Dual Alliance with Austria (October 7, 1879)

Abstract

Russia emerged from the Congress of Berlin (1878) resenting Germany's role in blocking its advance in the Balkans. Confronted with the possibility of choosing between Russia and Austria-Hungary, Bismarck sought to bind Austria to Germany in case of a German-Russian conflict. This task was made easier by the relatively generous peace terms Bismarck had made after the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and by Austria-Hungary's linguistic and cultural connections with Germany. The result of negotiations between Bismarck and Austria-Hungary's Secretary of State Count Julius Andrássy (1823–1890), the Dual Alliance came into effect on October 7, 1879. The defensive nature of the alliance is stressed in the treaty's preamble. Both nations guarantee to offer military support in case of a Russian attack—even if one of them is bound to Russia by another treaty. Although Bismarck overestimated the stability of the Habsburg Empire and its ability to bring Britain into the fold, this alliance was both durable and of great historical import: in July 1914, Austria-Hungary's squabble with Serbia in the Balkans grew into the First World War.

Source

Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary from October 7, 1879

Secret Treaty, Partial Publication in the *Reichs- und Staatsanzeiger* on February 3, 1888

Inasmuch as Their Majesties the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, and the German Emperor, King of Prussia, must consider it their imperative duty as monarchs to provide for the security of their empires and the peace of their subjects, under all circumstances;

inasmuch as the two sovereigns, as was the case under the former existing relations of alliance, will be enabled by the close union of the two empires to fulfil this duty more easily and more efficaciously;

inasmuch as, finally, an intimate cooperation of Germany and Austria-Hungary can menace no one, but is rather calculated to consolidate the peace of Europe as established by the stipulations of Berlin[1];

Their Majesties the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, and the Emperor of Germany,[2] while solemnly promising each other never to allow their purely defensive agreement to develop an aggressive tendency in any direction, have determined to conclude an alliance of peace and mutual defense.

[…][3]

Article I. Should, contrary to their hope, and against the loyal desire of the two high contracting parties, one of the two empires be attacked by Russia, the high contracting parties are bound to come to the assistance one of the other with the whole war strength of their empires, and accordingly only to conclude peace together and upon mutual agreement.[4]

[…]

NOTES

[1] The "Treaty of Berlin" (July 13, 1878) summarizing the results of the Congress of Berlin. [All footnotes adapted from Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 3rd rev. ed., vol. 2, *1851–1900*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986, p. 495.]

[2] Incorrect version of the imperial title.
[3] What follows are the names of the two negotiators: Heinrich VII, Prince Reuß (1825–1906), Prussian diplomat, envoy in Kassel (1863), Munich (1864–67), St. Petersburg (1867–76), Constantinople (1877–78), and Vienna (1878–94); and Count Julius Andrássy (1823–90), Austro-Hungarian statesman, Hungarian Minister President (1867–71), and Austro-Hungarian Secretary of State (1871–79).
[4] In a letter dated November 4, 1879, Kaiser Wilhelm I already conveyed the private communication of the treaty to Czar Alexander II (1818–81).

Source of English translation: *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary, 1879–1914*, vol. 1, edited by Alfred Franzis Pribam and Archibald Cary Coolidge, translated by Denys P. Myers and J. G. D'Arcy Paul. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920, pp. 25ff. Available online at: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015012309251&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021. Reprinted in Theodore S. Hamerow, ed., *The Age of Bismarck: Documents and Interpretations*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973, pp. 272–75.

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