Vaux to Burián, August 2, 1918, No. 100/ P.–D., HHStA, PA, Kt. 1052 P. A. I.

209 J. ANDRÁSSY, *Diplomatie und Weltkrieg*, Berlin/Wien 1920, pp. 274–275.

210 On the very heated debate cf. *Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrates im Jahre 1918*, XXII. Session, 75 Sitzung, Vol. 3, Wien 1918, p. 3892.

211 Redlich thought Hussarek was a bad Prime Minister. F. FELLNER (Ed.), *Schicksalsjahre Österreichs 1908–1919: Das Politische Tagebuch Josef Redlichs*, Vol. 2, Graz/Köln 1954, p. 287.

would only change their opinion if they clearly saw that *"they had been abandoned by the Allies and the victory of Germany was inevitable"*. It was in vain that Lammasch signalled to Switzerland that the time for peace negotiations had not yet arrived, but that he was not losing hope in the Emperor... Admittedly, nobody thought of negotiating with Charles since it had become obvious that Austria-Hungary *"could not survive another winter"*.[212]

Meanwhile on the diplomatic front, Great Britain had taken another step against Austria-Hungary. London believed the Czecho-Slovak legions in Russia would be the means to topple the Bolshevik government then co-operating with Germans. At the end of July 1918 Beneš arrived in London and requested the acknowledgement of total sovereignty for the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris. In view of the aforementioned facts, the UK on August 9, 1918, issued the requested declaration without consulting the Americans, although the final wording was less binding than Beneš had wanted.[213] London recognized Czecho-Slovaks as an allied nation and declared the Czecho-Slovak army as allied for it was in a true war with Austria-Hungary. The National Council was then labelled *"a representative of the future Czechoslovak government to exercise the supreme authority over this allied and warring army"*.[214]

Indeed, the United States was taken aback by the British declaration. Washington's administration pondered how to react to the gradual recognition of Czechoslovaks as a warring nation with the Czechoslovak National Council as its representative. For that purpose, Lansing drafted an extraordinary memorandum, which he sent to the President on August 19, 1918.[215] However, he thought *"it would* [not — V. H.] *be wise to give full recognition to the Czecho-Slovaks as a sovereign nation"*. It would demoralize the South Slavs, he said. Hence, instead of total recognition of state sovereignty, the Secretary of State proposed two solutions to the situation.

The first variant proposed to acknowledge that "Czecho-Slovak revolutionists" operating in Russia were in a state of war with *"Austrian loyalists and their German allies"*. This would include the recognition of the Czechoslovak National Council led by Masaryk as a *"de facto Revolutionary Government"*. By drawing attention to the war merits of the Czecho-Slovak legions, Lansing planned to avoid the protests of the South Slavs.[216]

As for the second solution, Lansing suggested that the President publish a general declaration, which would underline Austria-Hungary's dependence on Germany. In it, the Secretary of State proposed that the President ought not to merely address his

212 Stovall to Lansing, August 9, 1918, No. 4524, NA, RG 59, Microcopy 367, reel 100.

213 FEST, pp. 239–240. The declaration did not contain the words "sovereignty", "state" or "government" in relation to the Czech National Council.

214 Skinner (London) to Lansing, August 14, 1918, in: *FRUS*, Vol. 1918, Suppl. 1, Vol. 1, p. 824.

215 The original contains the expression "Mittel-Europa". A written document of the same name was published at the end of 1915 by German clergyman and politician Friedrich Naumann. The core of "Central Europe" was to be made up of a strong Austro-German alliance. This concept was apparently popular after Charles' trip to Spa in May 1918. Cf. SHANAFELT, p. 72 and after.

216 Cf. MAMATEY, *The United States...*, pp. 312–314. Lansing was wrong, South Slavs, too, were engaged in military actions against Austria-Hungary.

sympathy to the monarchy's nations, but also promise specific assistance and enter into official contact with exile representatives.[217]

In his personal account of the situation, Lansing said on August 23, 1918: The United States is under pressure to recognize Czecho-Slovaks "as independent nationality". Yet, the Secretary of State was extremely hesitant to do so. He was worried that should America take that step, it would produce a counter-measure by the Central Powers, asking the US to support the independence of Ireland, Egypt, India and South Africa. According to him, Czecho-Slovaks should not be recognized as an independent state. Only after Czecho-Slovaks and South Slavs win in battle can they be granted independence, wrote Lansing.[218]

On August 30, 1918, Lansing discussed the issue of Czecho-Slovak independence with the President. They agreed on the principles of a new declaration whose detailed draft was submitted to the President a day later. The Secretary of State urged Wilson not to put off the matter because they were being closely observed by the press and delays could provoke criticism.[219] Hence, the President approved the draft, with minor amendments, on September 2, 1918. The document was published the following day in the form of a declaration of the Secretary of State. It began by praising the Czecho-Slovaks for engaging in a war with the Central Powers and creating an organized army on the battlefield with their own leaders. The Czechoslovak National Council was their supreme authority. Thus Washington recognized the Council as a warring government with a de facto right *"to direct the military and political affairs of the Czecho-Slovaks"*. The document ended by declaring that the USA was willing to enter into formal relations with this government.[220]

Consequently, although Austria-Hungary formally continued to exist for another two months, the declaration from September 2, 1918, represented Washington's approval of its dissolution. In the weeks to come, the US merely observed the final stage of the agony of the Habsburg multi-national empire.

CONCLUSION

Beyond all doubt, President Wilson had not envisaged such an ending to the war. In spite of his one statement from December 1914, the dissolution of Austria-Hungary was not in his plans. In the subsequent years, the US administration did not share a united view of the monarchy. Rather, Wilson's role was to ease the situation. During the crisis around the *Ancona* he was against the severance of diplomatic relations with the monarchy, which had been favoured most of all by Lansing and, to a lesser extent, by House. The two powers attempted to maintain diplomatic relations also in winter and spring 1917. After Emperor Charles came to the throne, Wilson and Lansing struggled to drive a wedge among the Central Powers and therefore carefully

217 From Robert Lansing, August 19, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 49, pp. 287–289.

218 Lansing, Memorandum on Recognition of the Czecho-Slovaks as a Nationality, August 23, 1918, LC, The Papers of Robert Lansing, Vol. 63.

219 From Robert Lansing, with Enclosure, August 31, 1918, in: *PWW*, Vol. 49, pp. 404–405.

220 Three Letters to Robert Lansing, September 2, 1918, in: Ibidem, pp. 415–417.

distinguished among them. As regards Austria-Hungary, it was in its interest to keep the United States out of the war.

Wilson was much more in favour of the idea of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary than Lansing and House, who was an opportunist. He supported the confidential peace initiatives carried out in Switzerland by his confidant George D. Herron with intermediaries sent by the Austrian Emperor. In winter 1918 he entered into a direct written debate with the Emperor. Nevertheless, Wilson was motivated by more than a lust for power. Besides other things, mostly due to his closeness to Herron, whom he protected also during the spring of 1918, to many politicians' displeasure, it seems that Wilson also shared his faith in Emperor Charles' honest aspirations for peace.

While Lansing could not rule out the possibility that Austria-Hungary would escape the influence of Germany and would withdraw from the war, as time proceeded, he grew increasingly skeptical. His reservation was based on the widely accepted opinion that the monarchy was Germany's vassal. A better observation was made by Gary W. Shanafelt that *"the Monarchy was the hapless victim of German militarism on the one hand and Entente determination to fight for total victory over Germany on the other"*.[221] Austria-Hungary was not utterly dependent on Germany, contrary to statements made by various US officials including Wilson, the Emperor's reputation was damaged by the Sixtus Affair in the spring of 1918. Similarly, with regard to the dangerous German offensive, a growing number of voices in the US administration called for the support of the claims of the exile representatives of the monarchy's nations. Gradually, the space for differentiating between Austria-Hungary and Germany vanished. The United States had become convinced of the monarchy's total dependence on Berlin and resolved for its dissolution.

After the spring of 1918, Austria-Hungary dropped its peace initiatives. Although various influential people occasionally contacted Herron, the truly important politicians, such as Count Julius Andrássy, Jr., arrived in Switzerland only in October 1918, when the process of the monarchy's disintegration had long been under way. After the Sixtus Affair, Austro-Hungarian diplomacy merely observed Washington's individual steps. In the summer of 1918 the diplomats still thought Wilson had a more favourable view of Austria-Hungary than of Germany. Altogether though, overall skepticism prevailed, amplified by the spreading news about the dissolution of the monarchy. More importantly, the deteriorating internal situation as well as the developments on battlefields left the government with only one option — to hope for the mercy of the victorious countries.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND THE UNITED STATES IN 1918

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates the fact that President Wilson was, until the last months of the war, hesitant to support the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. It also proves that the Secretary of State Robert Lansing had a major effect on the President's decision making. In contrast, the group of experts *The Inquiry*, established by Colonel House with the aim of tackling the issues of peace settlement, lacked

221 SHANAFELT, p. 209.

inner coherence and the group's representatives were long in favour of federalization, rather than of the empire's dissolution. The main aim of the present article is to unravel the real motives and the genesis of the President's policy vis-à-vis Austria-Hungary. Yet another objective of this study is to help demystify the history of Central Europe after the First World War. The article also largely examines Austro-Hungarian policy toward the USA, which to this day has not been thoroughly studied.

KEYWORDS
First World War; US foreign policy; Austro-Hungarian foreign policy; US-Austro-Hungarian relations 1918

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