

Austria and Europe 1789-1866

Field Marshal Radetzky and his Time

(1848 - 1866)

In 1848, the outbreak of revolution once again seemed to form the prelude to the disintegration of the Austrian Empire. The Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont took the revolutionary events in Lombardy and in Venetia as an opportunity to declare war on Austria. In Hungary, revolutionary and national forces formed and began to march towards Vienna. Only after deploying all available military forces was it possible to put down the revolution and conduct war on two fronts. The engagement thereby sometimes took on the characteristics of a blitzkrieg. Field Marshal Radetzky, the supreme commander in the area, defeated the Sardinian-Piedmontese army in a number of skirmishes and battles, and called a truce which was renounced by Sardinia in 1849.

Once again Radetzky achieved victories at Mortara and Novara, which brought about peace at least for a few years. Yet Hungary was different. Fighting there dragged on all winter and most of the year 1849 and could only be stopped through the cooperation of Austrian troops with a Russian contingent. On 2 December, 1848, Emperor Ferdinand I abdicated the throne in favour of his nephew, Francis Joseph. Thus began the Francisco-Josephinian era, which lasted for 68 years.

After the victories in Italy and Hungary, the young Emperor strove to consolidate the empire again, and to establish a strong, centralized government. Francis Joseph tried to continue using the Austrian army as an instrument to maintain or restore order in Europe.

In 1864, Austria and Prussia combined to go to war against Denmark. The conflict was about the two German-speaking principalities of Schleswig and Holstein, both of which were under Danish administration. The victors of this war, Austria and Prussia, quarreled over the two territories. On 8 April, 1866, Prussia formed a league against Austria with the Kingdom of Italy. Under the command of Archduke Albrecht, the southern army of the Austrians was victorious near Custoza (south of lake Garda) on 24 June, 1866. But the war was decided in the north. The Austrian Army under Feldzeugmeister Ludwig von Benedek suffered a devastating defeat near Königgrätz (Hradec Králové, east of Prague) on 3 July. The Peace Treaty of Prague pushed the Austrian Empire out of the German Confederation for good. It kept only its positions in the eastern part of central Europe and in south-eastern Europe.

Radetzky Hall, showcases and freely placed objects

Left of the entrance the Actors of the Revolution section: busts of Field Marshals Prince Alfred of Windischgrätz, Baron Joseph of Jelacic, and Count Joseph Wenzel Radetzky.

Showcase 1 on Windischgrätz, Jelacic, Radetzky: exhibits pertaining to the three Commanders.

Wall behind: paintings depicting events of the Revolution of 1848/49 in Hungary.

Showcase 2 on Hungary: tunics, headgear and decorations from the fighting in Hungary in 1848.

Wall behind: Paintings depicting events of the Revolution of 1848/49 in Italy.

Central showcase 1 on Radetzky: exhibits pertaining to Field Marshal Radetzky, including, among others, a tunic, headgear, decorations and gifts.

Central showcase 2 on Italy: exhibits relating to the revolution in Italy, including, among others, the sword and sash of Colonel Karl von Kopal, the so-called "Kopal Bugle", the honorary cup of the Austrian Army in Italy for Franz Grillparzer and Baron Joseph of Zedlitz, medals for bravery, an Italian flag.

Lateral Radetzky Room 1: exhibits pertaining to Field Marshal Radetzky, including, among others, medals, a plans cabinet, his request for retirement and a homeopathic medicine travel kit.

Wall next to it: lithographs of the imperial military training establishments.

In front: model of the front part of the Arsenal barracks.

Centre of wall: Albrecht and Francis Adam: Emperor Francis Joseph as Field Marshal.

In front four desk showcases: portraits and other photographs from the 1850s and 1860s, portraits and battlefield photographs from the campaigns of 1864 and 1866.

Opposite central wall: Franz Schrotzberg: Portrait of Empress Elisabeth.

Central showcase 3: uniform mannequins from around 1848/49.

Central showcase 4: tunics and headgear from 1848 to 1866.

Central showcase 5: evolution of arms and artillery.

Wall: polychromised plaster casts and paintings from the Campaign of 1859. Paintings from the Campaign of 1864.

Central showcase 6: exhibits from the Campaigns of 1859, 1864 and 1866, including, among others, Italian melee weapons and firearms, camp flags, Danish melee weapons and flags, photographs and photo albums and a show-piece bowl: honorary gift to Baron Ludwig of Gablenz.

Lateral chamber 2 on Maximilian: exhibits relating to Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, including, among others, helmets, shakos and rapiers for the members of the Mexican Life Guard, relief map of the Mexican theatre, Maximilian's death mask.

Wall: Václav Sochor: The Battery of the Dead.

In front: four-pounder field cannon M1863.

Central showcase 7 on Prussia: Dreyse needle rifles, photographs, newspaper clippings, appeals, Prussian reports from the theatre.

Wall behind: paintings from the Campaign of 1866.