

## 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. . . .<sup>1</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> We leer not, we look, we look steadily, we look trustingly to the German fatherland.

leadership and should safeguard the interests of Germandom in the Orient, serving as the tie of contact between Germans and Slavs by hindering their collision.”<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact Austria played more and more the rôle of a bridge between Germany and the Danube basin, and the Balkans. This German economic and cultural expansion was quite natural in consequence of the geographical position of Germany and of her technical and scientific superiority, and this tendency would have been even more prominent if the saber-rattling German imperialism and the anti-Slav dualistic system of the monarchy had not aroused more and more the antipathy and distrust of the Slav and if the wise maxim of Bismarck had been followed, according to which “he was not willing to sacrifice even the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier” for the Balkan policy of Austria.

One can say that until the World War and until the conception of a *Mittleuropa* which followed the first victories of the Central Powers, the official standpoint of the German empire remained the unaltered retention of the Habsburg monarchy. To the report of Prince Lichnowsky, already quoted (in which he gave an account of the symptoms of dissolution of the Austrian monarchy) the foreign secretary, Bernhard von Bülow, gave the following answer, better say, categorical instruction to the Prince (June, 1898) :

. . . . Our political interest, to which all platonic sympathies should be subordinated . . . . lies in the maintenance of Austro-Hungary in its present independence as a Great Power. This interest demands that we be on our guard to discourage disintegrating tendencies in Austria whether they come from the Czech, Polish, or German side. The German-Austrians should not remain in doubt that as long as their struggle for the German cause is animated by an effort to safeguard Germandom as a cement for the inner cohesion and further maintenance of the Austrian state in its present form, we follow their aspirations with the most complete sympathy. But at the same time they should know that as soon as this struggle has as its final aim the separation of the German provinces from Austria and with this a return to the *status quo* of before 1866, the German nationalists cannot count on the promotion of their plans from our side. . . .

#### B. THE CZECH SEPARATISM

In the same sense one could not speak of a Czech irredenta in the proper meaning of the term, because the essence of the Czech separatistic tendencies was the same as that of the Magyars: an effort for constitutional independence, the unification of the countries of the Czech crown under national government. There was no foreign point of attraction, the union with which could have been a really serious aim of the Czech policy. Not even the thought of a union with their kindred folk, the Slovaks of Hungary, was in their minds, until the

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Richard Charnatz, *Österreichs innere Geschichte* (Leipzig u. Berlin, 1918), II, 95.

World War, a realizable program. The state independence of the Czech historical territories in Austria and a moderate autonomy for the Slovaks inside the Hungarian crown would have satisfied both the Czechs and the Slovaks completely if such a constitutional reform would have been carried on at the right time.<sup>3</sup> The Czech separatism, therefore, signified just the same thing as the Magyar: the guaranty of the independence of the state in the spirit of the historical right. This was clearly felt by the leader of Hungarian independence, by Louis Kossuth himself, who, in his devastating criticism against the Dualistic Compromise, wrote among others the following statement:

Bohemia, from the point of view of historical justice, has the same right to regard itself as a distinct autonomous state as Hungary; even, if possible, it would have more right because it is a fact that Bohemia had already been a flourishing state for centuries, when we Hungarians were not yet in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

One might even say that Czech separatism was far less dangerous from the point of view of the monarchy than the Magyar. For the Czechs, from the first awakening of the democratic national spirit until the dissolution of the monarchy, were not disinclined to accept the plan that the future independent Bohemia would become a part of a federal state and they would have willingly participated in a central parliament including all the nations of the monarchy as equal members. Just the opposite was the Magyar point of view, even that of the loyal dualistic circles, namely, that Hungary could not accept any state community or super-national central organ with the other nations of the monarchy.

And if, in spite of this, the danger of Pan-Slavism had always irritated the German and the Magyar leading elements and if it became a fashion to denounce Czech national aspirations as a result of Russian propaganda, that was the result of this unfortunate policy which by the German-Magyar hegemony, by the Magyar policy of assimilation, and the brutal handling of the Jugo-Slav problem always offended the Slav nations of the monarchy, especially the very developed

<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of a conscious national movement in the nineteenth century a serious literary and cultural movement was started among the Slovaks of Hungary under the leadership of Stur, Hurban, and Hodža for the elaboration of the Slovak language and culture distinct from the Czech. If instead of the policy of a forcible Magyarization this movement would not have been hindered, but protected by the Hungarian government, it is very probable that the gap between the Slovaks and the Czechs would have assumed proportions hostile to any efforts for unification. National culture and autonomy of the Slovak territory could have become a powerful bulwark against the Czech influence the more as the historical atmosphere, the national temperament, and the social customs of the Slovaks were nearer to the Magyars than to the Czechs whose nationalism, hussitism, and business efficiency is still a factor for misunderstanding, even hatred among the two kindred peoples. (A good analysis for this situation was given by R. W. Seton-Watson in his book, *The New Slovakia*, Praha, 1924.)

<sup>4</sup> *Writings of Louis Kossuth*, VII, 367-68. In Hungarian.

constitutional and cultural conscience of the Czechs. We have seen already that the claims for national autonomy of the Czechs were never satisfied, nay, that the most solemn pledges of the Emperor were broken in order to maintain unaltered the German-Magyar hegemony. Under such circumstances it was quite natural that the Czechs fixed their eyes more and more on the big Russian brother when they saw that they could not guarantee their national independence in a peaceful, constitutional way and that only a new catastrophe, a new Königgrätz could solve their problem. But this feeling of solidarity never was a serious irredenta, because it could not be such. A union with Russia was an impossibility from a geographic, an ethnographic, and a cultural point of view. The Czechs were separated from their remote Russian brothers by the national settlements of the Poles and the Ruthenians, peoples with which the Czechs had no real cultural connection. Besides the Czech culture was entirely a Western one, penetrated by the ideals of Humanism, the Reformation, and democracy. There was, therefore, no serious possibility for a union with Tsarist Russia and that romantic Pan-Slavistic plan which talked of a union of the smaller Slav nations under Russian hegemony from the future center of Constantinople was not only then a Utopia but it will probably remain such for centuries.

Under such circumstances the flirting of the Czech intelligentsia with Pan-Slavism, their pilgrimages to Russia, their enthusiastic cultural connections with Russian intellectual life, and the growing emphasis of Slav solidarity did not signify a possible or serious irredentistic movement but rather a tactical and also a sentimental position. It signified the magic charm of the Slav world-empire to the youthful spirits; it signified the canalization of the national exasperation into the sea of Pan-Slavism; it signified the attraction of national affinity, the possibility of imposing threats for Czech politicians against the Viennese court and government; it signified the moral and material protection of Czech intelligentsia by the Russian pan-Slavistic literary and scientific associations; and, finally, it signified the propaganda of the Russian emissaries who promised the guaranty of a brilliant Czech future when the day of last judgment, the *dies irae, dies illa*, between Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism comes.

Of course, the more things became envenomed in Austria, in Hungary, and in the Balkans, the less was the prospect probable that the aspirations of the northern and southern Slavs for their independent states would be realized within the frontiers of the monarchy. And the more all Europe was segregated into two military camps which by a system of alliances and counter-alliances prepared feverishly for the final fray, the more important became the card of sentimental and cultural Pan-Slavism in the hands of the leading Russian circles for utilizing the hatred of the Slavs of the monarchy against the countries

which refused to accept them as equal partners in their constitutional life.

We have seen that this propagandistic effort of Russian imperialism was to a large extent successful during the war and became one of the chief causes of the dissolution of the monarchy. This process however was not a fatal, unavoidable one. On the contrary, we have shown already in our historical analysis that the most serious and influential elements of the Czechs, beginning with their great leader, Palacký, embraced quite sincerely the point of view that Austria should be maintained on the basis of the equality of their peoples. This conception was enlarged by several northern and southern Slav political writers to a doctrine called *Austro-Slavism* which opposed the sentimental romanticism of Pan-Slavism with the distinct national individuality of the Slav peoples and advocated the maintenance of a democratized and federalized Austria as a natural bulwark for the free development of the smaller Slav peoples. The most consequent exponent of this tendency was the brilliant political thinker of the Czechs, Karel Havlíček (1821–56). He put the consciousness of his nation above the Slav solidarity. The Slav peoples are distinct national individualities as, for instance, the French and Spanish. The Austrian monarchy could become the supreme protector of the Czech and the Illyrian nationality. He emphasized the fact that the Slavs have four fatherlands and the idea of a general Slav patriotism was as vague as the idea of cosmopolitanism. "I am not a Slav, I am a Czech," he used to say and urged the Austrian government to defend also the Ruthenians against the oppressive tendencies of the Poles. After the revolutionary collapse in 1850, he admonished the ruling circles that an Austria protecting the Slavs would be capable of drawing also the Jugo-Slavs into its sphere of influence and of acquiring, by the way of a spontaneous gravitation, the largest part of the Turkish inheritance which would be an excellent change for the Italian territories, maintainable only by armed force.

This spirit of Austro-Slavism was sometimes called a hypocrisy or a purely tactical chess game, but it represented without doubt a sincere and natural tendency. The Czechs had no serious interest in fostering a policy of irredentism if they could have an opportunity of developing their own national state inside the monarchy. As a matter of fact, until the dissolution of the empire there were never lacking influential and authoritative voices which emphasized the necessity of such a solution. Not only the small group of Professor Masaryk, called the Czech Realists, sought peace and compromise with the other nations of the monarchy but even the leader of the younger Czech nationalists, Karel Kramář, though he was a leading man of the Russian solidarity, emphasized the possibility of a Czech compromise if they could build up their own national state as the Magyars did.

Nay, even after the World War, after the creation of an independent Czecho-Slovak state, in 1926, the same Kramař upheld retrospectively the correctness of this point of view which was desirous of solving the Slav problems without arousing catastrophes, a point of view advocated even during the World War by several Austro-Slav politicians. In regard to such plans Kramař wrote:

Was not a prudent and honest Austrian policy possible, such a one as our men since Palacký and Havliček have advocated, because they wished sincerely the continuation of Austria, a policy which would have made also the Serbs friends of Austria by becoming so just toward them that they would not aspire for a state beyond the frontiers and would estimate as superfluous the arousing of a catastrophe which might have ultimately also a sinister outcome for the Serbs and the Slavs . . . .?

The Czech statesmen gave an affirmative answer to this question. Naturally, for obtaining this aim quite a different policy, a different public morality and above all a different civic education would have been necessary.

#### C. THE POLISH SEPARATISM

That the problem of irredentism is not directed by a special mystical affinity and that it is not inevitable that a people in the minority must ogle beyond the frontiers or foment irredentistic plots but that the tendency of the national minorities is determined by the "law of the least social and national resistance," was clearly proved by the history of the Polish national minority of the monarchy. The Poles were for a long period the most restless and unreliable elements of the monarchy. Metternich regarded them with complete distrust. "The 'Polonism,'" he said, "is only a formula, a slogan, beyond which the revolution is hidden in its crudest form, it is the revolution itself." Indeed, as a matter of fact both in 1846 and 1863 the revolutionary dissatisfaction of the Poles flared up violently. But the situation changed when the Viennese government assumed a conciliatory attitude and when, abandoning the policy of German centralization, a complete national autonomy was granted to the Poles in Galicia. Especially the Compromise of 1867 made the influence of the Poles in the monarchy very conspicuous since, for the maintenance of the dualistic system the Austrian governments needed the votes of the Polish Club in the Viennese parliament. In consequence of the new equilibrium the Poles became the pampered children of the leading circles, the *Zunge an der Wage*, and they were allowed to build up an almost national state in Galicia which was often victorious over the Central administration. The Poles were not hindered in establishing their administrative, cultural, and economic organizations, nay, the Viennese government tacitly tolerated the continuous effort of the Polish nobility to curb under their yoke the Ruthenian peasant masses, almost half of the population of Galicia. Whereas the Poles of Prussia sighed under

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the heavy burden of the Germanizing policy and of the system of forcible expropriation and whereas the autocratic brutality of Russian Tsarism strangled the Polish minority, Austria became the envied province of Polish liberty and independence. The Austrian Poles, or to speak more correctly, the Polish nobility (because there was an enormous gulf between the Polish landlords and the wretched peasantry) began to feel themselves comfortable and became the most loyal subjects of His Majesty and the most important offices and diplomatic positions of the monarchy were intrusted to them. Since they had their own national autonomy and the possibilities of a free cultural development, not the slightest revolutionary ripple or irredentistic agitation was to be observed among them. On the contrary, their co-nationals under Prussian and Russian oppression began to extol the Galician conditions as a model state where, especially in the city of Cracow, a powerful center of Polish literature, science and art arose. Of course, the Austrian Poles continued to cherish the dream of the re-establishment of the former historical unity of the Polish state but this seeming Utopia had not the least sentiment against Austria and, therefore, the Polish nobility could develop unchecked their national aspirations. They were not only undisturbed in this but their attitude was rather sympathetic from the point of view of the ruling elements who understood that in the case of unification Austria would have a powerful attraction for all the Poles. Furthermore the Poles were so satisfied with their constitutional situation in Austria that when on the Austro-German side plans were made according to which Galicia should receive a complete autonomy analogous to that which Croatia had toward Hungary (in order that by the absence of the Poles, a German majority could be secured in the Austrian parliament) such plans aroused not the least sympathy among the Poles who enjoyed and utilized their power in the monarchy.

During the World War, too, strong sympathies were manifested for the monarchy which could have exercised a considerable force in favor of the Central Powers if the reminiscences of the Prussian policy in Posen had not pressed on a part of the Poles and if the monarchy and Germany had not been so short-sighted and hesitating in their Polish policy, but had accepted openly and determinedly the program of a united Poland as an independent state of the Habsburg empire. But the dualistic system in Austria and the Prussian policy in Germany made such a policy unworkable. Later the adventure in the Ukraine, as we have already seen, made the Poles enemies of the monarchy. Leon Bilinski, the Polish statesman who was several times Austrian and joint minister of finance and who became for a period minister of the newly created Polish state, wrote his memoirs before his death still in a loyal spirit to the Habsburgs and came to the conclusion that the dissolution of the monarchy was due to three facts:

to the incapacity of the Habsburg to conclude the Austro-Polish solution, to the megalomania of the German government on the occasion of the peace negotiations in 1917, and to the fatal nationality policy of Hungary.<sup>5</sup>

#### D. THE RUTHENIAN IRREDENTISM

The Ruthenian separatism shows the same tendencies as the Polish, though in another direction. The Ruthenian population of Austria was for a long time famous for its loyal dynastical attitude. They were called the "Tyrolians of the East" or the "Galician Piedmont" because the Ruthenian settlements of Austria began to exercise a certain attraction on their Ukrainian brothers of the same racial stock who were languishing under the yoke of the Russian autocracy and forceful assimilation. This Ruthenian minority was regarded for some time as a good balance against the revolutionary Polish nobility. At the same time the development of a special Ruthenian culture was favored and protected in Vienna as a bulwark against undermining endeavors of Russian imperialism.

This attitude, however, of this loyal people was changed radically after Galicia was surrendered to the Polish nobility which interfered with the national and political rights of the Ruthenian minority. This Polish-Ruthenian antagonism, made even more acute by the economic and social pressure of the big Polish estates, proved to be an efficient instrument in the hands of Russian Pan-Slavism for fostering irredentistic tendencies in Galicia and Bukowina. Indeed, Pan-Slavism was successful in arousing a pro-Russian feeling in some regions of the Ruthenian peasantry. The Ruthenian people in its cultural backwardness (in Bukowina 54 per cent and in Galicia 41 per cent of the population over ten years were illiterate) and in its social misery did not know that their Ukraine brothers in Russia were even more oppressed than they and that the rôle of the Polish nobility was played there by the Russians. Russian Pan-Slavism made its propaganda not only by the "rolling of rubles" and manipulating the feelings of the people, exasperated by social and political abuses, but also by utilizing the deep religious mysticism of the people which instinctively resented the papal union of its clergy and on which the old orthodox religion had a great sentimental appeal. Therefore, in certain regions the political propaganda was administered under a semi-religious disguise and the Tsar became a kind of divine protector for the persecuted Ruthenians of Austria.

This Pan-Slav propaganda was carried on almost openly without being counterbalanced by any effort for a reasonable civic education. On the contrary, the Poles, knowing the low cultural standard and the unorganized state of the Ruthenian peasantry, did not take this move-

<sup>5</sup> *Reminiscences and Documents* (Warsaw, 1924-25). In Polish.



ment seriously but even fostered it because it counterbalanced the political influence of the Ruthenians loyal to Austria, their really serious opponents, and at the same time they could extol themselves as guardians of the Austrian state idea against the "treacherous Ruthenians." This political play was so ruthless and hypocritical that in the younger Ruthenian generation a revolutionary spirit arose, which led to the killing of the governor of Galicia, Count Potocki, by a Ruthenian student in 1898. Though a part of the Viennese circles knew very well the nature of the problem and the ambiguous rôle of the Polish nobility, the government did not dare to interfere with it, according to its policy of *Fortwursteln* ("bungling along in the old groove"). For in order to extirpate the Ruthenian irredenta certain fundamental reforms were needed, among them the elimination of Polish supremacy, a courageous agrarian reform, complete religious equality, all things with which Vienna could not experiment the less so because these necessary reforms would have again created a Polish separatism, would have irritated the Roman Catholic church, the pillar of the empire, and what was the most important, they would have endangered the Dualistic Constitution itself which rested partly on the shoulders of the Poles. Under these conditions it was quite natural that the dynasty and its government chose rather the seemingly harmless, rather sentimental irredentism of the peaceful, weak, and unorganized Ruthenian subjects and abdicated from the "Eastern Tyrolians" to the benefit of the Polish *Szlachta*.

The irredentistic movement of the Ruthenians of Hungary was even more naïve and sentimental. The social and cultural background was even darker than in Austria. Illiteracy, slow starvation, the pressure of the big estates and of the feudal administration, ruthless usury, the alliance of the Greek Catholic church with the corrupt county potentates were a propitious field for Pan-Slavistic propaganda, which, under the disguise of orthodox Greek oriental religion, was administered as a species of social narcotics. As a matter of fact this wretched people had no idea of the political motives of the Pan-Slav propaganda but embraced enthusiastically the traditional religion of Russia, exciting its religious imagination and at the same time offering to the poor peasants sacred books in their own language in a surrounding where the Magyarization policy of the schools and of the administration left the intellectual longings of the people unsatisfied.

Immediately before the World War a sensational process was enacted against the so-called schismatic Ruthenians who tried to secede from the Greek Catholic church and to join the Greek Oriental church of Hungary. Though this aspiration was perfectly legitimate from a jural point of view, the Greek Catholic church denounced it as a plot of high treason fomented by the Pan-Slav agitation. This process carried on at Mármarosziget, a town of Northeastern Hungary,

aroused an international excitement because some leading figures of the Russian Pan-Slav movement were also involved in it. The better part of the Hungarian intelligentsia saw with despair the dark, medieval atmosphere of the whole process fomented by a greedy clergy who feared that the religious secession of the Ruthenian peasantry would diminish their ecclesiastical incomes. It became manifest that though the Russian propaganda played without doubt a certain part in this tragic religious hysteria of the Ruthenian people, it was mainly a result of their cultural isolation, economic misery and of the abuses of the local administration. A Hungarian attorney for the defense of the accused peasants wrote:

The chief lesson for us of the Ruthenian schismatic movement is that the religious persecution arranged by the Greek Catholic clergy, allied with the local administration [the people of the villages were surrounded by gendarmerie, then heavily fined because they performed secretly during the night those religious exercises forbidden by the authorities], created the possibilities of a Russian religious propaganda. That this religious propaganda found, curiously enough through America where the emigrated Hungarian Ruthenians narrated their sufferings to their co-nationals, the Ruthenian schismatics, this is in its final result only a painful episode of the Hungarian democracy.

It is quite natural that in this atmosphere the Russian religious propaganda should begin to assume a national color too and that the Ruthenian peasant, persecuted in his religious life,<sup>6</sup> should regard more and more the mystic personality of the Tsar as his liberator from the ecclesiastical and administrative yoke which he felt in his naïve consciousness simply as a Magyar yoke. . . .

<sup>6</sup> The superstitious, but at the same time extremely popular character of the Greek Orthodox religion which makes its priests in the culturally backward provinces almost magicians or primitive "medicine-men" had a great influence in the "nationalistic propaganda" (A. Bonkáló, *The Slavs* [Budapest, 1915], pp. 22-27. In Hungarian).

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRUE IRREDENTAS

As for real irredentas, in the proper sense, meaning the effort of a national minority to secede from the community of the state and to unite with another, to that of their co-nationals, there were only three in the monarchy: the Italian, the Rumanian, and the Jugo-Slav. Of these, only the first was a problem insoluble in its essence.

#### A. THE ITALIAN IRREDENTA

Since the formation of the Italian unity, it was inevitable that the Italian kingdom should exercise a great and irresistible influence on the Italian minority of Austria. (A population of about seven and a half hundred thousands before the World War.) This minority lived partly scattered, partly as compact settlements in southern Tyrol, in the southwestern parts of Görz and in the western regions of Istria. The attraction of the Italian territories toward Italy was quite natural, though it did not perhaps permeate the deepest strata of the population. The spell of an old historical culture, the community of the historic traditions, the desire for an economic and cultural unity would have manifested itself to a certain degree even in case Austria had signified a higher culture and a greater freedom. However, it did not signify this, but foreign rule, the obstacle to a richer cultural development, and the absence of a free local autonomy. And combined with these were the terrible memories of the Austrian *soldatesca* in their mother-country. Add to all this the continuous propaganda of Italian imperialism and of nationalistic romanticism for the Tyrol-ese and Triestene irredenta and for the *mare nostrum*. One should not forget that Garibaldi had already conquered southern Tyrol in 1866, and though he was unable to hold the provinces, this memory was kindling enthusiasm in Italian public opinion.

Under such circumstances the Italian territories meant a debit item for Austria, a source of internal strife and external complications which heightened the dangers of the other irredentas. A really enlightened Austrian policy therefore would have been a final conciliation with Italy by the cessation of its closed national settlements. As a recompense for this policy Austria could have easily obtained the agreement to declare the harbors of Trieste and Fiume free cities, *porto franco*, international centers for the trade. This solution would have been the most advantageous both from the Austrian and Italian point of view because the hinterland of these harbors was mostly Slav and Magyar. This policy would have been without doubt a perfectly