

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter deals with the First World War, and a separate war against Hungary. These events are fairly well known and commented. For the purpose of this summary some reflections are appropriate and a selected list of quotations by noted historians will serve the purpose the best.

THE WAR

"The Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy was created in order to avert the threatening danger of Pan-Slavism, the menace of Russia. For Hungary, this alliance was a purely defensive measure and no expansion of territory was contemplated. This policy was a natural continuation of a many centuries old tradition in Hungarian history: an alliance with the West against invasions coming from the East. The outbreak of the Great War gave sufficient proof that the preventive measures had not been taken against a mere chimaera. It is well known that the murder of Sarajevo, which gave the signal for the outbreak of the great fight was the work of Servian disciples of the great Russian Pan-Slav ideals". (1)

"The Austrian Government made it clear that it intended to take stern measures against Serbia for fomenting Francis Ferdinand's assassination. At the Crown Council, Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, desperately protested against any measures which might lead to war. . . In vain did Tisza point to the danger of Russian intervention. . ." (2)

"We must not forget that the catastrophe of Sarajevo was the seventh attempt in four years directed against the representatives of the monarchy by exalted young men. This revolutionary type united within itself, in a strange and awful way, the national idealism of a Mazzini with the violence

of a Bakunin and a nebulous ideology of Communism. Many members of this revolutionary generation studied in the West and some were in direct connection with Trotsky and the Russian emigres". (3)

"There was no longer a chance to stop the fast moving events. Russia, which considered Serbia an advanced base for its imperialistic plans, mobilized. One fateful step led to the next. The first world war broke out. . . In the era of European imperialism, when every foreign office cherished dreams that might be realized in war, Russia wanted Constantinople, and Serbia and Rumania schemed to gain huge slices of the Monarchy. Hungary alone did not want to enlarge its territory". (4)

"On the initiative of Charles IV, the last emperor-king of the Dual Monarchy, the Central Powers (Germany, the Monarchy, Bulgaria and Turkey) sent the Allied (Entente) powers a detailed peace offer in December 1916, suggesting the restoration of the 1914 status quo. The Entente rejected the offer, insisting on the "liberation of the Slav and Rumanian minorities". This rejection (costing another two years of war and another ten million dead) was the result of the successful propaganda campaign conducted by Czech intellectuals (Masaryk, Benes) and their Rumanian, Serb and other emigre colleagues in France and Britain. They managed to convince the Western Allies that the creation of Slav and Rumanian national states would stop German and Russian expansion in Central Europe. Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, pointed out to the U.S. Ambassador that the breaking up of the Monarchy would result in the creation of several weak, multi-national states unable to resist imperialist pressure. (We know today who was right...)" (2)

"Two weeks after America's entry into the war, on April 18, 1917, a Rumanian delegation headed by Vasile Lucacius left for Washington. During their trip through

Russia, they stopped at the Darnitza prisoner-of-war camp and asked the leaders of the Rumanian captives to issue a proclamation in which they demanded the unification of Transylvania with their occupied homeland. The declaration was printed later in American newspapers, copies of which were dropped by American airplanes over the trenches of the Austro-Hungarian army. The members of the delegation organized mass meetings in Washington, Cleveland, New York and other cities, issued the bilingual periodical "ROMANIA", and cooperated with Masaryk and with leaders of other Slav organizations in the United States. The Rumanian campaign was successful. Following the cabinet meeting of November 4, 1918, Secretary of State Lansing issued a declaration promising support for Rumanian political and territorial rights at the Peace Conference. . . A National Committee of Rumanian Unity was formed in Paris on October 3, under the chairmanship of Take Jonescu. Similar organizations were set up in England and Italy. The Unity Committee was officially recognized by the Allied governments during the period of October 12 — November 22, and Rumanian aspirations got the backing of the leading Entente powers." (5)

"The Germans came very near to victory and establishment of an imperial basis reaching from the English Channel to the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf. Between 1916 and 1918 Germany, and not Russia, controlled directly or indirectly all Slav lands with the sole exception of the Great Russian homeland — the whole of Poland, most of the Ukraine, the Austro-Hungarian Slavs, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria."(6)

"One should not lose from sight the astonishing fact that at no time during the war did Austria-Hungary show signs of breaking up from inside, as its enemies had hoped: on the contrary, its various ethnic groups remained on the whole perfectly loyal, a large majority fighting gallantly under the common flag, despite all allied, and particularly Russian appeals to desertion... Up till the beginning of 1918, neither President Wilson, nor the Allied and Associated Po-

wers as such had yet officially proclaimed their intention to carve up Austria-Hungary. In the end, of course, Wilson's famous 14 points and the ethnic principle became a more than precious tool in the hands of the Allied and associated Powers with which to obtain the moral disarmament of the Central Empires". (7)

"The about-turn of Allied policy in favor of breaking up the entire pattern of Danubian Europe took place only in the spring of 1918, when the French Premier Georges Clémenceau revealed his secret negotiations with Vienna: a fact which compelled Austria-Hungary to sever all contacts with the Allies and the Emperor-King Charles to humble himself into making amends at the German General Staff Headquarters in Spa... The intention was to bring about the collapse of the Dual Monarchy, at a very critical moment for the Western Allies, by promising national independence to its peoples... Only six months before the end of the first world war, under the threat of a military defeat and much against its grain did the Entente accept the idea of carving up the Monarchy". (8)

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Wartime diplomacy is always short sighted: any immediate measure of tactical value is adopted, irrespective of its consequences. War propaganda is not based on truth, it is based on interest.

Western Europe, and to that extent America, learned their first lessons about Central Europe from the mushrooming propagandists of the Slav cause. These propagandists offered everything the Western Allies wanted: to bring about the collapse of the Monarchy on the ethnic minority issue, to build up a barrier against German expansion in Central Europe, and to establish democratic states.

The structure of decision-making in wartime is different from that of peace-time. Speed makes it necessary to put the decision into the hands of one man or very few men, not necessarily wise statesmen.

And this was exactly the situation with the decision making in regards to the sug-



FRONT LINES OF WAR 1914-1918

gestion of Masaryk and his fellow propagandists: the idea of the dissolution of the Monarchy in general and the dissolution of historical Hungary in particular.

When Emperor-king Charles made a last attempt for separate peace by sending Prince Lajos Windischgraets to Switzerland to negotiate with the diplomatic representatives of France, Great Britain and the United States of America, a French note was handed to him:

"... In view of the fact that the peoples of the hitherto Austro-Hungarian Monarchy have resolved on the dissolution of the Danubian State, the Government of the Republic of France regards itself as being in no position to continue negotiations with the Government of His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty"...

The text of the British and American notes were identical.

Thus, the governments of the Western Allies declared that there was no such state as Austria-Hungary. Instead they gave recognition to those emigré groups Czech,

Serbo-Croat and Rumanian National Committees as quasi-governments of would-be countries or states.

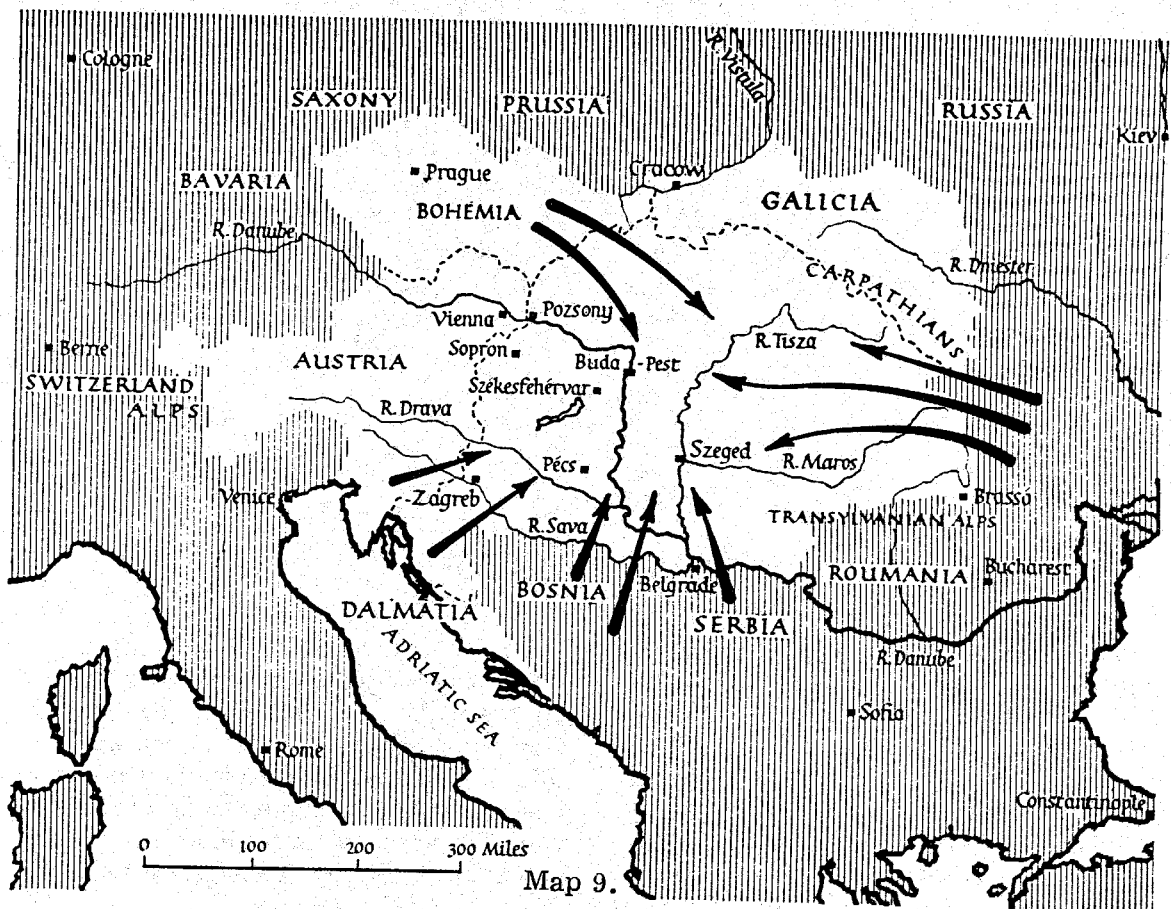
"These National Committees managed to be the only "experts" on the problems of the Monarchy, they were successful in making an impression on the public opinion and governments of the Allied Powers. Their nationalistic aspirations were presented in a form which seemed to suit the political interests and way of thinking of the Western Powers. This was served, primarily, by the argument that only through the fulfilment of these very aspirations could democracy be established in Carpathian Europe. Simplified, this sound rather naive now, i.e. while the nationalism of certain people is, a priori, in its very nature, "democratic", another nationalism, that of the Hungarians, for instance, was, a priori, "feudal". But those English experts who for a number of years had looked upon the social problems of Carpathian Europe from a certain angle, were of the opinion that their task was an easy one, namely that of choosing between good and evil." (4)

THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

"The Austro-Hungarian Supreme Command successfully conducted an Armistice in Padua on November 3, 1918, with Italian General Diaz as representative of the Entente Powers. Terms of this armistice defined a line of occupation only on the west, leaving the existing political frontiers of the country untouched in any other part." (4)

"On November 2, 1918, the eve of the Padua Armistice, Count Michael Károlyi (the notorious franco- and anglophile, and leader of the wartime opposition, a pacifist radical and immensely rich grandseigneur, who grabbed leadership in the confusion of defeat and invasion) with inexcusable ingenuousness and full of illusions concerning Allied good intentions towards Hungary,

issued the following proclamation addressed "to the peoples of the world" : — The Hungarian people have just achieved their peaceful, victorious revolution. They have broken the yoke which had enslaved them for centuries. Hungary now is a democratic and totally independent country. The Hungarian people energetically refuse to accept any responsibility whatever for the world war. Listening only to the voice of their conscience they lay down arms and call for peace. By acceding to the League of Nations they declare the fraternal equality of the peoples inhabiting Hungary. At this solemn moment let it be recalled that Hungary has a thousand-years-old history, it having been for centuries the bulwark of Europe and its civilization. The Hungarian people confidently believe that they may



The unshaded area shows the extent of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Arrows indicate the armed attacks against Hungary after the armistice.

entrust the existence and territorial integrity of their country to the sense of justice of all the free nations of the world. —

“The gravest error on the part of Károlyi and his team had been the honest but extremely stupid belief that one could renounce the use of force either in international or in domestic governmental politics. Without even waiting for the outcome of the armistice negotiations with General Diaz, the plenipotentiary of the Allies, the Minister for War of Károlyi’s Government ordered all Hungarian troops, on November 1, to lay down arms “on the basis of President Wilson’s terms — disarmament, League of Nations, international arbitration.”

”Let it be underlined, that with the Padua Armistice, Hungary left the first world war in the fullness of its territorial integrity — by that date not one enemy soldier had yet set foot on its soil. Unfortunately Károlyi assumed, wrongly, that the Allies’ signature constituted a sufficient guarantee for Hungary. Hence, through his War Minister, Béla Linder, he made the fatal mistake of thoughtlessly disbanding the then still intact Hungarian army, thus leaving the country defenceless overnight, exposed to the greed of its neighbours.” (7)

Thus a new war started after the Great War, a war against Hungary, by Rumania,

and two non-existent, only planned “nations”, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. All of them of course “democratic”, and their invading forces obtained the status of victorious Allied Forces, under the protection of General Franchet d’Espérey of the South-eastern Allied Forces.

This war after the war was full of tragic events, including 133 days of bolshevik terror, Rumanian occupation of Budapest, looting of the whole country and occupation of two-thirds of the thousand year old Hungary.

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- (1) Hungary, Rotary International, Budapest, 1931.
 - (2) Z. Bodolai: The Timeless Nation, Sydney 1977.
 - (3) O. Jászi: The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1929.
 - (4) S.B. Várdy: History of the Hungarian Nation, U.S.A. 1969.
 - (5) S. Szilassy: Revolutionary Hungary 1918—1921, U.S.A. 1971.
 - (6) Hans Kohn: Pan-Slavism, its History and Ideology, U.S.A. 1960.
 - (7) Yves de Daruvar: The Tragic Fate of Hungary, Paris, 1970.
 - (8) J. Lukaszewski: L’ Historiographie de l’ Autriche—Hongrie, Paris, 1968.