

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROAD TO THE GREAT EUROPEAN CIVIL WAR, CALLED "FIRST WORLD WAR"

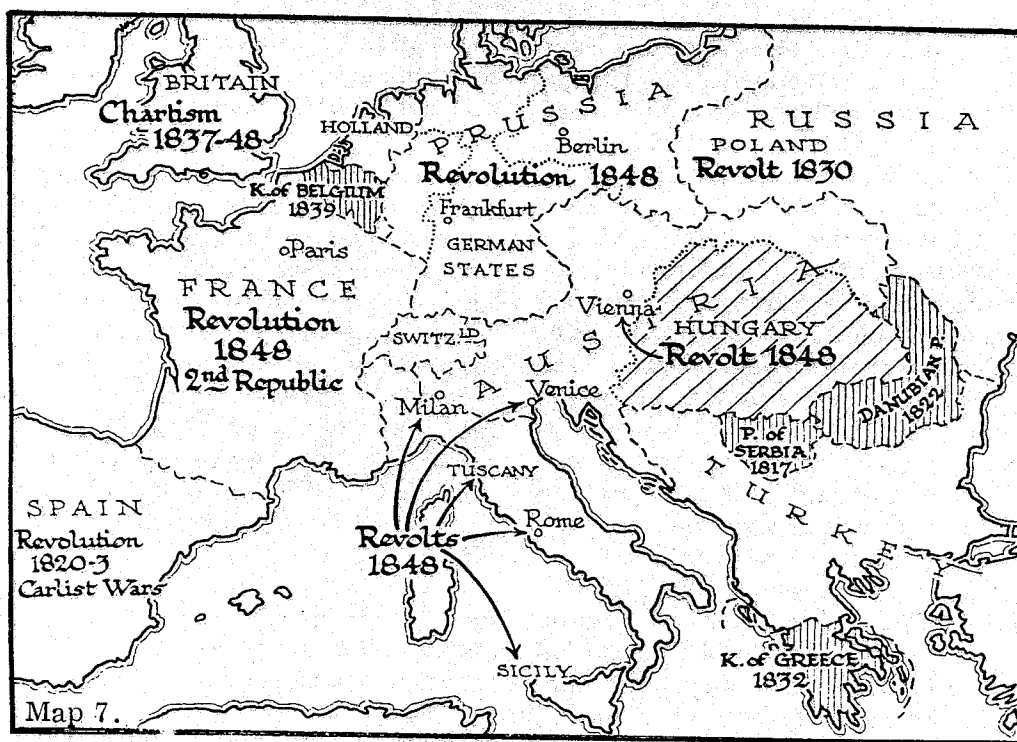
Revolutions

The 19th Century may be called the Century of Revolutions — upheavals which paved the road to the World Wars and global changes of the 20th century.

The "Marchland" of Central Europe was particularly affected by this phenomenon of "preparation and change". The middle of the century witnessed here fresh waves of liberal revolutions which interpreted the ideals of political revolution by laying emphasis on national aspirations and the establishment of national parliamentary governments. The model was the independent nation-state. In Hungary this was envisaged under the moderate rule of the constitutional monarchy. In Poland, which as a state

did not exist at that time, these expectations fomented the unsuccessful revolutions of 1830, 1846 and 1863. The great year of revolutions in the other states was 1848.

The bloodless Hungarian revolution of March 1848 was apparently successful: the Emperor granted Hungary a new, liberal constitution and a responsible ministry was formed in Buda-Pest. However, the Vienna "Camarilla", (the conservative rulers of the Austrian empire) sought to nullify the imperial assent and roused the nationalities against the Hungarian government. These ethnic minorities of Hungary were the descendants of the immigrants and refugees who had fled their original Turkish or



Russian dominated homelands for political or social reasons and had sought (and received) asylum in hospitable Hungary. Confused by the half-understood ideas of the French Revolution, these nationalities were easily manipulated by Vienna, especially the Rumanians and Serbs, former refugees from Turkish-dominated Balkan lands. The Vienna Cabinet declared the March constitution null and void and replaced the ageing emperor by young Francis Joseph, a ready tool in their hands. The Hungarians decided to defend their constitutional freedom and for one year withstood the concentrated assaults of the Austrian imperial forces and the nationalities. Eventually, the new emperor appealed to the Russian Czar for help who — mindful of the threats of revolution in his own empire — dispatched his elite troops which then crushed the stubborn Hungarian resistance.

After a twenty-year period of revenge and oppression, an agreement was reached between the Monarch and the Hungarian nation (the "Compromise" of 1867) which re-established the dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary on the basis of equality of the

two nations under one (Habsburg) ruler. The Monarchy thus constituted proved a very successful economic unit and a guardian of peace in the region until the coming of World War I.

Nationalism as a destructive force

Among the forces of history, nationalism could become the most effective and most important vehicle of political manipulations. This dynamic force has indeed been used — especially since the 19th century — to erode the loyalty of large groups of subjects — nationalities — against monarchs and governments, especially within the multinational state-structures of Central and Eastern Europe, causing the fragmentation of these comprehensive systems.

The effects of nationalism on state-structures were different in various regions of Europe. In the west, nationalism strengthened the large state-units into centralised states, whereas in the East the result was just the opposite: nationalism greatly contributed to the dissolution of the existing state-structures.

Today Western Europe lives in a period of post-nationalism, in a climate of continental cooperation and healthy interaction among well-defined nationalistic states. In the eastern part of Europe however the present situation is not the product of organic economical and political developments and mutual interaction but the result of planned systematic destruction of formerly existing composite state-structures. After World War II the fragments of the former federal structures were re-assembled into a new, monolithic state-structure, the Soviet-dominated satellite bloc.

This triumph of Russian nationalism had been prepared to a great extent — by the movement known as Panslavism.

Panslavism as an empire-building force

The 19th century was not only a period of political revolutions but it also brought forth the second phase of the 18th century industrial revolution, by reducing the economic disparity between the maritime states and the mainland countries of Europe. With the advent of train transport the interior of Europe, hitherto handicapped by lack of access to sea-transport, progressed dramatically. This aroused the jealousy of

the maritime powers and created their alliance with the Panslav movement in Eastern Europe against the so-called Central Powers of the continent's interior.

The Panslav movement operated in two main channels: the Russian, or Eastern Panslavism and the Western Panslavism.

The main centre of Western Panslavism was Bohemia, the land of the Czechs, part of the Habsburg Estate, before the First World War. The sacred duty of the Czech Tomas Masaryk and Eduard Benes was to organize Panslav actions within the Monarchy's Slav populations, and at the same time to create sympathy among the Western Powers for the establishment of independent Slav states in Central Europe, a purely nationalistic aim.

Panslav nationalism discarded any solution, other than the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. The heir to the Austrian throne, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, promoted a plan to convert the dualist (Austrian-Hungarian) state into a trialist one (Austria+Hungary+Slavs) with a constitutional government. The response to his friendly but naive approach was the assassination of the Archduke and his wife in 1914 by Serb (Panslav) terrorists.

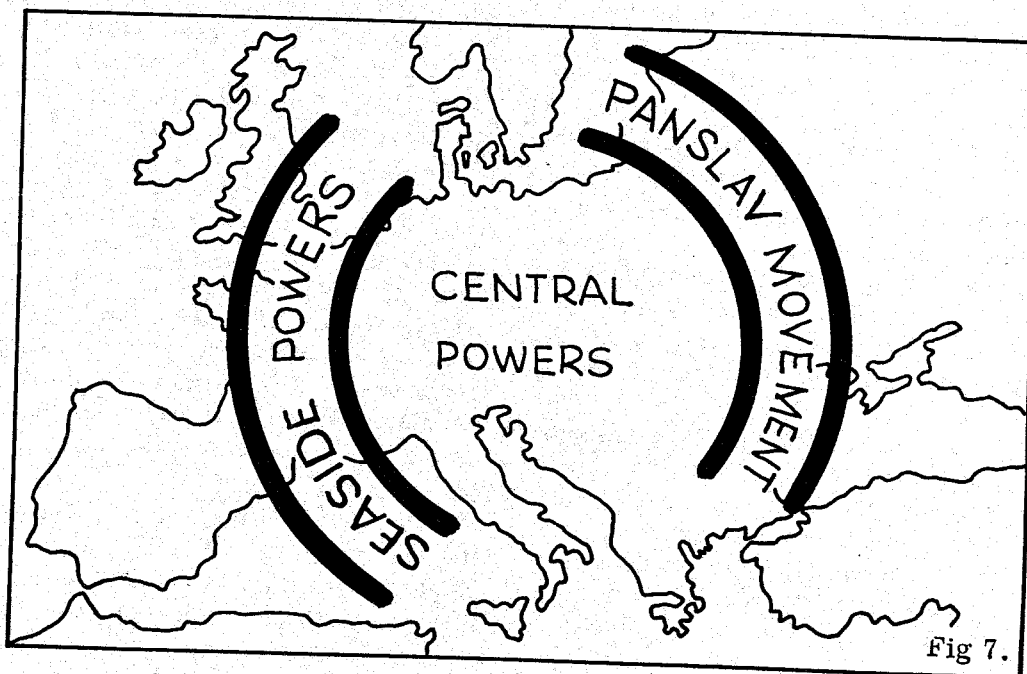


Fig 7.