

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

workable one if carried on tactfully with a prudent appreciation of the difficulties of the Italian policy. Before the catastrophe of Königgrätz the Italian government made a formal proposition to Austria for the purchase of the province of Venezia and at the same time for Italian Tyrol it offered recompensation for the Habsburgs in another direction. The proposition was refused without any consideration.¹ Even during the World War there were serious endeavors to maintain the neutrality of Italy by pursuing this road.

The present-day imperialistic state, however, in consequence of its very nature and of the dogma of "the prestige of a Great Power and of national honor" could not follow such a policy of "abdication" even if such would be highly beneficial for the immense majority of the population of both countries. Instead of this, both parties prepared for a policy of catastrophe through which the people of Austria-Hungary finally lost their harbors and the German Tyrolese territory. The crime of this policy was the greater because the leading circles of Austria were perfectly aware of the fatal gravity of the Italian irredenta. One for instance who reads the book of Alois Ritter von Haymerle, a colonel of the general staff, written in 1879 under the title, *Italicae Res*, will see that the Austrian officer has unveiled all the details of the Italian intrigues. Haymerle has shown that this current was not restricted to a few romantic dreamers but embraced broad circles of society and enjoyed the secret protection of the government. At national festivals it was a custom to carry the flags of Trieste and Trentino covered with a mourning veil; the whole country was permeated with the organizations of the "Italia Irredenta"; on the maps used in the public schools, the political frontier facing Austria was drawn through the Brenner and southern Tyrol was designated as *Provincia del Trentino*; the patriotic irredentistic festivals were often frequented by high officials of the state, and by the members of Parliament and of the army leadership. Witnessing such and similar currents, the Austrian staff officers did not even mention a plan of compromise but his final conclusion was simply an appeal to the right of arms.

As a matter of fact this rigid conception of the right of conquest determined Austrian policy until the end. This policy was the more light-minded and short-sighted because at the same time no serious step was taken to satisfy the just claims of the Italian minority which could have appeased somewhat the tension between the two countries. The demand of an autonomy for southern Tyrol was frustrated by the German bureaucracy and chauvinism. Similarly without result remained the desire of the Italian minority for the creation of a university in the Italian tongue, a privilege enjoyed for a long time by other

¹ V. Bibl, *op. cit.*, II, 288.

nations of the monarchy which were less conspicuous in culture and national traditions. But the Austrian government was frightened by this plan because it feared (and not without reason) that under the envenomed conditions such a university would strengthen the irredentistic current. For this reason the cause of the Italian university was postponed and finally a half-measure was adopted to establish an Italian faculty connected with the German university of Innsbruck (the southern bulwark of the Germans) instead of the Italian scheme to create a university in Trieste, the real center of Italian life in Austria. The result of this tactlessness was a real battle between Italian and German students in the *Aula* of the university of Innsbruck which had a bloody continuation in the streets (1909). After this calamity the Italian faculty was transferred to Vienna but there the German-Italian fight broke out even more violently. The cause of an Italian university died and the result was only this, that it poured new oil on the fire of Italian irredenta: "instead of a university the Italian students received cudgels and revolvers. . . ."

The inflammatory acuteness of the Austrian-Italian relations was further accentuated at the occasion of the Triestine festivals in 1882 when Austria held an exposition to the memory of the fact that Trieste belonged for five hundred years to the Habsburg monarchy. During these festivals, the police detected three attempts with bombs against the members of the dynasty and the Emperor himself. The organizer of one of these plots, Oberdank, was sentenced to death by a tribunal and became, thereafter, an Italian national martyr, a real symbol of the Italian irredentistic movement.

The relation, envenomed more and more between the two countries, was not improved but rather aggravated by the conclusion of the so-called Triple Alliance (1882) which was the true expression of the immoral policy of imperialism in not considering the real feeling of the people. Italy, under the patronage of Bismarck, entered into the Alliance of Germany and Austro-Hungary in order to manifest its dissatisfaction against the Tunis policy of France. This treaty, the text of which was not then published, signified the worst continuation of a Machivellian policy between the new allied powers, Italy and Austria, which were rightly called the "strangest allies of the world" because they made incessant war preparations against each other, they erected fortifications on their respective frontiers, and the hatred of the Italians and the Austrians was systematically kindled. This spirit of animosity exploded already during the Annexation Crisis when the whole Italian political world assumed a passionately hostile attitude against the Austrian "ally" for its "robbery" in the Balkans and asked for compensations on the irredentist territories. The exacerbation of Italian public opinion was so great that Prime Minister Giolitti could scarcely pacify it and was himself compelled to play,

almost unhidden, irredentistic tunes, speaking in Parliament of "premature impatience."

The Italian irredentism became more and more ruthless. For instance, General Asinari, commander of the Corps of Milano at the occasion of the inauguration festivity of the flag of a new cavalry regiment at Brescia, renewed in a speech the memory of the Austrian terror which reigned in this city half a century earlier and expressed the hope that Destiny would allow him some day to lead his soldiers against the traditional enemy. . . . At Udine a doll representing the features of Francis Joseph was fabricated and was burned by the mob. . . . At the same time the irredentistic literature became more and more violent. Under the title *La Preparazione*, a military-political periodical was started with the program of preparation for the future irredentistic war. And while the governments talked always officially of the "best," of the most cordial relations between the Allies, the propaganda of Gabriele d'Annunzio gained thousands and thousands for the irredentistic ideal and his book *La Nave* engraved the desire of the reconquest of the "Italian Sea" in the heart of the masses.

Meanwhile the turning of Italy toward the Entente became manifest and even an Italian-Slav rapprochement was skilfully arranged under French protection which had an open tendency against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It is quite natural that in this tense atmosphere the Austrian war party, too, made desperate efforts. In the first place, Conrad von Hötzendorf, who became chief of the staff in 1906, was quite aware that the Austrian-Italian relation was near to explosion and urged a preventive war against the Italians because he came to the right conclusion that things were rapidly tending toward an Italian-Jugo-Slav-Russian coalition against the Habsburg monarchy. That is the reason why Conrad advised, in 1911, when Italy had serious difficulties in Tripoli, an attack on the "ally," that is to say, to administer this "stab in the back" which, according to the Austrian terminology, Italy performed against her ally during the World War.

B. THE RUMANIAN IRREDENTA

The nature of the Rumanian irredenta differed substantially from the Italian. Speaking in round numbers, three and a quarter million Rumanians lived in the territory of the Habsburg monarchy (the bulk of whom, about three millions, were in Hungary) and six millions in the Rumanian kingdom. Therefore the Rumanian irredenta was not a small minority, as was the Italian, compared with the whole nation, but it was a very conspicuous settlement, the population of which liked to regard themselves as the successors of the Roman inhabitants of Dacia. The tradition of this Dacian affinity heightened very much the

national consciousness of the Rumanians of Transylvania and the doctrine of the Daco-Rumanian origin became the chief ideology of the irredentistic thought and of the endeavor to unite all the Rumanian territories. Though the historical foundations of this doctrine are hotly debated, it is probable that a part of the Rumanians of Transylvania belonged to the oldest elements of the country and the history of Transylvania was always a Magyar-Rumanian history. The Transylvanian and the Hungarian Rumanians had, therefore, all reason to regard Hungary as their native land.² (The Rumanians of Bukowina, numbering about 250,000, we can omit in the consideration of the irredentistic situation, because they lived in an almost complete separation from the Rumanian settlements of Hungary, as there was no direct railway connection between Bukowina and Transylvania. The interest of the Rumanians of Bukowina was absorbed in the Rumanian-Ruthenian antagonism and, therefore, their rôle in the irredentistic current was an insignificant one.)

There were also other reasons which would have made it possible that a Rumanian irredenta should not develop or that it should take quite another direction, that it should gravitate not toward the Rumanian kingdom but toward Transylvania. Namely, the Habsburg monarchy compared with the Rumanian kingdom, which not until the beginning of the sixties of the last century adopted the forms of Western civilization, could have exercised a mighty economic and cultural attraction upon all the Rumanians if it could have secured the unimpeded national development of the Rumanians inside its own frontiers. Besides, the real kernel of the Rumanian culture was first developed in Transylvania where some far-sighted Hungarian princes promoted intentionally the linguistic and ecclesiastic culture of the Rumanian race. Under such circumstances it would have been a comparatively easy task to maintain the cultural and economic hegemony of the Rumanians of Transylvania over those in the kingdom. At the same time the Rumanians of Transylvania surpassed in discipline, administration, Western culture, and moral restraint the bulk of the Rumanian population in the kingdom, which was corrupted by the Phanariot rule, by those Greeks who under Turkish patronage governed the country in an Asiatic spirit. Another cause which could have turned the line of irredentistic tendency was the traditional loyalty of the Transylvania Rumanians to the Habsburg dynasty, the better exponents of which often protected them from the abuses of Magyar feudalism.

For all these reasons, if the monarchy had been capable of satisfying at the right time the national needs of its peoples in the spirit of a reasonable federalism, Transylvania would have become a Pied-

² Compare pp. 306-7 of this book.

mont of the Rumanians which, with its more advanced culture and liberty, could have exercised a powerful attraction upon her connationals beyond the frontiers. As a matter of fact such a Rumanian irredenta, *tending toward the monarchy* manifested itself for centuries. Already, Michael the Courageous, a Rumanian prince (1593–1601), made an effort to unite their territories with the empire of Rudolf II and similar endeavors were renewed during the seventeenth century, desiring to unite all the Rumanians under Habsburg rule.³ The fear of the isolated Rumanian race before the growing Pan-Slav tendencies was also operative in the same direction. In 1848, some Rumanian leaders made the proposition to the German national assembly in Frankfurt that all the Rumanian settlements should be united in an autonomous country intimately connected with Austria. In the revolutionary period the Rumanians were ardent supporters of the Habsburg and almost until the collapse of the monarchy they stood in close connection with Vienna and their loyalty toward the dynasty was uncontested. One of their ablest political thinkers, Aurel C. Popovici, a leader of the Rumanian national party of Hungary who fled to Austria in order to avoid imprisonment in consequence of a pamphlet which he wrote against the policy of Magyarization, published as late as 1906 a sensational book under the title *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Grossösterreich* (“the United States of Greater Austria”) in which he advocated the federalization of the monarchy in an entirely loyal spirit toward the Habsburg. He tried to demonstrate that only a constitution based on the equality of the nations of the empire could save it and at the same time make it the center of attraction for the East and South.

All these facts, which could be easily supplemented by others, demonstrate sufficiently that the irredentistic movement tending toward Bucharest, which since the end of the nineteenth century alarmed more and more Austrian and Hungarian public opinion, was not at all an inevitable one but the result of an erroneous internal policy. A fatal irredenta directed against the Habsburg state was the less unavoidable because, since 1866, there were Hohenzollerns on the Rumanian throne who, in accordance with their education and traditions, were in harmony with the idea of a German–Hungarian–Rumanian alliance which was regarded by them as a bulwark against the growing waves of the Moscovite Pan-Slavism. As a matter of fact both King Charles and King Ferdinand were sincere supporters of this policy and did their best to check the Rumanian irredenta in Transylvania and to find a *modus vivendi* with the Habsburg monarchy.

That this policy of conciliation proved to be impossible, nay, that the irredentistic current grew rapidly in Transylvania was a conse-

³ F. Kleinwaechter, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

quence of the unhappy nationality policy of Hungary which by the Magyarization of the schools, by the vexatious control of the Rumanian church, and by the ousting of the Rumanian intelligentsia from the state life and local administration fostered the centrifugal tendencies of the Rumanian citizens. This irredenta was in the beginning rather sentimental and literary, but it assumed more and more political forms. A considerable part of the Rumanian intelligentsia of Hungary which could not find an appropriate livelihood at home or which came into collision with the Magyar juries, began to migrate to the Rumanian kingdom and became there a nucleus of an irredentistic campaign.

Immediately before the outbreak of the World War, the symptoms which indicated the growing acuteness of the Rumanian irredenta became more numerous. A Rumanian deputy in the Hungarian parliament, Vajda-Voevod, one of the most influential leaders of the Rumanians in Transylvania, wrote in 1913 in the October issue of the *Österreichische Rundschau* (the magazine of the leading Viennese circles) a passionate accusation against the Magyar chauvinistic policy, summoning Archduke Francis Ferdinand to carry on "the pacification of the Mongolia of Europe." In his vehement article the Rumanian leader denounced in detail the whole policy of artificial Magyarization.

These and similar complaints, a great part of which could not be refuted, heightened the exasperation of the Rumanian irredenta the more since a new wave of political persecution arose. At the same time the movement began to infiltrate also into the popular masses. The riot of Kismajtény and the criminal trial of Szatmár which followed it (1914) aroused a new current of ill-feeling. But something still more alarming happened in the same year. The Vicar-General of the bishopric of Hajdudorog, which was created for the Magyarization of the Rumanian uniates, became the victim of an infernal machine sent by unknown criminals by post. The detonation of this machine wounded seriously several priests of the diocese.

Such events made the antagonism between the two nations more and more acute and the *Liga Culturale* of Bucharest held a series of protest meetings in several cities of Rumania against the oppression of their brothers in Hungary. This current had such a violent repercussion that it began to alarm seriously even the so-called Great Policy of the monarchy. Immediately before the outbreak of the World War, Conrad von Hötzendorf, chief of the staff, declared in 1913 that Rumania must be regarded as lost to the Triple Alliance in consequence of the exasperation which the Magyar chauvinistic policy aroused among the Rumanians. Count Czernin, then minister at Bucharest and later foreign minister, admonished Vienna repeatedly that the nationality policy of Hungary must be changed because oth-

erwise Rumania would secede to the Entente. As a matter of fact the secret treaty between Rumania and the Triple Alliance was never published because the Rumanian government knew very well that it would have been swept away by the indignation of Rumanian public opinion. In one of his reports Count Czernin quoted a declaration of King Charles according to which "as things stand at the moment, Rumania in a war could not go with the monarchy. . . ."

The danger of the Rumanian problem in Transylvania began also to frighten the Berlin circles. When Emperor Wilhelm visited Archduke Ferdinand at Konopischt, this problem was one of the chief points of their conversation. The heir apparent attacked passionately the policy of Count Tisza in Transylvania and complained that the Hungarian Premier did not keep his previous promises made to him at Schönbrunn concerning the pacification of the Rumanians. The Archduke urged the Emperor to convince Count Tisza of the necessity of the revision of the Hungarian nationality policy (June, 1914). As a matter of fact the German ambassador at Vienna, von Tschirschky, was charged to admonish Count Tisza on every possible occasion of the urgency of a change in his policy toward the Rumanians. The Emperor told the Archduke that Count Tisza should always be addressed with the words: *Herr, gedenke der Rumänen* ("Sir remember the Rumanians!"). Under these difficulties Count Tisza had previously begun negotiations with the leaders of the Rumanians of Hungary, but the political atmosphere was already so envenomed and the point of view of the Hungarian Premier was so biased by his feudal attitude that he was incapable of settling any compromise. He was always under the sway of the rigidity of his general political conception in which the people did not exist as a conscious factor of public life. In this manner he saw in the Rumanian problem only some dissatisfied bishops and bank-directors and was convinced that this grave question could be solved by giving certain privileges to the gentlemen-like elements of the Rumanians, disregarding the social and economic grievances of the masses. He used to call the Rumanian problem "treading on the corns" of the Rumanian intelligentsia and admonished Magyar public opinion to discontinue the impolite practices, hurting in social life the sensitiveness of the Rumanians. In this way the most serious problem of the country, an almost cancerous disease of the social and political body appeared before the almighty leader as an "aching corn."

Both Vienna and Berlin followed with excited interest this new policy of Count Tisza. On one occasion the German Emperor tried personally to soften the Hungarian leader and to calm him with the assertion that "the Kingdom of Rumania did not demand a 'great action' on the part of the Hungarian government, but only concessions in smaller issues concerning the schools and local administration."

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At the same time the Emperor tried to play on another string by which he hoped to overcome the resistance of Count Tisza. According to a report of von Treutler:

His Majesty drew the attention of the Hungarian statesman also to the point that Hungary had every reason to stand firmly with the Germans against the Slav wave and pointed out that the best guaranty in the face of this danger would be a German Austria and a Magyar Hungary standing as firm pillars of the dual monarchy. . . . Count Tisza answered with enthusiastic agreement. . . .⁴

That means that in March, 1914, the German Emperor and the most influential statesman of the Habsburg monarchy were in complete accord as to the maintenance of the Dualistic Constitution and of that anti-Slav policy which made the gravest irredentistic problem of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the problem of Jugo-Slav unity insoluble and which caused ultimately the catastrophe of Sarajevo.

⁴*Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette.* Vol. XXXIX, Nos. 15,715, 15,716, 15,735, 15,736, 15,737.

CHAPTER IV

THE JUGO-SLAV IRREDENTA AND THE ROAD TOWARD THE WAR

Even that most dangerous irredenta which finally gave rise to the World War and destroyed the monarchy, the Jugo-Slav irredenta itself, cannot be regarded as an insolvable problem in its very nature, a problem which must have inevitably led to the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy. On the contrary, the chief factors of the Jugo-Slav situation would have made it possible to have the unavoidable tendency of the Jugo-Slav peoples toward national unity take a course propitious to the monarchy since national integration could have been achieved not from Belgrade but from Zagreb or Sarajevo.

As a matter of fact the Jugo-Slav irredenta, in one way or another, was really an unavoidable sociological necessity but the conditions and the process of its achievement depended to a large extent on the policy followed in this question. The whole history of the nineteenth century is a demonstration of a sociological law, according to which among masses of the same nationality, living under different sovereignties, there develops, with the rise of economic and cultural life, an irresistible current tending toward the unification of the whole national body into one single economic and political organization. The whole process of Jugo-Slav unity was in its essence the same as that of Italian or German unity. At the end of the nineteenth century, every careful observer could see that the tendency toward Jugo-Slav unity had become an inevitable mass-psychological necessity. The intrigues and rivalries of the great powers could retard or accelerate this process but they were not its real causes. Anyone with the slightest historical or sociological sense will repudiate *a limine* this naïve propagandistic point of view which holds that Jugo-Slav unity was the result of the undermining influence of Russian Pan-Slavism and of the diplomatic intrigues of the Entente, though both factors without doubt, have intensively ripened and accelerated the historical process.

A. THE DISPERSION OF THE JUGO-SLAV FORCES

The majority of the Jugo-Slav peoples of Europe, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, lived under foreign domination. The Austrian Slovenians under German, the Serb immigrants of Hungary under Magyar,¹ the Dalmatian Slavs under Italian, the Slavs of the

¹ Under the Turkish rule there was a slow, but continuous infiltration of Serb elements into the southern parts of Hungary. The largest wave of this immigration came in 1690 when about 40,000 Serb families under the leadership of the patriarch of Ipek were colonized by the imperial authorities in the counties of Pozsega, Szerém, and in Bácska. Emperor Leopold I bestowed upon them wide privileges which made their settlements almost a small state in the state.