Presentation of the Emperor's Gifts to Andreas Hofer at the Hofburg in Innsbruck (19th Century)

Abstract

In 1805, after being defeated by Napoleonic France, Austria was forced to cede the province of Tyrol to France's ally, Bavaria. In keeping with the Tyrolean population's pro-Habsburg, anti-revolutionary disposition and its objection to Bavarian rule, groups of volunteers led by innkeeper Andreas Hofer (1767-1810) took up arms and fought French, Saxon, Thuringian, and Bavarian troops in the rugged terrain of the Tyrolean Alps. Hofer's forces defeated the Bavarians at Bergisel in May 1809, forcing the occupational force to withdraw. But despite this victory and promises of aid from Austrian Emperor Francis II, Hofer's movement was left at the mercy of France at the Armistice of Znaim (May 12, 1809). The province was subsequently occupied by a force of 40,000 French and Bavarian troops. Still, Hofer continued the struggle, beating the French and Bavarians once again at Bergisel in August of that year. But Austria's renewed war with France ended in defeat, and the Peace of Schönbrunn (October 14, 1809) forced Austria to cede Tyrol to Bavaria once again. Hofer retreated into the mountains to rally his followers but was betrayed, captured, and executed by firing squad at Mantua on February 20, 1810. A central figure in the Tyrolean war of liberation, Hofer became the subject of numerous literary and artistic works. In the scene depicted here, Hofer (seated, with beard) receives gifts from the emperor at the Imperial Palace in Innsbruck on September 20, 1809. Hofer embodied the traditionalist-monarchist world-view, which easily transformed itself into conservative-monarchist nationalism in the course of the nineteenth century.

Source

Source: Engraving by Ferdinand Schirnböck after a painting by Franz von Defregger, 19th century.

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