

The Paper War

Prologue

What happened one hundred years ago, nearly to the day? Everybody in this room would know: The United States, in April 1917, finally terminated her official neutrality and declared war on Germany. What else? Only a few history buffs would know that the US did NOT declare war on Austria at the same time. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, however, severed diplomatic relations with Washington. Why? Dominating Berlin requested it. Significantly, Berlin had not followed Vienna when Rome had declared war on Austria in May 1915. Rome did that because of the secret London treaty concluded just weeks before in which the Allies promised rich harvest if Italy joins them.

For another eight months (April-December 1917), the status in the relations between Washington and Vienna remained in limbo. Both warring countries seemed to be interested to keep things that way. Only when Italy suffered utter defeat from a gas attack of German and Austrian forces (Caporetto disaster) in November 1917 the US considered taking the next step.

In the meantime President Wilson had not only installed a propaganda vehicle to explain the necessity of war with Germany to the public (Committee on Public Information) but he had also assembled a group of experts, mainly historians, to gather information about and from Europa. This circle called itself "The Inquiry" and later became part of the "American Commission to Negotiate Peace" in Paris.

One thesis tonight: Not only was there no necessity for this "Austrian war". We are also continuously looking at the wrong theatre of war. Americans and Austrians hardly fought each other on the battlefield – Hemingway was just an ambulance driver – but over the months, there was intense maneuvering in the diplomatic battleground. These actions finished off an already fragile entity, this "paper war" with Vienna created graver consequences than the real war against Germany.

Story

Cast of main characters: In the US camp, Woodrow Wilson, the President with George Creel, a journalist turning into his propagandist; in the State Department, Robert Lansing with his chief of the Near East division, Albert Putney, together with counsellors like Phillips and Woolsey; ambassadors like Frederick Penfield in Vienna; Colonel House with the secret and informal "Inquiry" led by geographers like Isaiah Bowman, and journalists like Walter Lippmann; finally, in and around Paris men like Archibald Coolidge and Amos Peaslee; outside the administration personalities like Richard Crane, the entrepreneur, and Karel Pergler, the immigrant from Bohemia. In the Austrian camp: emperor Karl, foreign minister Ottokar Czernin, diplomats in the US like Dumba and Tarnowski; for the Bohemians Thomas Masaryk in the US, Edvard Benes in Paris, and the politicians back home in Prague.

Let us go back to September 1915, when the relations slid to an uneven level, as Austrian ambassador Constantin Dumba was declared persona non grata and Vienna decided not to nominate a successor. At that time, Austria entertained about two dozens of consulates in the US – wherever masses of immigrants from the Habsburg Monarchy were earning good money. Meanwhile US ambassador Frederick Penfield held out in Vienna. At that time, the US employed eight consuls throughout the Empire, six in Austria and two in Hungary. Only in July 1915¹ the US had applied and Austria did not permit to open another one. As the army supreme command argued, Villach at the southern border was „mitten im Armeebereich“².

Dumba was hardly gone, when an Italian ship with the name "Ancona" was torpedoed by a submarine under the Austrian flag. Several Americans went under or were injured. Only after Vienna apologized and promised both to penalize the captain and pay damages did Washington relent. In the heat of this

“Ancona”-affair ambassador Penfield prepared his staff for departure. The irony in it was that the boat actually was German.

Meanwhile, Penfield performed well not only in representing the US but also as caretaker for interests of countries like Italy being at war with Austria. In spring 1916, after he inspected a camp at Katzenau in Linz/Danube in Upper Austria where many Italians were interned, Penfield wrote a detailed report³.

When the German submarine policy – conceived as counter measure against the British blockade – pushed Wilson towards preparedness at first and in the spring of 1917 towards war, Washington tried hard to keep a channel into Vienna open and Penfield fought to be allowed to stay. At the same time, Wilson did not accept Mr. Tarnowski who had finally been sent from Austria as a successor to Dumba, a move that cost Penfield his face who had literally promised this acceptance. In a parallel development, Washington searched for a way to separate Vienna from Berlin: Would Vienna be ready to negotiate a peace if it received a territorial guarantee? In four dramatic meetings with Foreign minister Czernin Penfield was not aware that the proposal was a genuine American one whereas Czernin suspected a Russian background as this enemy was about to fall under the vices of revolution.

Peace did not happen, Tarnowski left privately and Penfield in his official capacity. In his farewell meeting with Robert Lansing the Secretary of State tried to appeal to Tarnowski`s Polish descent, to no avail. He probably did not grasp the ethos of Habsburg diplomats – dynastic loyalty first, nation second. However, Lansing contributed a remarkably prophetic sentence: „Germany alone threatens Austrian independence.“⁴ With relations broken they seemed to return to the status they always had. Archibald Coolidge had described it a couple of years earlier with the words: “With Austria-Hungary the United States has never had much to do.”⁵

Between April and December 1917 Germans were considered enemy aliens whereas many thousands of Austrian immigrants remained neutral aliens if they had not become American citizens in the meantime. Remember, these people working in US factories and mines, producing both civilian and military items, since summer of 1914 could not return in masses to their home country because of the the British blockade as well as the German submarines.

At the end of 1917, when Italy (and Zsarist Russia) seemed beaten and ready to leave the war, the US stepped in to bring fresh wind into the case of the Allies and declared war on Austria as well. But did Washington have a good reason except helping out and even having not more than a scant knowledge of the London treaty which in itself and with several clauses was not coherent with US policy?

The Woolsey Papers in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division contain a ten page memo „Unfriendly Acts of Austria-Hungary“ of Nov. 20, 1917, which went back to 1915 when the „Ancona“-crisis threatened the relations. But Austria since then had kept the rules - ships would be sunk if armed or fleeing or resisting but only after proper warning and saving lives on board. The paper held it was rather Austria having a reason for a declaration of war: Some 5.000 ambulance men were waiting in Pennsylvania to be sent over to Europe with parts to be diverted to the Italian front; also, ambassador Sharp in Paris had been advised to acknowledge the Polish National Committee as an „official Polish Organisation“. Both measures were in contradiction to the law of nations.

When Wilson did ask Congress for a declaration of war on Austria one important voice opposed it. Senator Robert La Follette. Again, thanks to the Library of Congress we can follow his arguments. Circumstances had not changed since April so why now? Since helping out Italy seemed to be the main cause: The so far secret treaty of London – now published by the Bolsheviks – promised Italy territorial spoils but why should the US support this new kind of imperialism? Finally, via war on Austria a huge mass of immigrants – many after having taken their „first papers“ – would become „enemy aliens“. Drafting them could imply an obligation to fire at their folks at home once they were sent over to

Europe. Not only that, by still holding Austrian citizenship they would be considered traitors by Austria if captured in a fight. As the Senate vote was unanimous, what happened to La Follette's speech? It was never held. During debate in the Senate on Dec. 7, 1917, La Follette retired to work on his text. The debate quickened as several speakers waived their position so that when La Follette was called he was not present.

However, war on Austria was declared on that day because of – as Congress stated - “repeated acts of war” by Austria. The news took some time to reach Vienna, and the population of the capital seemed unmoved by it. Nobody had seen any US soldier in Europe so far. Until summer of 1918 there were no Austrians at all on the Western front where Americans eventually found themselves entrenched.

When Wilson got his nation “prepared” he had journalist George Creel install a Committee on Public Information (CPI), in fact a gigantic propaganda machine or what a historian⁶ called “propaganda-based diplomacy”. Among Creel's helpers was Edward Bernays⁷ who had emigrated with his parents from Austria in 1892. He was a nephew of Sigmund Freud and later became a specialist for the art of influencing public opinion. Quite a number of renowned historians had themselves registered at the National Board for Historical Service to do pseudo-scientific war work for Creel. One of his most famous inventions were the “Four Minute Men”⁸. People in these days amassed at the movie theatres and it took about four minutes to exchange the reels. During this short interval socially well suited local men spoke on behalf of the war effort under strict guidelines issued by the CPI.

But the CPI stands for a general wave of suspicion, espionage, and sabotage on both sides, with a couple of Austrians involved. Altendorf became a double agent moving around in Mexico at the time when Berlin aimed at bringing this country into the war on her side. He delivered a German agent (Witzke⁹) to the Americans who were in her early stages regarding intelligence, actually the only foreign agent who served a penalty in a US jail. Maybe the most cruel story is that of Alexander Szek. This highly gifted young man got employed by the German code office in occupied Belgium. Because of an English line in his family the Secret Service managed to turn him around so that he delivered a copy of the German code book. London got rid of him quickly to avoid embarrassment. A third example is Wozniak, also born in old Austria, who became a suspect in the sabotage case of Kingsland, a production plant for ammunition destroyed by explosions. This case lingered on until the Thirties when Germany and the US debated in the Claims Commission about responsibility and compensation. US interests then were taken care of by Amos Peaslee.

After Congress had approved of the war on Germany the President asked Colonel House to form a group of men whom a later historian, Gelfand¹⁰, called experts and “experts”. The job of this “Inquiry” has been to collect data on (and from Europe) to form opinions and recommendations for the sake of a lasting peace. The founding fathers were Isaiah Bowman and Walter Lippmann. They were behind the 14 points of Woodrow Wilson (January 8, 1918) the tenth of which read: “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.”

Nine months afterwards (October 29, 1918) and many dramatic developments later the program had to be adjusted. Lippmann and another journalist, Frank Cobb of the „New York World“, commented on point ten that the „proposition“ of January (autonomy) „no longer holds“. As for the new state „Czecho-Slovakia“ the press duet talked of „at least a million Germans for whom some provision must be made“. As it turned out they were about threetimes the size. As for “*German Austria*” both men seemed to agree that “this territory should of right be permitted to join Germany”. This did not happen, at least not then. The document closed its remarks on the tenth point of Wilson: “The United States is clearly committed to the program of national unity and independence. ... and it supports a program aiming at a confederation of southeastern Europe.”

A new confederation of – not quite southeastern – Europe had held its first formal meeting on Oct. 3, 1918 in this town, The Democratic Mid-European Union. One chapter in a book upon the influence of immigrants on President Wilson's policies¹¹, the Peabody Papers in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, the Union left no traces.

It has been a basically Slavic undertaking to unite the various peoples of this race in Europe, over the remains of the Danubian Empire. Supported and encouraged by their recent triumphs in the (paper) war representatives of southern, northern and eastern slavs agreed upon founding a new vehicle after the old body that held them together for a long time had been dissolved. Why did the Union not succeed? First of all, Austria and Hungary were not invited to join. To name such an organization mid-european without the two most middle-european countries seems like an unforgivable fault. Second, the brothers had not cleared their internal conflicts before they started the union. Even among the northern and southern branches themselves there was no unity. Czechs and Poles did not agree upon borders; Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes differed in even more fundamental ways – language, culture, religion – many parts of everyday life were different, and on top the Serbs always wanted a Greater Serbia, whereas the other Southerners vied for a construction named Yugo-Slavia.

Curiously, the Union even faced a competitor, an Association with a program not much different from the Union. Masaryk who happened to be member with both groups seemed to be untouched by the problems as he had achieved what he really had longed for, an independent Czecho-Slovakia.

When, in October 1918, representatives of nationalities in the US solemnly vowed to cooperate within the Union, and Lippmann-Cobb produced their paper, Prague celebrated the overthrow of the Habsburg authorities without any blood shed as the last Austrian commander hesitated long enough to transfer his power to civilian members of the leading political parties in Bohemia. Vienna even issued regular passports to their representatives to travel to Geneva where they were able to meet with Benes who had arrived from Paris. Remember, he was Masaryk's partner in Paris when the leader himself was still in the US to help form the Mid-European Union.

But not so fast. What were these dramatic developments since Wilson's 14 points of January 1918? It has been Foreign Minister Czernin himself who stated on March 10, 1918: "Ein Separatfrieden mit Amerika, mit welchem wir eigentlich nur auf dem Papier Krieg führen, hilft uns aber gar nichts."¹² The beginning of April in Vienna Foreign Minister Czernin stumbled over the Sixtus affair which more or less killed all efforts to bring Austria to a separate peace. Rome in mid-April 1918 saw a conference of the oppressed peoples of the Habsburg monarchy. It seems widely unknown¹³ that Austria planned such a conference herself. In a memorandum of June 6, 1918 representatives of an Irish, an Indian, and an Egyptian committee would invite to such a countermove in propaganda.

On May 8 a document widely unknown landed on Robert Lansing's desk: The director of his small Near Eastern Division, Albert Putney, had compiled a devastating report on the "Slavs in Austria-Hungary". Consisting of 236 pages the piece repeated pretty much everything bad that had been issued about the soon defunct realm in the middle of Europe. Lansing took the document to approach his President with a choice: "In brief, should we or should we not favor the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into its component parts and union of these parts, or certain of them, based upon "self-determination?" On May 29, 1918 the US expressed her „sympathy“ for the Slavs.

A leading diplomat in the State Department did not much bother about the old Latin principle „audiatur et altera pars“? But what choice did Mr. Putney have? Lacking material deriving from the non-Slav field he trusted declared Czech nationalist Charles Pergler from the Bohemian National Alliance. One piece of literature from Pergler's desk carried the title "Czech demands", another "The Bohemian Question"¹⁴. Why did Putney not have access to un-biased information? First of all, relations were broken. Second, the Library of Congress in 1906 had received a large collection of Slavic books from a

Russian nobleman named Yudin. But: As it seems Putney did not even consult with the Library of Congress.

To give you two examples for Putney's failure: At least, in section six he frankly admits having used biased material (coming from Masaryk, Benes, Capek, and Pergler) to prove Viennese misdeeds towards the Bohemians such as restriction of individual rights, limits on education, suppression of media and attacks on independence of courts. Even in copying he lacked accuracy: „Austrian Terrorism in Bohemia“ (a small brochure¹⁵ of just 38 pages, published by the Czech National Alliance in Great Britain) was not by Masaryk himself (he wrote the preface only). When Putney turned to the Southern Slavs in sections eight and nine he refrained from commenting on the quality of the sources he used. He also quoted often without even naming the source. Putney also copied from Vosnjak, a declared propagandist, and made heavy use of pamphlets printed by a Southern Slav Library.

It took "The Inquiry" till August 1918 to agree upon an agenda. A working group of four men was installed to deal just with Austria-Hungary: Charles Seymour, Robert Kerner, Austin Evans and William Lunt. All of them produced numerous papers (called sketches, memorandum, resume or epitome). To begin with, Seymour did not want the job because he questioned his competence: „When Seymour protested that he knew the Austrian problems only as a tourist and merely from the headlines, Bowman bade him "get down to work and become an authority.““ However, this historian did contribute a rather interesting paper on a rather strange project the Slavs ventured: A corridor between Austria and Hungary should connect the northern and the southern „tribes“. Access to the Adriatic – possible via this corridor - listed high on the agenda of the Czechs. Evans and Lunt were rather known for their expertise on Italy and the Balkans. With them, a female geographer, Ellen Churchill Semple, formed a trio to discuss the strategic character of Italy's northern border. Altogether, American geographers developed at least three versions how the lines should be drawn there to satisfy both strategy and self-determination. A task that had to fail. None of them ever saw reality.

Although with a German name, Robert Kerner was a nationalist Czech all his life. Unfortunately, his Papers in Berkeley, seem to be in a devastated condition. He became one of the most ambitious and influential writers of the „Inquiry“. One of the reasons for this were his language skills. On the other hand, even well meaning colleagues noticed his biased expertise and his often pontifical behaviour. Kerner wrote on several subjects, in several versions, and on more than one occasion. Here a selection of titles in his memo repertoire: Digest Outline Austria-Hungary Structure of Government, A Brief Sketch of the Political Movement of the Czecho-Slovaks Tending towards the Federalization or Dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, Memorandum on Racial Participation of the Government of Austria-Hungary, Minorities in Austria-Hungary. To take this last document as an example, Kerner hardly wrote a bibliography, probably because he regarded himself as one.

When the war finally terminated by truce with Austria on November 3 and with Germany on November 11 – again everybody seems to be aware of the 11th, nobody of the 3rd – the Inquiry compiled what today is called the Black Book (there was a second one called Red Book), a sort of guideline for the American Commission to Negotiate Peace (ACNP) at the upcoming Paris Peace Conference. It contains lots of maps and proposals based on them. If you take the trouble to differentiate between border changes that have happened and are still working, others that have been altered again, and others still that were contemplated but never even tried out, and If you consider the territory of the former monarchy, you may find out that hardly any of the ideas of 1917-1919 has survived, especially after the revolutions of the miracle year 1989. Indeed, one tragedy with the Black Book lies in the huge work by American geographers and the little success it actually had in the long run. Remember the three maps of the South Tyrol. Wilson and the conference did not wish to have anything like that.

When Paris came up the Inquiry split with a core of just 23 people traveling to Europe and becoming part of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Unfortunately, The Inquiry Papers and the Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace are often mixed up, even in the archives. One of the few ladies who were allowed to travel to Paris, was a Mary Florence Wilson¹⁶ who took professional care of the temporary library and its purchases. To gather even more information and right at the spot a field mission for Austria-Hungary (although it had ceased to exist) was installed. Harvard history professor Archibald Coolidge was picked as head with one of his pupils, Kerner, being one member of it. Based in Vienna, the American experts rode to all other regions once part of the Habsburg empire. Many reports were written and sent to Paris to support the American delegates to numerous commissions and committees within the conference organization. It was Amos Peaslee who back in 1919 installed a proper courier service between Paris and Vienna during the peace conference.

Geography played its role in both the US Commission and the Paris conference, but the names had changed. To be sure, Bowman still occupied center stage but his companions in Paris were Mark Jefferson and Colonel Johnson¹⁷. Whereas Jefferson provided the whole commission with professional maps, Johnson became specifically involved with Italy and so gained some relevance for Austria. Jefferson was credited with knowledge of Europe¹⁸: „Jefferson understood the European; he was well schooled in European history, ethnography, and economics.“ In one of his reports, dated September 16, 1918 „Principles Assumed in Locating Boundaries“¹⁹ he took the border in Bohemia west of the Elbe as a model for his understanding of political geography: Since the language argument favored Germany, strategically the territory should belong to the weaker nation (Czechs), especially as the land in dispute had more height. Johnson was no friend of Germany and seemed to transfer his dislike on to Austria. In his two books²⁰, he claimed strategic disadvantages of Italy towards Austria, on the other hand he lent preference to the Slavs in their struggle against Italy.

When the conference assembled in Paris many diplomatic issues had already been decided by pure fact, and I do not mean the military occupation of Germanic Bohemia by returning Czech troops. Washington, on September 3, had recognized a National Council in Paris with Benes at the helm (but with hardly anybody else there). Did the United States act according to the law of nations or prematurely? When Karl in Vienna offered truce based on point ten as of January 1918 Wilson took his time and replied to have ceased to be a player in this since circumstances had changed since January. Would Karl please talk to the Czechs directly, from state to state. What had been an internal affair of the Dual Monarchy had now turned into international business out of control by Vienna. Wilson would have had the option of accepting the offer. By that time, Prague was still under Austrian command. It wavered on October 28 only when Vienna left her troops in the Bohemian capital without instructions.

Again, State Department counsellor Woolsey had on August 23, 1918 drafted a memorandum on the recognition not of the state of Czecho-Slovakia, but of „czecho-slovak belligerency“. By that move the Czechs simply had switched sides, in the eyes of the US, at least. One of the consequences was that citizens of Austria in America who claimed Bohemian descent changed their legal status from enemy alien to member of a friendly nation. Woolsey discovered four points of relevance: first, the oppressed kingdom of Bohemia had been held a vasallage by Vienna for centuries; second, the people of the kingdom declared independence and installed the national council in Paris; third, the people entrusted the council as „official organization“; finally, this council organized troops siding with the entente. Frankly, this sort of language – in point one at least - was not much different from Putney`s. The question remained what were Benes` credentials, his legitimation from home? Was the situation back in Bohemia as bad as he claimed? Considering the apathy after the Great war and historiography in general favoring the successor states, it is remarkable to find opposing statements at all. One voice²¹ from Cleveland where many Czechs had settled made one think: „The Czechs had won a mesasure of

freedom from their Austrian rulers, ... permitted to have better schools, the use of their own language, and an easier economic life“.

Records show revolutionaries in Prague even until the end counted on Austria`s perseverance beyond the war. Only when their representatives attended the Geneva conference with Benes end of October/beginning of November 1918 with passports issued by Vienna – some say hoping they might still acknowledge being part of all – they discovered what Masaryk and Benes had achieved in exile. A window of opportunity opened for a state which historians such as Heimann have called “failed”²².

The US played a vital role in creating this new state. The Bohemia-born Pergler was not the only helper in the US. Although he became Prague`s first representative to Washington he later estranged from his country, came out against Benes but lost and ended up in despair and neglect. Another emigree was Emanuel Voska, Bohemia`s master spy in the war. He ended up in a communist jail in the Fifties. His espionage network both in Austria and in the US helped fell Dumba. One of his men, named Kopecky in the consulate general in New York, got hold of questionable activities in the embassy, such as initiating strikes among workers from Austria in munition plants in America. Another one had access to a minister in Vienna and copied his mail for Voska. The master himself organized a plot you expect from a Bond movie: When the Czechs and the Poles both wanted Teschen in Austrian Silesia Voska disguised as entente officer and marched into the Polish half of the town.

Masaryk`s main American supporter was Crane. He made business with Russia (brakes for the Trans-Siberian railways) and fell for Slavic choir music. UoChicago President Harper introduced Crane to Masaryk who in a famous first meeting believed Crane to be an American missionary asking for money. Instead, Crane was extremely wealthy and started to donate money to the Czech cause. He also happened to be a supporter of Wilson and had his attention whenever he wished. When Crane asked Wilson in the spring of 1918 to receive Masaryk in the White House the Czech leader had his chance. He almost spoiled it though because whereas Wilson wanted to hear more about Russia after the revolution where Masaryk had spent several months, the future president preferred to talk of the dissolution of Austria. The summit did not change much at all, as the US had already declared her sympathy with the Czech cause on May 29 soon to be followed by formal recognition on September 3.

National self-determination had been picked by Wilson as the core of his strategy to make the world safe for democracy. Again, the world looked at Germany mainly: Elsass, Schleswig, and Danzig became the catchwords. The big drama happened in the very centre of Europe, with Hungary losing even more people and land than Austria. Both states were also led into a conflict with each other: Only after several years of negotiating, fighting and voting did Germanic West Hungary become part of the new Germanic Austria. What the slavic successor states had had in mind was something completely preposterous, a corridor between both former dominant territories within the empire.

Austria fought off the corridor, received a new province from Hungary – much smaller than the corridor – but suffered losses in the north and the south. Three million Germanics in Bohemia and Moravia were not sure what to do. Economically, they lived in a Slavic environment, emotionally they belonged to Austria. When no help came from tired Vienna, the Czechs took initiative and occupied the Germanic territory. Their men from the fronts were motivated whereas the Austrians demoralized. Hoping the best from Paris clearly turned out to be miscalculated, not even a plebiscite was envisioned. In the south, one has to differentiate between the Slavic and the Italian south. Southern Styria was taken by changing the administration from Germanic to Slovenian staff with a few violent moments, coincidentally when the American field mission travelled the area. In Carinthia, Slovenes and Austrians fought out a genuine local war until Paris decided upon one of the few plebiscites of the time. In the western south bordering to Italy the highly regarded principle of national self-determination was more or less buried right away, probably because of a geographical misunderstanding. The example of South

Tyrol stands for the opinion that most of the high quality work of the Inquiry went nowhere. Trentino was taken for the whole land between Trent and the Brenner pass although linguistically north of Bozen (which lies roughly half between Trent and Brenner) was overwhelmingly German.

Finally, the concept of Anschluss, and I am not talking of that one in 1938 when Herr Hitler saluted the homecoming of Austria into the German Reich. Richard could tell you more about it since he himself fell victim to it and still carries exceptionally bad memories of it with him. According to the slogan of self-determination the Germanic people of Austria should be free to join the German republic of 1918. It is one of the many ironies in history that 1938 a plebiscite was indeed held, with the result to be expected in a dictatorship. In 1919 Paris did not allow the people to vote. My personal estimate would be that serious and free plebiscites both in 1919 and 1938 would not have resulted in an Anschluss. We are a late nation, and today there is no doubt at all that Austria cherishes her independence, in a European environment that resembles more and more what could have happened after the Great war had the federalization of the old Austria been realized. But as one of our literary heroes of old, Franz Grillparzer, has written²³: „Das ist der Fluch von unserm edlen Haus: Auf halben Wegen und zu halber Tat mit halben Mitteln zauderhaft zu streben.“ Additionally, when the Slovenian politician Korosec met with Emperor Karl for the last time in October 1918 and was asked for loyalty, the Slavic member of the parliament in Vienna replied²⁴: „Majestät, es ist zu spät!“ This should be the moment to admit that the heaviest fault for the events rested, of course, with the Austrians themselves.

When the treaty of Saint Germain with Austria was finally signed in September 1919 the US had already left as Congress blocked both the League of Nations and consequentially the peace treaties as it was all combined. Paris put in words what had been achieved silently before: A couple of smaller states had replaced the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and nobody seemed to care because – and here I would like to quote Richard Schifter - “The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a minor issue for the United States.”

The US war on Austria terminated de facto with the truce on November 3, 1918; legally with a separate peace treaty and the renewal of diplomatic relations in 1921. Today, we are – thanks also to the US - a liberated republic, member of the EU, involved in a partnership program of NATO (membership seems not possible as we have committed ourselves to permanent neutrality), and – since 1989 – economically in many ways a new hub for CEE.

Conclusion

Let us look at ALL the theatres of the Great War. The outcome of the “paper war” was in no way predestined, on several occasions things could have turned out differently. Old Austria was stimulated to disintegrate. However, It would be wrong to forget what went wrong on her side, on top of all the starting of A war (not THE war because a world war was certainly not the intention of Vienna). Ironically, her paper war with the US turned out to be more consequential than military fighting.

This may explain why the official World War One Museum of the United States in Kansas City does not take much notice of Austria. It is dedicated to the military actions of this war. Generally, Austria tends to appear in narratives of 1914-1918 at the beginning only. Consequentially, the Military History Museum`s exhibition in Vienna starts with the symbol for the outbreak of this European tragedy, the car in which the imperial couple had been shot in Sarajevo.

Although tonight we are discussing a US paper war only it would be unfair to put any blame upon America alone. All her efforts to sort things out in Europa (and elsewhere) in a peaceful and sustainable way met – in most cases anyway – with bad European habits. Since then the world has changed in many ways. The US has become world power number one, and believes in the concept of American exceptionalism. Dennis Jett²⁵ has considered it a challenge to future diplomats, ok to use it at home,

difficult abroad, defend it without offending, support it without denying values, having in mind that it is not even clear what it means: „Today it can be used to justify most anything America does abroad.“

Being powerful implies responsibilities. Executing power affords knowledge to decide how to make use of it, be it for the sake of others or your own. You may have expertise yourself or you may gather it from somebody or somewhere else. Without degrading Ambassador Penfield's qualities, he got the post in Vienna because he was a Catholic and because he donated his wife's money to the cause of Wilson's party. To point out to you how far devoid of professionalism diplomatic positions were assigned I let you go with a smile over another quote: "We might give Guatemala to Arkansas"²⁶.

Kurt Bednar, Vienna (Austrian Cultural Forum, Washington DC, USA, April 5, 2017)

¹ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Wien, Karton 52 P.A. XXXIII USA Varia 1915.

² „In the core of the army deployment.“

³ Penfield Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

⁴ Gerald H. Davis, *The Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Austria-Hungary 1913-1917*, Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 1958, page 268 f. with footnote 74.

⁵ Archibald Cary Coolidge, *The United States as a World Power*, New York, 1908.

⁶ John Louis Nigro, *The New Diplomacy in Italy*, New York 1999, chapter 1.

⁷ Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda: Die Kunst der Public Relations*, Freiburg, 2007, pages 83 ff.

⁸ Alfred Emile Cornebise, *War as advertised: The Four Minute Men and America's Crusade, 1917-1918*, Philadelphia, 1984. Chapters VII und VIII. Carol Oukrop, *The Four Minute Men Became National Network During World War I*, *Journalism Quarterly*, volume 52, no. 4, winter 1975, pages 632-637. Lisa Mastrangelo, *World War I, Public Intellectuals, and the Four Minute Men: Convergent Ideals of Public Speaking and Civic Participation*, *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, volume 12, no. 4, winter 2009, pages 607-633. Mary Yost, *Training Four Minute Men at Vassar*, *The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education*, 1918.

⁹ Charles H. Harris, Louis R. Sadler: *The Witzke Affair: German Intrigue on the Mexican Border, 1917-18*, in: *Military Review*, volume LIX, 2 (february 1979), pages 36-50.

¹⁰ Lawrence E. Gelfand, *The „Inquiry“, American Preparations for Peace, 1917-1919*; New Haven, 1963.

¹¹ Arthur J. May, H.A. Miller and the Mid-European Union of 1918, *American Slavic and East European Review*, volume 16, no. 4, December 1957, pages 473-488; ders.: in Joseph P. O'Grady (ed.), *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies*, Lexington, KY, 1967, pages 250 ff.

¹² „A separate peace with America with whom we have a war on paper only does not help us at all.“

¹³ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Wien, Karton 709 P.A. I Generalia IX/7 (two folders).

¹⁴ Charles Pergler, *The Bohemian Question*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, volume 72, July 1917, pages 155-160.

¹⁵ *Austrian terrorism in Bohemia*, ed. The Czech national alliance in Great Britain, London 1916.

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