

CHAPTER I

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE PROBLEM

Rudolf Kjellén, looking back on the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy, wrote the following conclusion :

A Great Power can endure without difficulty one Ireland, as England did, even three, as imperial Germany did (Poland, Alsace, Schleswig). Different is the case when a Great Power is composed of nothing else but Irelands, as was almost the history of Austro-Hungary.

This remark points without doubt to the immediate cause of the collapse of the empire, but we should not regard this process as an unavoidable historical necessity. As a matter of fact the monarchy has been surrounded with countries, the peoples of which were closely related in blood and language with the nations of the monarchy. Therefore all these peoples exercised an inevitable attraction on each other.¹ It is evident that the attraction of Germany for the Germans of Austria, that of Russia for the northern Slavs of the monarchy, that of the Serb kingdom for the Jugo-Slavs, that of Rumania for the Rumanians of Transylvania, that of Italy for the Italian settlements of the monarchy, aggravated the internal political situation, but from this fact we are not at all entitled to draw the conclusion that all these so-called irredentistic movements had the same significance or that the dissolution of the monarchy was unavoidable under the pressure of these forces.

If we analyze the irredentistic problems of the Dual Monarchy more carefully, we shall see that among them there was only one which could be regarded as insolvable in its essence: the Italian; whereas the solution of all the others was not at all a sociological or historical impossibility. On the contrary the key to the situation was in the hands of the monarchy and if it had seized the possibilities at the right time and if it had followed consequently a prudent policy for the satisfaction of the national interests of its peoples, the fate of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy would have taken an entirely different turn. Of course, I know that the adherents of a rigid mechanical determinism regard all discussions concerning a historical *fait accompli* as sterile and ridicule the question of whether a given, already accomplished, historical process could have taken a different turn, whether better and more fertile

¹ Perhaps in no country in the world was the connection between the inner and the foreign policy of the state so intimate and full of dangers as in the former Habsburg monarchy. On the theoretical foundation of this connection excellent remarks may be found in the book of Rudolf Goldscheid, *Das Verhältnis der Äussern Politik zur Innern* (Wien, 1914).

results could have been achieved by a more prudent and fair policy. Opposed to this materialistic point of view, I accept the theory of Renouvier, of the reversibility of the historical process, and regard the chief utility of all historical and sociological investigations to be to admonish us of the alternative possibilities of history.

Regarding the Habsburg drama from this point of view, we may note two opposite policies in dealing with the problems of the monarchy. One policy was represented by Eugene of Savoy, the great war lord and statesman, the benignant French genius of the monarchy, who clearly visualized as its chief task the expansion of Western culture and civilization toward the Balkans and the East, in territories in a backward state because of Turkish occupation. In order to attain this aim he urged at the peace negotiations of Passarović in 1718 the annexation of the liberated territories, especially parts of Bosnia and Serbia, Wallachia and Moldavia, to the monarchy. At a time when the national consciousness of these territories was almost entirely dormant and when the most elementary conditions of culture were still lacking, such an enlargement of the Habsburg empire, combined with an efficient economic and cultural policy, could have put an end to all those external complications which envenomed the history of the whole nineteenth century and could have facilitated immensely the peaceful national integration of these territories. This road was not closed to the monarchy even later. The Habsburg empire in the first half of the nineteenth century was in economics and culture at least a hundred years in advance of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. If this advantage had been utilized in a prudent way, if a system of national autonomy had been established for all the nations of the monarchy, and if the empire had been gradually transformed into a system of a free confederation of peoples, the monarchy could then have developed an irresistible attraction for the related nations living outside its territory. It was not written in the book of Destiny with a fatal inevitability that the Jugo-Slavs of the monarchy must gravitate in any case toward Belgrade, nor that the Rumanians of Transylvania must tend of necessity toward the center of Bucharest; under appropriate conditions just the opposite tendency could have been operative and the Serbs in the Serb kingdom could have gravitated toward Zagreb in order to attain Jugo-Slav unity or the Rumanians of the Rumanian kingdom could have tended toward Transylvania as the Piedmont of the united Rumanian national state. Not only the powerful German and the comparatively highly developed Magyar and Czech cultures could have exercised the influence of a magnet, but there began also to develop a very propitious Croatian, Serb, and Rumanian culture in territories of the Hungarian crown which under adequate constitutional conditions would have attracted their semi-barbarous co-nationals beyond the frontiers into the orbit of the monarchy. The Hun-

garian Serb town, Novi Sad was called for a long time the "Serb Athens" and it was said that the "brain of Transylvania migrated to Bucharest and Jaši." At the same time Zagreb was a real cultural center in a period when Belgrade was scarcely more than an oriental village.

As a matter of fact the road indicated by Eugene of Savoy never disappeared completely from the consciousness of the peoples and of the abler statesmen. That was the spirit which inspired the constitution of Kremsier, the reforms of Hohenwart-Schäffle, the plans of the Czech Austro-Slavism, the revival of Illyrism in the form of Trialism, which animated the political conception of Fischhof and Eötvös and even the anti-Habsburg confederation vision of Louis Kossuth. The kernel of all these plans and visions was the idea that the complicated national problems of the monarchy and of the Balkans could only be solved on the basis of a reasonable federalism which would have secured the peaceful expansion of the Western culture toward the backward countries but at the same time also the individual development of each nation and an appropriate unification of its ethnographic settlements. On the basis of this conception the monarchy should have assumed the rôle of a protector of the Christian Balkan peoples then languishing under the Turkish yoke, the rôle of an elder brother, endeavoring to promote with action and advice the future of its weaker and oppressed brothers.

Opposed to this policy never seriously tried in the monarchy was another idea, the conception of Metternich, the policy of the *status quo* and of the stabilization which regarded the national problems exclusively from the point of view of the legitimist dynasties. From the point of view of this policy the struggles of the Balkan Christian nations for emancipation against the Turks were revolutionary upheavals against the *status quo* of the legitimist powers and they tried, therefore, to conserve the Turkish rule which became entirely corrupt and obsolete. Metternich used to say:

The Porte is like a person who became incurably sick with a chronic disease. Her maintenance is an important thing for her friends and even for strangers because her death would be harmful for their interests. . . . The great powers, especially Austria, face as advisory physicians the task of prolonging as far as possible the life of the patient, her salvation being impossible. . . .

But in reality this policy was not so innocent as portrayed by the Chancellor and Freiherr von Stein, the great Prussian statesman, was perfectly right when he said of Metternich that "he oppresses the Greek in order to hinder the Russian movement and sharpens and directs the murderous knife of the Turks."² This policy in its later de-

² Cf. Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, *op. cit.*, II, 470, 625, 684.

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velopment, in the hands of the weaker successors of the chancellor, became chiefly an instrument for the frustration of the growing efforts for Jugo-Slav unity. The system became more and more a playing off of the various Balkan nations against each other in order to avoid the unification of a Jugo-Slav state which would have menaced the fundamental thought of the Dualistic Constitution: the German-Magyar hegemony.

With the consequences of this policy we will deal later as the most fatal force which undermined the monarchy. At this juncture I would like only to emphasize that the extreme danger of this policy of the *status quo* and the cogent necessity of rebuilding the monarchy by utilizing the federative aspirations of its peoples became more and more a *communis opinio* not only in the eyes of the more objective foreign observers but also in the opinion of the more thoughtful politicians of Austria. At the beginning of the twentieth century an extensive literature arose which (however different may have been the individuality of its writers and their political tendencies) was based on the common thought that the system of the German-Magyar hegemony had become untenable, that the monarchy should be transformed in the spirit of a confederation in order to make it possible that the natural attraction between the Slavs and the Rumanians of the monarchy toward their brethren beyond the frontiers should lose its destructive character. In this manner the Habsburg monarchy, instead of becoming the Eastern and Southern bridge of the German imperialism, should have been transformed into a state organization of conciliation and separation between the Pan-German and Pan-Slav imperialistic tendencies.

Amid the tempests of the annexation crisis, when the final incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina put Europe on the verge of a world war, a Serb statesman, Stojan Protić, said with great clearness in the Parliament of Belgrade:

Between Austria-Hungary and the Balkan states peace and good neighborhood can only be established when the Danube monarchy decides to assume the rôle of an Eastern Switzerland. As long as it continues to play the rôle of a Great Power, it will be under the necessity of making new conquests in the Balkan peninsula. . . .

This opinion was corroborated from a retrospective point of view by one of the ablest diplomats of the former monarchy. Baron J. Szilassy in a courageous book has demonstrated that the annexation policy of Aehrenthal was the most fatal blow to the monarchy and that the system of dualism made the peaceful solution of its problems impossible. In this connection he made the following profound remark:

It should not be forgotten that if instead of the Dual System there had existed a large Danube Federation, several of the national Irredentas could have been appeased inside of its frontiers. I am thinking chiefly of the

Jugo-Slavs. Some of their distinguished statesmen have preconized this solution. . . . A well balanced federation would have created harmony, as history has shown in many examples. . . . This Danube Federation . . . would not have been forced to make a common cause with the German Empire, not yet satiated. . . . Rather it would have every reason to seek a close connection with the Western Powers, interested chiefly in the maintenance of their possessions. . . . Western Europe would have every interest in protecting this liberal federation against eventual desires for expansion of Russia or Germany. . . .³

But none of the active German or Hungarian statesmen of the monarchy visualized the gravity of the existing situation, with the only exception of Count Michael Károlyi, then leader of the Independent Party, who made a last effort to regalvanize the policy of Kossuth for a Danube Federation. For this scope he advocated universal suffrage and dismemberment of the *latifundia* in the internal policy and a rapprochement toward France and the Slavs in the external policy by terminating the Dualistic Constitution. Guided by these principles he went to Paris in 1913 and discussed the possibilities of such a new orientation with Messrs. Poincaré and Clemenceau. This latter remarked that the idea was excellent, but it came too late because Austro-Hungary was already too much engaged in the opposite direction.⁴

³ *Der Untergang der Donau-Monarchie* (Bern, 1921), pp. 40-42.

⁴ *Fighting the World*, pp. 78-80.

CHAPTER II

THE PSEUDO-IRREDENTAS

A. THE GERMAN SEPARATISM

If we regard more carefully the so-called irredentistic problems of the monarchy, we find that among them the German, the Czech, the Polish, and the Ruthenian were not real irredentas nor could they ever develop into such if a prudent and constructive policy had been followed.

As to German separatism, we have seen already in another connection that there never was a serious German irredentistic movement in Austria, that it signified rather a sentimental attachment to Germany or at best a sulky protestation against the growing influence of the Slavs which menaced German hegemony. But the force of the dynasty, of the army, and of the Church was so strong in Austria that a real German separatistic movement could not develop. We saw that the *Los von Rom* movement with outspoken anti-Habsburg tendencies ended in a complete fiasco and the Pan-German idea never had behind it a truly revolutionary movement. It is true that some of its leaders, for instance K. H. Wolf, spoke publicly of a *Germania Irredenta* and that enthusiastic young men began to sing seditious rhymes:

Wir schielen nicht, wir schauen
Wir schauen unverwandt,
Wir schauen voll Vertrauen
Ins deutsche Vaterland. . . .¹

But the entire movement remained always a rather sentimental or tactical protestation, the more as the leading circles of Berlin never sympathized with this tendency. The German official policy followed to the end the conception of Bismarck, who with his keen sense of reality understood very well that the union of the Austrian Germans with Germany would lead not only to a renewed armed conflict between the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns but that it would possibly also kindle a world war because the Slav peoples of Austria would develop the most exacerbated resistance to such a policy. This price would have been too high from the point of view of the German empire, the more so, since the Austrian Germans could render more precious services to the whole German nation outside of the German empire than inside without the Slavs or struggling with a disparate Slav minority. "The German Austrian," said Bismarck, "is justified to aspire for political

¹ We leer not, we look, we look steadily, we look trustingly to the German fatherland.