

KARL A. ROIDER

Baron Thugut and Austria's Response to the French Revolution



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BARON THUGUT
AND AUSTRIA'S RESPONSE TO
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



Franz Maria, Baron von Thugut
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BARON THUGUT
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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

KARL A. ROIDER, JR.

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FOR WAYNE S. VUCINICH

—From one of his “nephews”

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN I WOULD tell fellow historians at professional meetings that I was working on a political biography of Franz Maria Baron von Thugut, I usually encountered two reactions. Those who had not studied Habsburg foreign affairs wrinkled their noses and asked, "Who's he?" Those who had smiled knowingly and said, "You certainly aren't going to try to rehabilitate him, are you?" For the first group I always tried to describe briefly who Thugut was: first graduate of the Oriental Academy in Vienna; Austrian minister to the Ottoman Empire, Poland, and Naples in the 1770s and 1780s; and from 1793 to 1800 foreign minister of the Habsburg Monarchy and leader of its vigorous struggle against revolutionary France. To the second group I replied, as befits a cautious historian, that I was not seeking to "rehabilitate" Thugut but to "understand" him, knowing full well that seeking an understanding of a historical personage can sometimes become a form of rehabilitation. I must admit that, like many biographers, I found myself often in sympathy with my subject.

My decision to write a biography of Thugut came about in a somewhat unusual way. I first encountered him in my research not in his post as foreign minister, but in the lesser position of Austrian envoy to the Ottoman Empire in the early 1770s. In reading the reports and recommendations that he sent from Constantinople to Vienna during those years, I found him to be not only a perceptive and practical person, as one would expect a diplomat to be, but also a man concerned with ethical matters in foreign affairs, one even troubled when his superiors advised a course of action that he considered dishonorable or disreputable. I found such qualities in an eight-

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eenth-century diplomat rather unusual and also attractive, since in my research I, like most other diplomatic historians, had found ethics rarely entering into discussions of foreign policy except when necessary to justify one's own actions or to condemn someone else's. Having said that, let me hasten to assure the reader that what follows is not a morality tale in which Thugut the Right and Honorable struggles against the forces of evil and darkness. I merely intended to explain how I became interested in studying the man. Ethical questions did not dominate his personality or his foreign policy—as we shall see.

From that beginning, I pursued my study of Thugut and his time. He had been examined widely before. In fact, he was the subject of a significant and at times bitter historical controversy that began in the middle of the nineteenth century and continued with varying intensity into the first years of the twentieth. As with many historical controversies, the issue at stake involved far more than simply an academic assessment of the goals and achievements of his foreign policy. It concerned the major question facing the German political world in the nineteenth century: was Austria or Prussia, Habsburg or Hohenzollern, the worthier leader of Germany and the German people? The issue arose with the publication of Heinrich von Sybel's *Geschichte der Revolutionszeit*, the first edition of which appeared in 1853 to be followed by many more as Sybel incorporated new findings and new interpretations into his work. Based on materials found largely in the archives of Prussia and Saxony, his study from the beginning reflected a Prussian bias that became particularly pronounced in the 1860s during the rivalry leading to the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Partly to justify Prussia's victory in that war in the long view of history, Sybel argued that Austria had not lost its influence in Germany because of the battles of 1866; it had forfeited its leadership in the 1790s when, under Thugut's guidance, the Habsburg dynasty surrendered Germany to the mercy of revolutionary France while it searched indiscriminately for territory to add to its patrimony. In fact, Sybel con-

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tended, even as Austria was formally engaged in war against France, it was primarily intent upon thwarting Prussia; moreover, by its abandonment of Belgium in 1794 and its policies toward Poland between 1792 and 1795, Austria threatened Prussia to such a degree that Berlin was compelled to halt its own struggle against France in order to protect the Hohen-zollern lands from Habsburg malice and greed.

Blistering at Sybel's charges, Austrian historians rose to the defense of Thugut in particular and their monarchy in general. At their head was Alfred von Vivenot, a former officer in the Austrian army who had fought against the Prussians with considerable distinction in 1866, even leading a group of raiders behind enemy lines with such success that the Prussians had put a price on his head. Vivenot passionately disputed Sybel's interpretation of Thugut. He described Thugut as "a strong, clear spirit, a pure character, a statesman of premier genius," who possessed alone "the united spirit of a Pitt and a Carnot."¹ He was not crafty and sinister as Sybel would have it, but a "tragic hero in the Greek sense, struggling against his fate."² When scolded by other historians for defending Thugut with too much emotion, Vivenot explained his passion as the only honorable response of a loyal Austrian who, like Thugut, had experienced a *Drangperiode* in Austria's history.³ Beginning in 1869 Vivenot published a flood of works defending Thugut and Habsburg policy in the 1790s. Fortunately for historians, these works were almost all editions of documents; they included among others the single-volume *Thugut, Clerfayt und Wurmser* (Vienna, 1869); the five-volume *Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Kaiser-politik Oesterreichs während der französischen Revolutionskriege* (Vienna, 1873-1890), co-edited with Heinrich von Zeissberg; and—especially valuable for the study of Thugut—the two-volume *Vertrauliche Briefe des*

¹ Alfred von Vivenot, ed., *Vertrauliche Briefe des Freiherrn von Thugut* (Vienna, 1872), I: xvii-xviii.

² Alfred von Vivenot, ed., *Thugut, Clerfayt und Wurmser* (Vienna, 1869), xxix.

³ *Ibid.*, iv.

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Freiherrn von Thugut (Vienna, 1871). Vivenot died at the age of thirty-seven in 1874, before he could publish promised additional volumes and before he could pen a biography.

Vivenot's death did not end the controversy. Taking up the cudgels on Thugut's behalf were Hermann Hüffer and Zeissberg, who both pursued Vivenot's earlier theses but with considerably more restraint. They also published additional volumes of source materials, notably Hüffer's collections on the period from 1797 to 1800.⁴ Sybel too was not without supporters, notably Heinrich von Treitschke and Dimitrii Miliutin, but after the restoration of Austro-German friendship in the 1870s, the controversy subsided, helped along by the work of Hüffer and Zeissberg and especially by the balanced scholarship of K. T. Heigel in his *Deutsche Geschichte vom Tode Friedrich des Grossen bis zur Auflösung des alten Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1899–1911).⁵

Notwithstanding this scholarly activity, no biography of Thugut appeared and thus no effort to examine seriously the man's policies and decisions in light of his own past or his own character. Moreover, despite the published materials of Vivenot and Hüffer, the scholarly impression of Thugut continued to be largely that first offered by Sybel, namely, that Thugut cared most of all about the undoing of Prussia and the pursuit of territorial gain for Austria. In his study of the Second Partition of Poland that appeared in 1915, Robert Lord wrote that Thugut "believed that territorial aggrandizement was the Alpha and Omega of statecraft, and that all means were hallowed by that end."⁶ In 1960 Max Braubach described Thugut as willing to exploit the revolutionary wars not to de-

⁴ Hermann Hüffer, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte des Krieges von 1799* (Leipzig, 1900); *Quellen zur Geschichte des Krieges von 1800* (Leipzig, 1901); *Der rastatter Congress und die zweite Coalition*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1878–1879).

⁵ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1879); Dimitrii Miliutin and Alexander Mikhailovskii-Danilevsky, *Geschichte des Krieges Russlands mit Frankreich unter der Regierung Kaiser Paul's I im Jahr 1799*, 5 vols. (Munich, 1856–1858).

⁶ Robert Howard Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), 406.

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feat France but "to build the domination of Austria on the demise of the hated Prussia."⁷ In 1983 Derek McKay and H. M. Scott assessed Thugut's policy thus: "The notion of total victory was no part of Habsburg thinking. . . . They assumed that military successes could be turned to immediate account in the shape of territorial acquisitions."⁸ And in 1984 Piers Mackesy wrote, "indifferent to the counter-revolutionary crusade against the French republic, the Austrians saw their national interests in terms of expansion in South Germany and Italy. The Chancellor Thugut was not planning to march on Paris, but looked forward to consolidating the Habsburg lands in Italy by further acquisitions."⁹

One can in part account for the persistence of these views because they are based not on Thugut's own writings but rather on the writings of contemporaries about him. In the correspondence of many Russians, Englishmen, Prussians, Frenchmen, and even Austrians, one frequently encounters harsh words describing Thugut's intentions and character. Historians have accepted such assessments at face value without studying seriously Thugut's own explanations and justifications for his decisions and acts or by seeking reasons for the hostile expressions of the time.

Underlying these historical judgments is the assumption that Thugut's actions represented little more than an extension of the eighteenth-century international politics pursued by his predecessor and instructor, the great Habsburg chancellor, Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg. Throughout his long tenure, Kaunitz was concerned in foreign affairs very much with territorial aggrandizement and the defeat of Prussia, all clothed in the appropriate garb of maintaining the balance of power among the great states of Europe. Since Thugut

⁷ Bruno Gebhardt, ed., *Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte*, 8th ed. (Stuttgart, 1960), 3: 14.

⁸ Derek McKay and H. M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648-1815* (London, 1983), 216.

⁹ Piers Mackesy, *War Without Victory: The Downfall of Pitt, 1799-1802* (Oxford, 1984), 4-5.

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rose in the foreign ministry from junior translator to foreign minister under the auspices of Kaunitz, many have assumed that his views of foreign policy and its goals reflected those of his mentor. As Kaunitz was the great practitioner of eighteenth-century diplomacy, so Thugut must have followed his principles right through the 1790s even though the social, intellectual, and political upheavals brought on by the French Revolution had made those principles not only obsolete but also dangerous for the monarchy to pursue. Thugut was facing a new world of international politics with outmoded precepts. Therefore, it was inevitable that he and Austria should suffer defeat.

Just as scholars have argued that the legacy of his predecessor blinded Thugut to the changes around him, so too have they at times unfavorably compared him to his later successor, the great Clemens von Metternich, who assumed the reins of Habsburg foreign policy nine years after Thugut's fall. While Kaunitz was the master of diplomacy in the eighteenth century, Metternich was the master in the nineteenth. Metternich recognized that the French Revolution had added new and complicated forces to the making of foreign policy and understood that, to preserve the Habsburg Monarchy in a changed world required a greater vision of the present and future Europe. Balance of power became in itself a goal worth pursuing and no longer merely a stated principle under which European powers pushed and shoved one another for advantage. Peace and order also became objectives to be actively sought; they were no longer conditions looked upon as existing naturally in the absence of war. Thugut, many have suggested, never understood that the revolution had changed Europe; consequently, he sought only to grab land here or insult Prussia there, and in doing so he missed the significance of the French Revolution for Austria and for the entire continent.

The problem with these time-honored interpretations of Thugut and his goals is that they do not accord with the policies that he actually pursued in the 1790s. Had territorial gain dominated his intentions, he would have made peace with rev-

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olutionary France and divided with it parts of Germany or Italy. It is true that such a course might not have made the monarchy more secure because France was then both a dynamic and unsettled power not always willing or able to keep its agreements. Nevertheless, during Thugut's tenure as foreign minister, various French revolutionary governments did offer Austria inducements to make a separate peace, but Thugut rejected such offers—and even refused to discuss them—except when French armies were at Vienna's doorstep. If territorial aggrandizement was his principal goal, this stance makes no sense.

Likewise, the view that Thugut was more eager to hurt Prussia than to defeat France seems difficult to accept in the light of the path he followed. All the governments of revolutionary France sought peace more ardently with Austria than with Prussia. Indeed, even after Berlin concluded its own peace with Paris in 1795, French statesmen looked upon Prussia with considerable disdain and continued peace probes to Vienna. Thugut had repeated opportunities to reach a settlement with France and to direct Austria's hostility toward the north; he even had opportunities to enlist French assistance against Prussia. Had Prussia's ruin been Thugut's chief objective, he would not have spurned these opportunities so consistently as he did.

To achieve the goals usually attributed to him, the most obvious step for Thugut was to seek peace with revolutionary France. Yet he steadfastly resisted such a step, and at the end of his career he was removed because he had come to symbolize everywhere, but especially in Vienna, the irreconcilable pursuit of war against France. His steadfast determination to continue the fight, especially in the wake of serious and at times devastating reversals, make the traditional explanations of Thugut's policies seem inadequate.

Thugut was in fact by no means bound by Prussophobia and a lust for territorial gain; rather, he was dedicated to the defeat of revolutionary France, a state he understood to be truly a danger to the established social and political system of

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the Europe that he valued. And he assumed that such a defeat could be achieved only with the cooperation of the other traditional great powers of Europe: Britain, Russia, and Prussia; in other words, he sought an allied victory much like that achieved by Metternich in 1814. However, it was in the forming and maintaining of the coalitions that the heritage of eighteenth-century diplomacy hamstrung his efforts. The statesmen of the allied powers wasted much time and effort squabbling about territorial gain, imagining insidious purposes on the part of others, and doubting their allies' intentions to fulfill their promises. Thugut's greatest undertaking was convincing the traditional powers that the defeat of France must be paramount for all of them; as we shall see, he failed to do so for many reasons, not least of which was others' perceptions of his character and his goals.

The purpose, then, of this book is to probe more deeply into Austrian policy toward revolutionary France during the 1790s by examining the man responsible for making that policy, Thugut himself. The book will examine the influences upon him from his early years onward, what he believed to be important for himself and the state that he served, and how he dealt with the persons and ideas surrounding him. Its primary aim is to reach a better understanding of Thugut and through him a better understanding of Austrian statesmanship and politics during a tumultuous time in the history of the Habsburg Monarchy.

BARON THUGUT
AND AUSTRIA'S RESPONSE TO
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CHAPTER I

YOUTH, 1736–1769

ON A BRIGHT SPRING DAY, amidst a spectacle of blossoming fruit trees, colorful songbirds, and greening fields that natives and visitors love so much, Maria Theresa and her imperial entourage approached the right bank of the Danube River near the village of Pöchlarn in Lower Austria. Her purpose was to visit the elegant, baroque pilgrimage church at Maria Taferl, on the other side of the river. As she reached the water's edge, she found the local ferry and its master waiting to carry her and her company across. Descending from their carriages, the queen and her closest courtiers boarded the craft, settled as comfortably as possible into the available seats, and signaled the ferryman to begin the crossing. As the boat set out, she noticed a small ragamuffin sitting near the helmsman and surveying the distinguished passengers with a bright, inquisitive gaze. To the ferryman she asked, "Who is this boy with such intelligent eyes?" The man replied, "Your Majesty, he has no name; he is a foundling; he is a *Thunichtgut*, a good-for-nothing." "He is no *Thunichtgut*," remarked the queen. "Not this boy. He is instead a *Thugut*, one who will do well." Then she turned to one of her courtiers and told him that the boy would come under her care and that she would see to his upbringing and education. As the years passed, this *Thugut* rose from Maria Theresa's favorite foundling to court secretary, personal envoy to the empress-queen, ambassador, and finally foreign minister of the Habsburg Monarchy. He did well indeed.

As much as one would like to believe this story of the humblest origins and grand success, it is, alas, apocryphal. Thugut was indeed a commoner who rose to foreign minister largely by virtue of his own talent, but he was not an orphan or the offspring of a ferryman. He was born the son of a minor bureaucrat and was blessed not only with innate gifts but also with a good education, which in large part launched him on his career. Before proceeding to the facts of his origin and his family, however, we should examine this legend further, because it does have a bearing on the understanding of Thugut and what others thought of him. The story told above is not without variations from other sources. One has him born the son of a ferryman in the city of Linz, where his schooling and not his bright eyes brought him to Maria Theresa's attention. Another relates that the *Thunichtgut* name was a play on his real name of Tunicotti, which makes him not of German but of Italian origin, perhaps the son of a Venetian gondolier. A third tells of Maria Theresa's finding Thugut not in the back of a boat but as an abandoned infant in a corner of the main staircase of the Hofburg, the Habsburg winter palace in Vienna. Sweeping him into her arms, she reportedly announced, "Thugut will be the name of this poor little creature."¹

These legends are notable for many reasons, not least of which is that Thugut was a man important enough to have legends told about him. Indeed, these stories were not later creations, but were current when Thugut was actively involved in affairs. The diarist Karl von Zinzendorf wrote that part of the entertainment at a dinner party he attended in 1796 was listening to "satires about Thugut, whose father had been a ferryman."² The primary source for the introduction of the

¹ These stories can be found in various places, but they are neatly summarized in the old *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig, 1891), 38: 138. The *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* and the *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaisertums Österreich* by Constant von Wurzbach (Vienna, 1882), 45: 1, both explain Thugut's true origins and the falseness of these various stories. Nonetheless, the legends appeared in historical literature for some time afterward.

² Hans Wagner, ed., *Wien von Maria Theresia bis zur Franzosenzeit: Aus den Tagebüchern des Grafen Karl von Zinzendorf* (Vienna, 1972), 72.

ferryman legend into historical scholarship is *Lebensbilder aus dem Befreiungskriege* by Josef Hormayr zu Hortenburg, contemporary of Thugut, participant in the Tyrolean rising of 1809, and later official historian of the House of Habsburg. As his authority for the ferryman story, Hormayr cited Emperor Joseph II, who, he said, learned it from another Danubian ferryman during one of his own crossings of the river.³

As is well known, legends often persist long after they are shown to be nothing more than fanciful stories because they serve some purpose: to illustrate a quality of human character, to explain what appears inexplicable, or to teach a lesson. Such interpretations can also apply to the legends of Thugut's origin. In the positive sense, these tales show Thugut as the example of the self-made man, one who seized an opportunity and made the most of it. The only born commoner in the history of the Habsburg Monarchy to rise to the rank of foreign minister, he did so not by virtue of family connections or aristocratic origin but by his own talent. One could argue that, while he loathed the French Revolution and its principles, he represented one of its most cherished precepts: that ability and not social or family background should be the primary criterion for promotion or advancement in any occupation.

Just as it praises Thugut for his rise to prominence, so too the legend reflects credit on the Habsburg Monarchy for allowing him to do so. It endorses the view that, although its society was structured in the feudal manner found throughout Europe at the time, the monarchy was always looking for talented officials regardless of their nationality, religion, or social origin. Indeed, positive interpretations of the legend usually served not to commend Thugut's rise from modesty to greatness, but to illustrate the beneficence, compassion, and good judgment of Maria Theresa. The hero in the story is not the child but the great queen.

But many dismissed the positive implications of the legend

³ Josef Hormayr zu Hortenburg, *Lebensbilder aus dem Befreiungskriege* (Jena, 1841), 1: 459. The story is told in English in E. Vehse, *Memoirs of the Court, Aristocracy, and Diplomacy of Austria* (London, 1856), 2: 381. Vehse's discussions of Thugut are copied literally from Hormayr.

as it dealt with Thugut himself. They saw it instead as further evidence that Thugut was a parvenu, an interloper, a self-serving and ungracious manipulator who used all possible wiles and stratagems to hoodwink a youthful and naive emperor and his inept advisers in order to place himself ahead of the honorable and selfless noblemen who truly deserved to hold the distinguished position Thugut had usurped. For some of his aristocratic detractors, even being an ordinary orphan or the son of a ferryman was not degrading enough. In 1794 the socially active Zinzendorf recorded that at a party the wife of Prince Georg Adam Starhemberg “went so far as to say that Thugut was purchased from a convent.”⁴ The legend, in other words, served both to praise and to condemn Thugut, depending upon one’s view of the man and his deeds.

Yet, if Thugut was not found on a boat, discovered in a staircase, or purchased from a convent, then where did he come from? He was born Johannes Amadeus Franciscus de Paula to Philipp Joseph and Maria Eva Thueguett in the city of Linz in the province of Upper Austria on March 31, 1736.⁵ His father was an administrator (*Verwalter*) of the Bancalitäts-Militär-Zahlamt, a somewhat low-paying post in the provincial bureaucracy of the Habsburg government that administered the military payroll and acquisition of supplies in the Linz area.⁶ Thugut’s mother was the daughter of a master miller and town councilman in the village of Gundramsdorf bei Wien, where the couple married in 1716. She gave birth to five children, including three daughters, named Maria Anna, Sophia, and Josepha, and another son, born Thomas Johannes.⁷

⁴ Zinzendorf’s diary entry, July 14, 1794, in Wagner, ed., *Tagebüchern*, 75.

⁵ My special thanks to Heinrich Berger and Peter Gradauer of the Bischöfliches Ordinariat Linz for sending photocopies of the baptismal records of Thugut and his brother from the *Liber baptizatorum Parochiae Linciensis coeptus, 1731–1756*.

⁶ This is the official title for Philipp Joseph Thugut listed in the *Hofsystematismus* (later *Hof- und Staats-Schematismus*), the yearly publication listing the Habsburg administrative offices and personnel in them. My thanks to the staff of the Hofkammerarchiv in Vienna for directing me to it.

⁷ B. Pillwein, *Linz: Einst und Jetzt* (Linz, 1846), 2:34.

The Thugut ancestry traced itself to southern Bohemia near Budweis (Budejovice). Curiously, the original name was indeed Thunichtgut, or Thuenitgut, a holdover from the peasant wars of the sixteenth century when many men were branded with names that labeled them as criminals or at least hostile in some way to conventional society.⁸ Thugut's great-grandfather Andreas Thunichtgut was a schoolmaster in a village in southern Bohemia, and it was he who changed the name to Thugut. Andreas had two wives, the first of whom bore a number of "cobblers, farmers, and linen weavers"; the second gave birth in 1673 to Urban Thugut, Philipp Joseph's father and our Thugut's grandfather.⁹

Just as there is a bit of confusion about Thugut's last name, so too there is some about his first. Although christened Johannes Amadeus Franciscus de Paula, Thugut as an adult used the name Franz Maria when exchanging correspondence or signing documents, and it is these names that are listed in the *Hof- und Staats-Schematismus*, the official Habsburg listing of offices and their holders. When he began to use the name Franz Maria is unclear, but he had already dropped Johannes Amadeus by the time he entered the Oriental Academy at the age of eighteen in 1753.¹⁰ The addition of Maria as a middle name may have been in honor of Maria Theresa, whom he greatly admired, but it also may have been in honor of his mother.¹¹ His brother also altered his name. Christened Thomas Johannes at his birth on March 8, 1739, he is listed in the *Hof- und Staats-Schematismus* of the 1790s (when he served as ordinary court secretary—*wirklicher Hof-secretär*—in the principal administrative office of the monarchy) as Johann de Deo Thugut. When he changed his name is also unclear, but the use of the name Johann at one time or another by both

⁸ Other such names common in the same area were Bauernfeind and Bauernschelm.

⁹ Vivenot, ed., *Vertrauliche Briefe*, 1: 391.

¹⁰ Joseph Franz to Maria Theresa, October 22, 1753, Vienna, Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatskanzlei, *Interiora*, 55. (Hereafter cited as Vienna, HHSA, SK.)

¹¹ The *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 38:138, suggests the former.

brothers has caused some minor confusion among historians ever since.¹²

The early years of Thugut's life are for the most part unknown. He never wrote about his childhood and rarely mentioned his family, even when he and his brother worked together in different government offices in Vienna. He attended the Jesuit Gymnasium in Linz, where, according to the necrology that appeared in the *Österreichischer Beobachter* upon his death in 1818, his teachers "even at that time forecast a brilliant career and recognized as one of the dominant qualities in his character that perseverance and determination that were so obvious throughout his life."¹³ While this description smacks of hindsight, he was apparently a promising youth, for in 1753 as part of his explanation for admitting Thugut as one of the first students of the Oriental Academy, the headmaster wrote, "He can speak Italian, French, Spanish, and read Greek and was through all schools far and away the first."¹⁴ Promising scholastic achievement was well and good, but, as this passage indicates, his linguistic skills were what propelled him forward in the formative stages of his career. He could learn foreign languages easily and quickly, and in the world of Austrian foreign affairs that was always a gift highly valued by the powers that be. Facility in languages won for Thugut his openings; hard work, intelligence, and dedication brought advancement.

Thugut apparently did not go directly from Linz to the Oriental Academy but spent a brief interval at the University of Vienna. In a biography of her father, Johann Georg Obermayr, written in 1858 for her family, Emilie Weckbecker cast

¹² The *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* lists Thugut's birthday as the correct one (p. 138); Wurzbach's *Biographisches Lexikon* lists the brother's birthday, March 8, 1739, as the one for our Thugut but admits that it might be incorrect (p. 1).

¹³ *Österreichischer Beobachter*, September 5, 1818, p. 1305.

¹⁴ Josef Franz to Maria Theresa, October 22, 1753, Vienna, HHSA, SK, *Interiora*, 55. As foreign minister he complained that his Italian was not good enough for him to write official documents in that language. Thugut to Colloredo, June 8, 1793, in Vivenot, ed., *Vertrauliche Briefe*, 1:18–19.

some light on Thugut's university days when she described her own father's entry into that institution in 1751 or 1752. Obermayr entered as a *Bettelstudent*, a mendicant student, an official status that provided certain prerogatives including a free bed if one was available; the right to be first in line at some cloisters that fed the poor; free university attire (although without the dagger permitted to regular students); and the right on weekends and holidays to sing spiritual songs or to read scriptural passages in the courtyards and streets in exchange for coins from passersby. According to Weckbecker, her father reached Vienna too late for ordinary admission, but, since he and two other late arrivals showed such promise, all three were admitted as *Bettelstudenten*. The other two were "Franz Thugut of Linz" and "Bernard Jenisch of Carinthia."¹⁵ The three became good friends, sharing rather primitive accommodations and meals together. Within a short time Obermayr, the most outgoing and sociable of the three, secured a post as tutor to children of a well-to-do Spanish family in Vienna. The other two, in order to continue their studies, applied for openings in the newly created Oriental Academy.

One wonders if Emilie Weckbecker's tale of these university days is true. Some of her facts are wrong—for example, Jenisch was Viennese, not Carinthian—and Thugut, just sixteen years old in 1752, never formally matriculated at the university. However, neither his youth nor his failure to matriculate means that he was excluded from classes. Sixteen-year-olds were a common sight at European universities, and the academic promise that he had already shown could have inspired his teachers to send him to the university at an early age. Besides, the *Österreichischer Beobachter* of 1818 notes that he studied law and mathematics there before he entered the Oriental Academy.¹⁶ He also may have been a *Bettelstudent*. His father's post was a low-paying one, and he probably could not afford to give his son much money. Moreover, Thugut

¹⁵ Wilhelm Weckbecker, *Die Weckbeckers: Karriere einer Familie* (Graz, 1966), 19.

¹⁶ *Österreichischer Beobachter*, September 5, 1818, p. 1305.

throughout his life remained a frugal man, requiring little money on which to live, spending virtually none on frivolities, but investing as carefully as he could either in economic ventures that he believed promised a good return (but rarely brought one, as we shall see) or in individuals from whom he expected to derive favors and influence. Such traits he may have first acquired as a son in a family of limited means and then reinforced as a mendicant student in Vienna.

Without doubt, however, the opportunity that launched Thugut on his career in diplomacy and statecraft was his admission to the Oriental Academy. The Oriental Academy was a school created to train boys in the Ottoman language and in Ottoman customs, so that they could be employed as translators for Austrian officials serving in the Ottoman Empire, along the Habsburg-Ottoman borders, or in parts of the Austrian interior visited by Ottoman envoys or businessmen. Of all the states with which Austria had diplomatic relations in the early modern period, the Ottoman Empire posed the most difficulties in the day-to-day conduct of affairs. And the greatest difficulty was the Ottoman language itself. Whereas an Austrian diplomat assigned to a court in the rest of Europe would assuredly find his hosts speaking one or more of the common upper-class languages—French, German, or Italian—he would just as assuredly find almost no one among the Turks who could converse in any of those tongues. Not only was knowledge of Ottoman a rarity in Christian Europe, but the language was also difficult to learn, being a blend of Turkish, Persian, and Arabic words written in Arabic characters. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Habsburg envoys to the Turkish Empire had relied largely on translators they could find at hand, usually Greeks or Italians living in Ottoman territory. Frequently, however, these persons proved unreliable, and in the 1630s the Austrian embassy in Constantinople established a school for what were called *Sprachknaben*, young Austrian boys who would be trained in the language, history, customs, and political dealings of the Ottoman Empire and then serve as translators, messengers, and secretaries.

The school proved quite successful, and by the late seventeenth century the official Habsburg representatives to the Ottoman state were almost all chosen from its alumni.

The school in Constantinople continued until 1753 when, upon Kaunitz's recommendation that the boys could be trained better and more cheaply in Vienna, Maria Theresa replaced it with the Oriental Academy.¹⁷ To head the new school, Maria Theresa appointed Josef Franz. Franz was a Jesuit, a tutor of the future Joseph II, a specialist in the natural sciences, an assistant to Gerhard van Swieten in his reform of the University of Vienna, and a master of the Ottoman language. It was he who selected the first class of the academy, and for the places in that class he chose "*Landeskinder*, who have had an honorable education and come from such parents who have been true to the imperial-royal service for long years or were associated with it earlier, their extraction or estate honorable, and who have been blessed by God with many children."¹⁸ Undoubtedly these criteria reflected the wishes of Maria Theresa, who always held loyal service to her house and the blessing of many children to be two of the greatest virtues possible both for herself and for her subjects.

Second on the list of the eight boys accepted was Franz de Paula Thugut, praised for his excellent linguistic skills and also for his father's devotion to the imperial family. "His father," wrote Franz, "is administrator of the imperial-royal war chest in Linz and in the last war risked his life to bring the military and cameral treasures to Vienna."¹⁹ Franz was referring to a deed of some distinction on Philipp Thugut's part; when the Franco-Bavarian forces approached Linz in the early months of the War of the Austrian Succession, he packed up the funds for which he was responsible and fled with them, so that they would not fall into enemy hands. It was an act of

¹⁷ Karl A. Roider, Jr., "The Oriental Academy in the *Theresienzeit*," *Topic: A Journal of the Liberal Arts* 34 (1980): 21.

¹⁸ Josef Franz to Maria Theresa, October 22, 1753, Vienna, HHSA, SK, *Interiora*, 55.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

loyalty appreciated by Maria Theresa, who, after Philipp's death in 1766, granted his family a pension, half of which went to his widow and half to his three daughters. Upon the wife's death in 1772, her half of the pension was supposed to revert to the state, but, because of Thugut's own valuable service by this time, Maria Theresa added the wife's portion to that of the daughters.²⁰

In late 1753 at the age of eighteen, Thugut entered the Oriental Academy. Of the eight classmates, he was the third oldest, two being nineteen and the other five ranging from fourteen to seventeen. All were living in Vienna at the time of their acceptance, lending credence to Emilie Weckbecker's contention that Thugut was attending classes at the university when he was chosen. The academy's facilities were even located in one of the university's buildings. Thugut's friend Bernhard Jenisch was also in that first class. The courses the students took were not confined to Ottoman studies, but were designed to provide training generally in languages and liberal arts. In a report of January 1, 1754, Franz listed the subjects as Ottoman, Latin, French, Italian, Greek, German, geography, and history.²¹

Thugut remained in the Oriental Academy for less than two years, and his departure in September 1755 marked the end of his school days. It is rather difficult to assess the impact of his formal education upon his personal life in later years. In his writings he never credited his school in Linz, the University of Vienna, the Oriental Academy, or any of his instructors with any particular influence upon him. One may assume that these schools provided him with an education from which he could develop his general talents in later life, and there is no doubt that they gave him the language training that proved to

²⁰ Pillwein, *Linz*, 2: 34; *Österreichischer Beobachter*, September 5, 1818, p. 1306; Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon*, 45: 1.

²¹ Josef Franz to Maria Theresa, January 1, 1754, Vienna, HHSA, SK, *Interiora*, 55. Later in the eighteenth century the curriculum would include, among other studies, mathematics, natural sciences, philosophy, calligraphy, dancing, and riding.

be the key to unlock doors of early opportunity. But what else did he learn?

Although he was wholly educated by Jesuits, he later expressed no strong opinions of their order or the Church in general. Hormayr, his great detractor, wrote of him, "He was about as pious as the writer of the book *De Tribus Impostoribus* [a somewhat notorious book of unknown authorship and date praising atheism by arguing that Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed were charletans]. Always treading in the track of Voltairian philosophy, he loved the clergy and the oligarchy in that way which is formulated in Diderot's well-known saying about what should be done with kings and priests ['Let us strangle the last king with the bowels of the last priest']. He would not even hear of the priesthood as an energetic tool of passive obedience or of obscurantism."²² As an assessment of Thugut's formal opinion of Church and aristocracy, Hormayr's view seems exaggerated, although it may reflect Thugut's mutterings when he was particularly annoyed about some matter or other. Nonetheless, one doubts that he believed much that the Church taught, and if he attended services at all, they made no impression upon him. He was too cynical a man to accept either the spiritual or moral precepts offered by the eighteenth-century Church, preferring instead a kind of natural value system in keeping with the Enlightenment. He rejected outright the notion that the Church should have any say about what he was allowed to read.

One often assumes that in the eighteenth century the Church and the Enlightenment were bitter enemies, each side condemning the other as a curse upon mankind. That was certainly true in polemical writings, but both groups agreed on one matter: the great books they advised young men to read. The Jesuits who guided Thugut's formal education taught him the classical literature that the Enlightenment valued and that he himself loved for the remainder of his life. Hormayr wrote that Thugut never forgot the writings that he learned as

²² Vehse, *Memoirs*, 384.

a student: “The Roman classics he knew well and even in his seventies he quoted many important passages from memory.”²³ His love of the classics led to an appreciation of modern literature, and he read extensively from writers of the Enlightenment, particularly from great French figures such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Montesquieu. Following his dismissal as foreign minister in 1801, his correspondence with his former colleagues from his exile in Pressburg (Bratislava) often included lists of books for them to send to him. While most items requested were commentaries, memoirs, and histories of the French Revolution, others included travel literature, commercial studies, commentaries on ancient writings, and some popular scientific works—in other words, what one would expect of an eighteenth-century man of enlightened tastes.²⁴

Although familiar with many of the writers of the Enlightenment, Thugut never hinted that any of them had a profound impact upon his ideas, nor did he write essays or letters discussing any philosophical conjectures that he read. Moreover, like most of the Viennese literati, he revealed no interest in the contemporary achievements in German literature. In the late 1780s, when he was ambassador to Naples, his secretary may have invited him to join a literary circle to which Goethe belonged, but no evidence suggests that he did so.²⁵ He read widely, but more to gather information and to keep informed than to reflect deeply on the great ideas of the time or to stimulate his own insights into the human condition. He knew that he was not an imaginative thinker and devoted no time to pretending that he was one.

Thugut’s credentials as a man of the Viennese Enlightenment would be considerably enhanced if he had belonged to a lodge of the Freemasons or Illuminati, the standard-bearers of enlightened thought in the Habsburg Monarchy. From the founding of the first lodge in Vienna in 1742 to the 1780s,

²³ Hormayr, *Lebensbilder*, 1: 319.

²⁴ Thugut to various correspondents, 1802–1810, Vienna, HHSA, SK, *Grosse Korrespondenz*, 447.

²⁵ *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 38: 143.

Freemasonry expanded to such an extent that a number of prominent men in governmental and intellectual circles belonged to it.²⁶ Many of the men Thugut later knew and worked with were members of lodges, including his chief agent in Germany, Count Konrad Ludwig Lehrbach, and his most trusted negotiator, Count Louis Cobenzl. Moreover, in the late 1780s Thugut served as ambassador to the court of Naples whose queen, Maria Carolina, was one of Freemasonry's most enthusiastic proponents. Nevertheless, there as yet is no explicit evidence that Thugut was a member. In a recent study, Helmut Reinalter identifies Thugut as a Freemason, based on a document listing a Thugut among the Illuminati in Vienna.²⁷ However, the name on that document is "Johann Thugut," and it is clear from other evidence in the manuscript that it refers not to our Thugut but to his brother.²⁸ After Thugut's death in 1818, the officer dispatched by Metternich to inspect Thugut's papers discovered a bundle of letters "under a Freemasonry seal" but gave no other indication that he belonged to a lodge.²⁹ One can safely say that Thugut was closely associated with men who were Freemasons and perhaps with the movement itself, but, without better documentation, one cannot prove that he was a member.

A trait of Thugut not commonly shared by other men of the Enlightenment was his fondness for Ottoman literature. Like many of the graduates of the Oriental Academy, he was fascinated by Turkish and Arabic writings and acquired over time a collection of Ottoman books and manuscripts. He liked

²⁶ For recent studies of Freemasonry in Austria see Helmut Reinalter, *Aufgeklärter Absolutismus und Revolution: Zur Geschichte des Jakobinertums und der frühdemokratischen Bestrebungen in der Habsburger Monarchie* (Vienna/Cologne, 1980); Helmut Reinalter, ed., *Der Jakobinismus in Mitteleuropa* (Innsbruck, 1977); and Leslie Bodi, *Tauwetter in Wien: Zur Prosa der österreichischen Aufklärung, 1781–1795* (Frankfurt, 1977).

²⁷ Helmut Reinalter, "Aufklärung, Freimaurerei, und Jakobinertum in der Habsburger-Monarchie," in Reinalter, ed., *Jakobinismus*, 259.

²⁸ Vienna, HHSA, SK, *Vertrauliche Akten*, 38, folio 61.

²⁹ Brettfeld to Metternich, June 1, 1818, *ibid.*, SK, *Grosse Korrespondenz*, 447.

to quote Ottoman aphorisms and sayings, especially to his life-long friend Jenisch, to whom he could write them in the original Arabic characters. A good friend in his later days was a young man who would become the father of Middle Eastern studies in the Western world, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. Himself a graduate of the Oriental Academy and an officer attached to the Austrian embassy in Constantinople, Hammer not only corresponded with Thugut on matters of Ottoman literature and history but also purchased Ottoman books and manuscripts for him. But Hammer was apparently not particularly familiar with what material Thugut possessed. A few months after Thugut's death he noted, "In the night I realized that I had missed the auction of Thugut's oriental manuscripts; I did not know their value at all."³⁰ Upon his death Thugut's collection of Ottomania reverted to the state; the court library absorbed what it could use into its collection and sold the remainder.

Thugut's formal education with its emphasis on literature undoubtedly trained him in the important art of speaking and writing clearly and logically. His mother tongue may have been German, but, like so many eighteenth-century figures, he preferred to use French. Of his expression Hormayr wrote, "His manner of speaking was precise but not unpleasant, the oral as well as written language academically correct, consistent, clear, exact." His intellect was "surprisingly learned, never frivolous, never petty or inspired by arrogance; pure and complete reasoning, as prudent as it was thorough, without decoration; the words he used, however, were full of caustic wit and not without teasing."³¹ When telling a friend what should be included in memoranda and dispatches, Metternich noted, "There is in writing a certain confusion, I feel, that cannot be fully clear to the reader. So I follow the advice of an old, experienced practitioner, Baron Thugut, who once taught me that in such situations I should not try to find new and differ-

³⁰ Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, 1774-1852 (Vienna/Leipzig, 1940), 249.

³¹ Hormayr, *Lebensbilder*, 1: 319.

ent ways to present my ideas or to argue from a new direction, but instead to concentrate solely on doing away with what is superfluous and address the rest to the topic squarely and surely. And so I do it.”³² Thugut’s letters and instructions are generally direct and concise, and his wit is certainly caustic. His handwriting is tiny and, while not the clearest, easy to read.

His formal schooling over, in September 1755 Thugut left the Oriental Academy for his first official assignment as “border translator” (*Grenzdolmetsch*) at the fortress of Esseg (Osijek) on the Drava (Drau) River in Slavonia. Esseg was the post near the Habsburg-Ottoman border that monitored affairs in northern Bosnia. As *Grenzdolmetsch* Thugut translated for the Austrian military officers, customs officials, and plague watchers who had to deal with border incidents, commercial traffic, and travelers in the area. Unfortunately, we have no writings of Thugut from this period and can only wonder how he viewed leaving the vibrant capital city for a remote border outpost. Whatever his thoughts, he did become familiar with an area and people unlike any he had seen before, and he got the opportunity to practice the profession for which he had been trained.

His tour in Esseg lasted until December 1757, when his old headmaster at the Oriental Academy recommended that he be sent to Constantinople because he was “the best in the first class.”³³ Granted a salary of a thousand gulden, he set out for the Ottoman capital, the first graduate of the academy assigned there. By 1758, the Ottoman Empire had passed the zenith of its power. Since the catastrophic defeat of its armies at the gates of Vienna in 1683, Turkey had been in a state of certain, if spasmodic, decline. At the time of Thugut’s arrival, that decline had slowed somewhat, in part because the Seven Years’ War in western Europe had temporarily relieved the

³² K. A. Varnhagen von Ense, *Denkwürdigkeiten und vermischte Schriften* (Leipzig, 1859), 8: 112.

³³ Josef Franz to Maria Theresa, December 1, 1757, Vienna, HHSA, SK, *Interiora*, 55.

pressure on the Ottoman Empire from the outside. Moreover, in 1758 the Ottomans were enjoying the administration of one of the few grand viziers of the eighteenth century who truly understood the growing weakness of the empire and who tried to remedy it. He was Koca Mehmet Ragip Pasha, a scholarly and able man who believed that Turkey could be revived only by staying out of the bloody wars that engulfed western Europe and by introducing internal reforms that would promote the welfare, loyalty, and prosperity of the entire population. To that end his government introduced revised codes of justice, restricted the powers of landlords to exploit their peasants, tried to balance the budget, and began the construction of libraries and mosques. After his death in 1763, these reforms, like many earlier and later ones, were abandoned, and the Ottoman Empire resumed its decline. But at least Thugut was there to observe a brief attempt at Ottoman recovery.

And observe he did, for that was his principal assignment during his first stay in Constantinople. Thugut was not thrust into a translator's role immediately, for he was considered too inexperienced for any task of consequence. Instead, he continued his study of Ottoman language, literature, and history, now augmented by journeys through the city during which he was to absorb as much of the civilization of the streets as he could. A mark of distinction first among the *Sprachknaben* and later among graduates of the Oriental Academy in Constantinople was the wearing of Turkish dress (the long robes of a scholar) within the Austrian embassy in the suburb of Pera as well as in the streets of the Moslem city. The distinction was not bestowed, however, until the young man was regarded as fluent in the Ottoman language.³⁴ It is likely but not certain that Thugut enjoyed this honor during his first tour of duty.

Thugut remained in Constantinople only briefly on this first assignment, but in 1762, following a stint as translator in Transylvania, he returned to the Ottoman capital, this time in the company of one of the truly skillful Austrian envoys to the

³⁴ Hammer, *Erinnerungen*, 38.

Ottoman Empire, Heinrich Christoph Penkler. In 1762 Penkler was the old Turkish hand of the Habsburg foreign service. A *Sprachkñabe* in his youth, he had held a number of posts as translator and adviser until 1741, when he became "resident"—the common eighteenth-century title of the official Austrian representative at the Sublime Porte, the Ottoman governmental establishment—in Constantinople. Penkler possessed not only a superb knowledge of the Ottoman language and of Ottoman practices, but also the rare ability to become close friends with Turkish officials. He had used these talents to influence the Porte to remain neutral during the long War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and to maintain friendly relations between Constantinople and Vienna until his retirement in 1755.

In 1762 Penkler was pressed back into service by Maria Theresa and Kaunitz, who perceived serious trouble arising between Austria and the Ottoman Empire. Since the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756, Frederick the Great of Prussia had been soliciting Ottoman aid in his struggle against the Habsburg Monarchy. Although Penkler's able successor, Josef Peter von Schwachheim, had repeatedly assured Vienna that Ragip Pasha had no intention of joining the war against Austria, the resident had never completely convinced his superiors. In 1762 a combination of circumstances eroded what confidence Vienna still retained. In 1760 and 1761 Prussian military fortunes had sunk to a low ebb, and Frederick had intensified his efforts to convince Turkey to enter the war on Prussia's side. Lured by bribes of all kinds (including Nürnberg dolls for the women of the harems of the sultan and his important officials), the Porte finally consented to a treaty of friendship and commerce with Berlin in April 1761. But Frederick wanted more; in March 1762 his envoy proposed a full treaty of alliance to the grand vizier. Such offers had been made before, but Vienna found this one by far the most threatening. In January 1762 Austria's stalwart ally, Empress Elizabeth of Russia, had died, leaving the throne to her notoriously Prussophile nephew, Peter III. The possibility that Russia

would abandon Austria and ally with Prussia was alarming; if the Ottomans also joined the alliance, it would place the Habsburgs in a dangerous, if not hopeless, position. Kaunitz and Maria Theresa wanted desperately to reassess the likelihood of Prussian success in Constantinople.³⁵

In answer to the growing concerns expressed by Vienna, Schwachheim insisted that there was not the slightest evidence of Turkish preparations for war against Austria or anyone else. No supply depots had been established, no ships built, no unusual recruitment taking place. The Porte could not make war at this time even if it wanted to.³⁶ But Kaunitz was unconvinced. Hence he dispatched to the Turkish capital the veteran Penkler and, as *wirklicher dritter Dolmetsch*—ordinary third translator—Franz Maria Thugut, now on his second trip to Constantinople.

Penkler's job was to find out if Schwachheim's confidence was justified. Upon his arrival, he set out to check all of the known sources in order to make the most accurate judgment possible of Turkish intentions. After completing the investigation, Penkler notified Kaunitz that Schwachheim had been exactly right. To underscore his point, Penkler informed the chancellor that he had not even used the large sums of bribe money provided him to obtain his information because his sources all believed it to be common knowledge. Kaunitz could be assured, Penkler concluded, that Turkey would not enter the war.³⁷ He was correct, and within a year Austria and Prussia themselves negotiated peace, as much because of mutual exhaustion as any other factor.

On this second trip to the Ottoman capital, Thugut was no longer a novice. Instead of simply receiving more training, he served this time in the traditional capacity of translators: running messages to and from the Austrian embassy, providing oral translating services for lesser Habsburg officers or civil-

³⁵ Kaunitz to Schwachheim, April 6, 1762, Vienna, HHSA, SK, *Türkei*, 2: 40.

³⁶ Schwachheim to Kaunitz, May 1, 1762, *ibid.*, 38.

³⁷ Penkler to Kaunitz, September 15, 1762, *ibid.*, 39.



Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg
(Courtesy Bildarchiv, Austrian National Library)

ians, purchasing supplies and goods for the embassy, and, most important of all, copying and translating documents. This last job was the most time-consuming, especially for a *wirklicher dritter Dolmetsch*. And it benefitted Thugut the most, for as he did his work he was improving and refining his language skills and slowly but surely learning the trade of the diplomat, a trade he would practice most of his life.

Shortly after Penkler's mission ended, Thugut was recalled to Vienna, this time to work at the very center of Austrian might, the chancellery, where the great Kaunitz himself held sway. He was appointed assistant to the official translator of the Ottoman language, Anton Seleskowitz, but in an administrative reform of the foreign affairs section of the chancellery in 1766 he was also assigned the post of court secretary. The purpose of the joint appointment was to give the translators more to do. Their tasks had been to translate documents to and from the Ottoman Empire or the Habsburg-Ottoman borders and to serve as guides and translators whenever Ottoman officials were received in Vienna. When no such services were required, the translators remained largely idle. By assigning secretarial status to both the official translator and his assistant, Kaunitz could employ them in routine office tasks during slack periods.³⁸ But Thugut's appointment was not simply an accidental result of the reform alone. Kaunitz selected Thugut specifically because he possessed "not only various languages but good knowledge and talent."³⁹

Just as his assignments in Constantinople had given him insight into the duties and practices of a diplomat at a foreign court, so too his appointment as court secretary gave him ex-

³⁸ Johann Josef Khevenhüller-Metsch, *Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias* (Vienna, 1917), 6: 450-57.

³⁹ Quoted in Alfred von Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresia's* (Vienna, 1876), 7: 316. The promotion of Thugut the commoner to the office of court secretary offers evidence for Grete Klingenstein's argument that Kaunitz tried to make the chancellery a professional service. See Grete Klingenstein, "Institutionelle Aspekte der österreichischen Aussenpolitik im 18. Jahrhundert," in Erich Zöllner, ed., *Diplomatie und Aussenpolitik Österreichs* (Vienna, 1977), 74-93.

perience in the day-to-day operations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, he was able to observe the great Kaunitz in action and to meet some of the men with whom he would be closely associated later on.⁴⁰ In the long run, however, his most important experience was to break from the confines of Ottoman affairs and to learn more about Habsburg relations with the rest of the world. He now summarized, transcribed, and edited documents relating to the greater and lesser powers of Europe. Still an Ottoman specialist, he nonetheless was gaining a deeper awareness of the overall concerns of Habsburg foreign policy.

In 1768 his area of specialty leaped again to the forefront of Vienna's concerns. The trouble this time had begun farther north, in Poland. The death of King Augustus III in 1763 had led to the election as king of that country Stanislaus Poniatowski, member of the powerful Czartoryski family but, of greater importance, lover and protégé of Catherine II of Russia. One assumed that, with Russia as its master, Poland would now become a peaceful if not necessarily contented place. The opposite occurred. A crisis within Poland between the Roman Catholic majority and the Protestant and Orthodox minorities led in 1767 to armed intervention by the Russians on behalf of the minorities and in 1768 to an uprising among the Poles against that intervention. Within a short time, practically all of Poland was beset by conflict.

Habsburg policy in the face of this situation was to remain uninvolved. Kaunitz was not enthusiastic about Russian domination of Poland, but he certainly had no intention of actively opposing it. His chief concern was that Turkey might do so. Since the 1740s, the Sublime Porte had viewed Russia as its most dangerous foe and had looked upon the growth of Russian influence in Poland as particularly threatening to the Ottoman Empire. Polish resistance seemed to many of the sultan's advisers an opportunity to drive the Russians out of

⁴⁰ A fellow young secretary at the time was Anton Spielmann, whose policies Thugut would first criticize and then overturn in 1793.