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# The Dead Lands of Europe

By

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diplomatists and the rulers of the country would tell him, *e.g.*, that there is no such country as Poland, that they are the Polish subjects of the King of Prussia, the Emperor of Austria, or (till a few weeks ago) Polish subjects of the Czar of all the Russias.

Have any of my readers ever thought what this means? The United States of America have been founded to maintain the principle of government of the people by the people for the people. There may be populations so ignorant and untrained in political matters that they are unable to profit by a complete system of democratic government, and they may require a transition stage in which the government is in strong hands; but there is no nation so ignorant that it does not require that its own prosperity should be the first object of its rulers, and no nation which does not demand complete and full recognition of its own customs, of its own language, and of its own religion. Have you ever considered what it means that the peasant when he goes into a Court of Justice is allowed at the best only on sufferance to use his own language; that the schools to which his children are sent may be used to destroy in them the remembrance of the great deeds of their own ancestors and to substitute for them the language and the traditions of an alien and conquering race? You know something of what the English nation suffered under the rule of the Norman Conquerors. That which at this moment is being endured in Eastern Europe is in many ways infinitely worse. The Normans never interfered in the home life of the English; they never called upon the English to go to war outside the bounds of the kingdom and to risk their lives in a quarrel which was not their own. What these nations have to meet is not merely the carelessness and indifference of a superior social class, but the steady, deliberate, and continued efforts of highly organised governments to obliterate from the earth the very memory of their existence.

That which these nations—the Poles, the Bohemians, the Southern Slavs—claim is in fact the right to exist,

the right to a full expression of their own nationality in literature, in art, in their internal government and in their international relations. One would have thought that the claim had only to be made for every one to accede to it. Surely in political life the murder of a nation is the greatest of crimes. It is perhaps difficult for those who live many thousands of miles away in the Western World to understand, not the justice of the claim—for that must in truth be obvious to all—but the necessity for enforcing it. But the danger is no imaginary one. Of these Slavonic peoples some have in fact been crushed out of existence. The whole of Germany east of the Elbe was in former days inhabited by peoples whose very names have disappeared from Europe, and a hundred years ago it seemed as if the same fate had befallen the Bohemians and would befall the South Slavonic peoples. They were being slowly crushed by the predominance of their German neighbours, swamped by the immigration of German colonists, absorbed into the neighbouring German States. But for the last hundred years, and in fact since the time of the French Revolution, a reaction against this process has taken place, and the question at issue, which should be determined by this war, is whether the forces of Germanisation or those of national reaction will be successful.

In this great controversy, the greatest in its nature of which history has any record, we might well call on the Germans to bear testimony on our side. It would be well that they should in the days of their prosperity remember certain aspects of their past history. There was a time when Germany occupied relatively to France a position somewhat similar to that which these Slavonic states now occupy relatively to Germany. Germany at the beginning of the eighteenth century had no real political unity. Owing to political disunion and internal warfare it had lost its national self-consciousness; it was divided between three Christian confessions and split up into hundreds of small principalities. To the west of them were the French, united under a pow-

erful and aggressive ruler; their culture, their language, their institutions dominated Europe. Germany seemed indeed to have no message for the world. It was the highest ambition of their men of letters, statesmen, courtiers, and kings to show themselves capable of imitating what they learned from their Western neighbours. The rest of the world was rapidly coming to look on at least Western Germany as an appendage of France. It was inconceivable that an ordinary man of science or letters or of affairs should trouble to learn German. German towns were known to the rest of Europe by their French names; to this day indeed we speak of Cologne and Mayence and Aix la Chapelle, not of Köln and Mainz and Aachen. The very memory of the great days of mediæval Germany had been lost; the very existence, for instance, of the *Nibelungenlied*, now the treasured epic of the Germans, was not known. It might well look as though Germany was destined eventually to be absorbed into the superior Latin culture, the German language to survive merely as the local dialect of the peasants; it was being relegated to the same position which English for a time held under the Norman Kings.

And then the great change came. The German nation became again conscious of itself. By an unparalleled national effort they once more gained touch with their own past. A great school of German letters and German science was founded. German once more established itself as one of the essential elements in Western European culture, and this intellectual and spiritual revival was inevitably followed by the political regeneration of the country, for the Germans soon saw, and rightly saw, that the preservation and development of their own culture was impossible without political unity.

What they did then is what these Slavonic races are doing now. They have for the last hundred years been recalling the great achievements of their own past; they are giving expression in art, in learning, and in literature to the thoughts and aspirations which spring spon-

taneously from them; they claim to be heard speaking in their own voice and not through the medium of Germany. They ask us to think of their own towns, not under the disguise of a foreign and German name, and they know that these aspirations cannot be fulfilled unless they gain complete political self-government. It is indeed one of the true tragedies of history that the German nation had not the greatness of soul and the generosity of mind to extend to these nations, rightly struggling to be free, the sympathy and admiration which they have claimed for themselves.

## II

### POLAND

AMONG those lands of which I spoke in my last chapter the first place must be assigned to Poland—Poland the Niobe of nations. Let us be frank. In the political world, among statesmen and diplomatists, the name of Poland calls up no pleasing recollections. How could it do so? For during the last three generations the word “Pole” has called to our minds exiles, men holding often precarious positions in foreign countries, full—as exiles will always be—of fantastic and unrealisable schemes, subterranean diplomacy, intrigues—and intrigues directed as often against one another as against the common enemy of their race. And in their own country in Eastern Europe the word “Poland” implied a problem—a problem to which there appeared to be no solution, for every solution must mean the complete overthrow of the established European system. It was to throw the apple of discord into the relations of kings and states—a problem which indeed could not be solved without a fundamental change, not only in the external relations, but the internal government of Russia, of Austria, of Prussia.

It is the duty, and it is nearly always the object, of

diplomats to avoid war. In 1815, in 1830, in 1848, in 1863 the Polish question brought Europe to the verge of war, and since 1863 it is one on which the rulers of the world have deliberately and perhaps wisely been silent. But now things are changed; that great war which nearly all had striven to avoid has come, and is it not reasonable to hope that there may be secured from the ruin of the world at least the avoidance of the perpetuation of a state of things which would inevitably in the future bring about again a similar catastrophe?

When we speak of Poland we think of the Poland and the Poles whom we know ourselves—weak, helpless, divided. But let us remember that there was an older Poland, one which occupied in Europe a position among the greatest of monarchies. Five hundred years ago the Kings of Poland held a great place among the rulers of Europe. Two hundred and fifty years ago a Turkish army stood before the gates of Vienna. The great imperial city, the guardian of Christendom and civilisation, was beleaguered by the hosts of the infidel and the barbarian. If it fell, a flood of desolation would sweep over Central Europe. Whence could help come? It came, and the saviour was John Sobieski, King of Poland. And the next Sunday, in the Cathedral of Vienna, the preacher took as his text, "There was a man sent from God, and his name was John." But now there is no King of Poland; there is no Poland. Fifty years ago Metternich said he had no knowledge of Italy—Italy was merely a geographical expression. Poland is not even a geographical expression. There are the Polish provinces of Prussia, there is Galicia, there is the district of the Vistula. Poland is dead, the monarchy is gone; you can see the jewels of the Polish crown preserved in a museum in a German city; you can see the tombs of the kings and recall the past greatness of the kingdom in the churches at Cracow, the ancient capital. But Poland is rent asunder. It has been divided between three great monarchies, by which its territory was surrounded; but the memory of the crime has not been



effaced in the history of Europe, and Europe will never be at peace or at rest until there has been reparation and restoration. The final judgment on it has been given by one of the participants. Maria Theresa of Austria wrote: "When all my lands were invaded, and I knew not where in the world I should find a place to be brought to bed in, I relied on my good right and the help of God. But in this thing, where not only public law cries to Heaven against us, but also all natural justice and sound reason, I must confess never in my life to have been in such trouble and am ashamed to show my face."

The hour for which the world has waited so long has now come, and at last the diplomacy of Europe has mentioned the word Poland. The first word was spoken by the ruler of that country which has enjoyed for a hundred years the larger share of the booty. The Czar proclaimed that Poland should be restored, and his Allies have taken note of the words and embodied this in their proposals for terms of peace. It is a word which has not been lightly spoken and cannot be recalled. The President of the United States has also taken note of it and has specifically stated that an autonomous and independent Poland must be a part of any new system to which he and the American nation are to give their guarantee.

When the Peace Congress meets, one of the first questions to be asked will be—What of Poland? How it will be answered we do not know. If the solution is to be not a passing subterfuge to escape from the embarrassments of the moment but a permanent establishment, through which the relations of states may be based on peace and goodwill, not on conquest and aggrandisement and oppression, then we know this—all those districts in which the population is predominantly Polish must be separated from the states to which they now belong. No partial or incomplete restoration will be sufficient. Prussia must give up her Polish provinces; Austria must contribute as her share the Polish districts of Galicia,

and they must be joined with the nucleus of Polish lands which have been acquired by the Russian Empire. For if there are left lands unredeemed then they will surely remain a source of poison; they will be a festering sore which will produce inflammation and disease, *i.e.*, agitation, conspiracy, intrigue, and war. This new Poland must be a self-governing community. It will be for them to determine whether the head of their state should bear the title of King; in Europe many of us still like to have our kings. But our kings must be men of the same nation, the same language, the same religion as ourselves; they must be not an autocratic ruler imposed on us from outside, but the symbol of the unity of the nation. Poland must have its own parliament, and King and parliament, working in harmony with one another, must give to Poland those laws which the Polish nation desires, and must allow the free opportunity for that unrestrained play of parties and of programmes without which no nation can become conscious of that which it really desires.

What place will Poland take in the international system of Europe? It is too soon to answer this question, but it is not too soon to express the hope that the Russian nation will be capable eventually of a supreme act of generosity—that they will say: This great nation, this Holy Russia, with its tens of thousands of square miles of contiguous territory, with its millions of inhabitants, which comprises half Europe and half Asia, united as no other nation is united by an intensity of national and religious consciousness, has no need to rule over other unwilling dependencies. There may be a period of transition, when the Polish nation—weak, divided by more than a century of living death—is unable to stand upon its own feet. But, looking into the future, we can see the day when the Polish King, crowned at Cracow and ruling at Warsaw, joining under his sceptre all the Polish lands which border the banks of the Vistula and enjoying what has been long denied—access to the sea at that great port of Danzig—will take his place,

owing subjection and suzerainty to no man, as the full and complete equal of the other rulers of a free and independent Europe or instead of a kingdom there may be a republic.

And what hitherto has been but a vague hope and a distant aspiration now seems on the verge of fulfilment. The Russian autocracy has fallen, and that great event, by which freedom is given to the Russian nation, will also give freedom to the other races allied to Russia under a common despotism. Those generous feelings by which the Revolution was brought about, and which it will nourish in the future, cannot be confined to Russia alone. Already the decree has gone out that the Poles shall, by free elections, choose a constituent assembly to decide the future of their own race. We may now hope that a free Russia, united to a free Europe, will in fact undo the wrong committed by Russian despotism in alliance with Prussia and Austria.

### III

#### BOHEMIA

IN my last chapter I spoke of Poland: but Poland is not the only kingdom which has been destroyed. Far back in the Middle Ages there was a Kingdom of Bohemia; we know it, and you know it because you will have read in your history of England of the blind King of Bohemia who fought on the field of Crecy, and whose device of three ostrich feathers and motto *Ich dien* (I serve) are still the device and the motto of the Prince of Wales. There was a King of Bohemia; there is one no longer. There was a Bohemian nation; that too we ought to know well, because the Bohemian nation gave us the first beginnings of that to which at least Protestant England and Protestant America owe their present faith. The religious history of English Protestantism goes back to Wycliffe, whom we call the morning star

of the Reformation; but Wycliffe himself had received the impulse and inspiration from abroad, from the distant Bohemian nation. Bohemia had given to England a Queen, the wife of Richard II., and with her came the knowledge of the new teaching of John Huss. Huss was the first of the Protestants, and from the Bohemian nation sprang the beginnings of the reformed faith. But Huss was not only a great religious teacher; he was also a great patriot. The religious movement which he led was only part of a great national movement for establishing the full freedom of the Czech nation which was already being crushed by the superior forces of the Germans. It was opposed, less as a religious than as a national movement. A century later the German nation acclaimed Luther, and has never since then ceased to acclaim him as the real founder of modern Germanism. For a similar national movement in another race they had then, as they have now, no sympathy. And so Huss was burned—burned at a great council held on German soil under a German Emperor, and a death similar to that which came upon their great leader fell also upon the Bohemian nation. And more than two centuries later, in the great war which was fought on the soil of Europe for religious liberty, the first blow was directed by the house of Austria against the people of Bohemia. They were defeated and crushed, their English Queen was driven to be a wanderer on the face of the earth, and from that time the name and nation of the Bohemians—or, as they called themselves, the Czechs—were wiped out, as it seemed for ever, from the map of Europe. It was the same house of Austria, the same armies, the same generals, who, at the same time, tried to crush out the reformed religion and the new national spirit of Germany. In Germany they only half succeeded. A new Germany has arisen in opposition to the house of Austria; but now German Nationalism, which should have been inspired with the true spirit of liberty, has combined with its ancient enemy, and conspires with it to hold Bohemia in permanent bondage.

But we know how difficult it is to destroy the spirit of life. The seeds that had been buried ages ago in some forgotten tomb will spring up when brought into contact with the sun and the wind and the rain, and when the spirit of liberty, which had always been nourished in England and found its voice in America and in France, was transplanted by the Revolution to the East of Europe, the spirit of the Bohemian nation, warmed and watered by it, sprang again to life.

For seventy years a great struggle has been taking place, little heard of in Western Europe. Many centuries ago the Bohemians had chosen as their Kings the Dukes, who have now become the Emperors, of Austria. It was a free offer of a crown; all they asked for in return was the maintenance of their national institutions and defence against foreign enemies. The latter was given, the former was neglected. Among the titles which the Austrian Emperor holds, one of the first is that of King of Bohemia, but this title remains a mere name. Bohemia was a titular kingdom; they have demanded, and demanded in vain, that their king should come to Prague and there assume the ancient crown of King Wenceslas. This promise was given, but like many other promises it was broken. Something indeed the nations have succeeded in winning: the struggles of two generations had brought it about that the Czech language should be used and recognised officially in the government of the country; they had their own Assembly, which had many rights in internal affairs, but was still subject in essential things to the supremacy of the Central Parliament and the Imperial offices, which were situated at Vienna, and were, as they must be, predominantly German in spirit.

The new Charter of Liberties for Europe cannot neglect this nation which has struggled so bravely for its existence. How terrible is their situation at the present moment! In the great war, which has become a war between the Teutonic and the Slavonic nations, their sympathies cannot but be with those who are of one

blood and kindred speech. But they have no voice in determining their own policy. There is no Bohemian Foreign Minister, there is no Bohemian Minister of War, there is no Bohemian army; there are only regiments in the Austro-Hungarian army. They have not even the freedom which Russia gives to the Finns, who are exempt from service in the army; they have not the liberty of voluntary service which we give to the Irish. And so the Czech citizens and peasants have been called from their homes, placed under German commanders, and driven forth to fight in a cause which they detest, and in every Czech regiment sent to the front there are incorporated 40 per cent. of Germans and Magyars to watch and control them. The true history of this tragedy will perhaps never be known. We do know that hundreds of the leaders of the nation are languishing in jail, many of them under a sentence of death, and that others have found safety in flight and are eating out their souls in exile. We do know that whole regiments have passed, or tried to pass, over on the field of battle to those whom they cannot look upon as their enemies. Of these some have been destroyed, literally annihilated; others, if all that we hear is true, are now to be found fighting on the side of the Allies against the Germanic Powers.

Within the Austrian State, among the many others, there are two nations—the Magyars or Hungarians, the Bohemians or Czechs—about equal in population. The one, the Magyars, have been given full, complete, and absolute self-government; they have a full part in the government of the whole empire; the common ministers of war and of foreign affairs are jointly responsible to the Austrian and Hungarian Parliaments. Why is Bohemia deprived of its equal share in the government of an empire in which it has an equal stake? And why is it that two millions of this nation, cut off from all association with their more fortunate brethren, are held in subjection by the Hungarians?

The story is told that when the compact was made

between Austrian and Magyar, by which the empire is now governed, an Austrian statesman said to his Hungarian colleague: "If you look after your barbarians, we will look after ours." Among these barbarians were the Czechs and the Slovacs—the Czechs assigned to the Austrian portion of the Empire, the Slovacs to the Hungarians. But the Czechs and Slovacs were no barbarians; they had a great university at Prague to which in the fourteenth century the Germans from the neighbouring districts had to go in search of learning. With the German conquest it was transformed into a German University; now it has become once more a centre of national thought. In no nation is the number of illiterates so small; it is less among the Czechs than among the German inhabitants of Bohemia.. If Poland is the country of Chopin, Bohemia is the motherland of Dvorák. If Copernicus, the founder of modern astronomy, was a Pole, Comenius, one of the first men who brought a free and independent judgment to bear on the problem of education, was a Bohemian. Needless to say he, with many thousands of his fellow-countrymen, was driven out by the Germans.

What the future constitution of the kingdom of Bohemia will be it is still too soon to predict. This will be one of the most difficult problems with which the Peace Conference will have to deal. Bohemia is unlike Poland in this, that it has and can have no direct access to the sea, and without this, as President Wilson has pointed out, it is difficult for a nation to enjoy full political and economic independence. The proper place of Bohemia seems to be perhaps rather that of a unit in a friendly confederation of nations, associated for mutual defence and joined in an economic league. Such a confederation might include the Bohemians, the Hungarians, the Southern Slavs, and perhaps the Roumanians. It is one of the tragedies of history that the House of Austria has let slip the opportunity, while there was yet time, of establishing this. How different would the condition of Europe be if it had been more wisely guided,

if it had recognised that that great Empire could be gradually transformed into a free republic of nations! It has preferred the other way.

The question will then be asked whether it is even now too late, whether the constitution of the Empire might not so be changed as to provide fully for the liberty and self-government of the Bohemians and of all the other races within the empire. There are many who hoped, even after the war had begun, that some solution of this kind might be possible; any such hope seems to have been futile—no sign comes from Austria. The Emperor has since the war began never ventured to summon the Austrian Parliament to Vienna. The control of Austrian policy and Austrian armies is falling more and more into the hands of the Germans; there is no sign within the Empire of the wideness of view or the force of will which alone could preserve it. All that we hear from Vienna points in the other direction. The latest proposals for an alteration in the Government are that the use of the language should be impeded, that the common institutions which the Bohemians in fact enjoy shall be broken down, and that Bohemia, instead of taking its place in the Austrian federation as a single or undivided organic whole, shall be broken up into administrative districts. These districts will be arranged so far as possible as to give the greatest influence to the German minority, and those liberties which the Czechs have secured by fifty years of perseverance will be wiped away. History will not wait; the patience of the subject nations is exhausted; the years which have been allowed to elapse cannot be recalled.

#### IV

### ROUMANIA AND THE SOUTHERN SLAVS

IN the Poles and Bohemians we have two ancient nations which have been destroyed, deprived of their king-



doms, and made subject to alien rule. Very different is the situation of the Roumanians and the Southern Slavs. Both these latter peoples had been subjected to the Turkish conquest, and for many centuries they were obliterated and the whole South-East of Europe became a part of the Ottoman Empire. But as there spread the decay which rapidly set in as soon as the Moslem conquerors had gained possession of Constantinople and thereby became inheritors of the vices of the Byzantine Empire, their Christian subjects began to stir and cast off the chains which bound them. In this they could look for assistance to the two great Christian Empires, the Austrian and the Russian. The process was very long, very slow; rebellion succeeded rebellion and war succeeded war, but at last there were established subordinate principalities, which, while acknowledging the suzerainty of the Sultan, were freed from the interference of Turkish officials. From those principalities have grown the independent kingdoms of Roumania and Serbia, both of them in our own days. But things have so come about that, unlike Bulgaria, which includes within its boundaries practically all those who have any claim to Bulgarian nationality, a very large portion of the Roumanian and the Serbian race have fallen under the power of the Austrian Emperors. The problem here, therefore, is one very different from that with which we had to deal in the case of Bohemia and of Poland. It is not the creation of a new nor the restoration of an ancient kingdom; it is the extension of an existing kingdom to its natural boundaries. The kingdom of Roumania includes some seven million inhabitants; just beyond the border are three million other Roumanians. When the kingdom of Roumania entered the war, the Government and the people were inspired by the one hope that they might rejoin to themselves the Roumanians outside the kingdom, and, by the annexation of these districts, form a greater Roumania, a country large enough to hold its own among the smaller States to which it would be contiguous.

The case of Serbia is more difficult for this reason,—that the Serbians of Serbia are fewer in number than those of the same race outside. Moreover, we here find a further source of division. The Serbian race is divided into two halves, of which one belongs to the Eastern Church and uses the Russian alphabet; the other, generally called the Croats, are Roman Catholics and use the alphabet common in Western Europe. Again, while the majority of the Serbs outside the kingdom are inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina—districts which have only within the last thirty years been freed from Turkish rule—the Croats have for many hundreds of years been united to the Hungarian crown, and under Austro-Hungarian dominion have enjoyed what, with all its faults, has been an orderly and civilised administration.

We have, then, two completely different problems: on the one hand the union of Serbia with Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other that with Croatia and Dalmatia.

The first is an object which from the beginning of the war has been generally recognised as a necessary one. Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina form a closely connected district, all inhabited by one common race, speaking a common language, and Bosnia and Herzegovina intervene between Serbia and the seaboard. These provinces have been under Austrian government for a comparatively short time only, *i.e.* since 1879, and it was not until 1908 that the formal annexation took place. It was this annexation which was the origin of the present troubles. Until it was completed the Serbs had always hoped that in some way or other it might be brought about that these provinces would be transferred to them; but formal annexation dissipated these hopes, with the result that the whole Serbian race was driven into the most intense enmity to the Austrians. This enmity was increased when, after the first Balkan war in 1912, the Serbians hoped to gain access to the sea. This access was forbidden solely ow-

ing to the will of Austria. Since it became apparent that the superior power of Austria was the unchangeable enemy of all Serbian aspirations, it was inevitable that Serbia must look forward to the first opportunity of helping in some blow directed against Austria, the result of which would be that her national unity would be secured.

The Croatian problem is infinitely more difficult, and this for two reasons. In the first place, we do not know what is the view which the Croats themselves take of it. During the war all free expression of opinion has been impossible. The Croatian regiments have fought in the Austrian armies. Have they done so willingly, or is there no truth in the reports that large bodies of them have passed over to the Russians on the field of battle? We know that hundreds of the Croat leaders have been thrown into prison or executed and Croat papers suppressed—sure signs that the people no longer acquiesce in their present government. On the one hand they are bound by many ties to the House of Hapsburg, on the other they have been occupied for thirty years in an acute struggle with their Hungarian masters. More advanced in civilisation, they could not be asked to accept simple annexation to the kingdom of Serbia; rather, a new state would have to be founded in which there might be something of a federal union between the Serbian monarchy and a restored kingdom of Croatia. But there is another even more serious question at stake, for we cannot obscure the fact that the union of Serbia and Croatia, whatever form it might take, would in fact imply the dissolution and destruction of the Austrian Empire.

This is a problem which the world will have to face. I have not spoken of Italy; it is scarcely necessary to do so. The Italian claims at least cannot be disputed; they are only the completion of that process which began in 1848, and of which the stages were 1859, 1866, 1870. After the Congress of Vienna Austria was predominant throughout the whole peninsula; Venetia

and Lombardy were actually governed from Vienna. The Austrian control has been broken down. The kingdom of Italy has taken its place; Lombardy and Venetia have been freed, but the process of liberation was not carried out completely. The Austrians still maintain their rule over the valleys running down from the Alps to the great plain; the Italians justly claim that the frontier shall be pushed back to the top of the mountain barrier, which is in fact the division between the two nationalities, and that the great city of Trieste, Italian in population as in origin, shall be incorporated in the Italian kingdom. There may indeed be some difficulties in determining the precise boundaries on the East and the delimitation between the Italian and Slavonic States on the Adriatic, but it is not with these smaller matters of detail that at present we are occupied. It is sufficient to clear our minds with regard to the greater principles.

But this is the important thing to note, that the Italian problem is the same in essence as that of Roumania and that of Serbia. Each one of them implies the separation of considerable districts from the Austrian Empire as at present constituted, and the total transference of territory, if it were brought about, would be so great as to destroy the secular position which Austria has held in Europe as one of the Great Powers by which international relations were determined.

## V

### SOUTH SLAVS AND CENTRAL EUROPE

WE can all see that the real problem which will be presented to the world when the Peace Congress meets is not so much what we may call the German problem, as the Austrian and the Turkish. Not the German problem, because, whatever the result of the war may be, we can predict this,—that Germany will remain after the

war a sovereign, independent, undivided State, shorn it may be of one or two districts on the Eastern and the Western frontiers, the inhabitants of which have refused to consider themselves as German, but in its essential features the Germany which we have known in the past. There may be, there inevitably will be, profound changes in the internal government of the country, but these will not be a matter of international arrangement. Whether Germany will continue to be governed as now, whether the power of the Empire will be diminished, whether there will be changes in the relations of Prussia to the other Federal States, whether even (I do not think this will be the case) the monarchical institutions will be overthrown and a German Republic established—all these are matters for the German nation itself to determine. Quite otherwise is it with Austria and with Turkey; for, let us recognise it frankly and fully, the peace terms of the Allies imply a diminution of territory so great as to amount to a disintegration and dissolution of these two Empires.

This has been seized on by German writers who do not cease to protest against the extravagant terms suggested by the Allies. They do not cease at the same time to protest against proposals for the annihilation of Germany, although such proposals have not and will not be made; but they have some justification for speaking of the annihilation of Austria and of Turkey. Of Turkey I do not propose on this occasion to speak, and indeed what need is there to do so? In America at least no voice surely would be heard in defence of an empire which since the time of its establishment has not made a single contribution, however small, to the civilisation and progress of the world; their government has been an alternation between sloth, indifference, sensuality, and paroxysms of destruction and massacre. But Austria is different. With all her faults, Austria has been for 300 years one of the greatest, proudest and most dignified states in the commonwealth of Christendom, and it is the government seat at Vienna which has

been the source of order and authority through all the Valley of the Danube.

The dissolution of Austria, the annihilation of the empire! Let us look at these expressions from another point of view. Destruction is only legitimate when it is the condition of a new creation; we cut down a great forest tree only to give freedom of growth, air, light, and sunshine to the fruit-growing plants which will occupy the ground that it leaves free.

The overthrow of the Empire! Let us regard this not from the point of view of the Government, the State, the Army, the Government offices, but from the point of view of the men who live under their control and protection. Do not matters then take on a very different aspect?

If we read any typical German discussion as to the condition of affairs which they hope to secure at the end of the war we shall always find placed in the front rank the conception that Eastern Europe must be so arranged as to leave open a channel of communication, a corridor, a road between Central Europe and the sea. They, thinking purely as Germans, wish to have access to the East for "exploitation" and the carrying out of their grandiose schemes of conquest and civilisation. For them, therefore, the Balkans, the peoples, races, and districts which intervene between the lands of German speech and the derelict countries which have been ruined by the Turks, take the form merely of so many miles of land intervening between them and the objects of their ambition. For the German these people have no essential right of existence; all the problems which arise in regard to them are reduced to whether or not they will make easy the line of communication between Germany and Asia.

When we have said this we have said all that need be said. German claims, as Germans themselves make them, are overthrown in the very formula in which they are conveyed, for they imply this—that there are certain races the greatness and prosperity of which is an

end in itself, and others which only exist for the benefit of the more favoured. The establishment of a great kingdom of Serbia, of a powerful and extended Roumania, would be inconvenient to Germany, because they would interpose a barrier between Germany and other parts of the world. Therefore these States must remain small, helpless, dependent for political and commercial prosperity upon the more powerful German nation.

But the Allies say, and all history will endorse what they say, that this is a wrong way to envisage the problem. We have not to consider whether the existence of a great Serbia is or is not convenient to Germany—that is a matter which is completely unimportant; the activity of every nation is necessarily conditioned by its geographical situation. It has to make the best of the world in which it finds itself. Spain is cut off from access to the rest of Europe by the interposition of France; this was no reason why, as in fact at one time took place, the Spaniards should establish control over Italy, Western Germany, and the Netherlands, and encircle France in a ring of iron. Sweden, shut up in her own peninsula, is cut off from Southern Europe by the great bulk of Germany; that is no reason why, as once happened, the Swedes should secure for themselves a *piéd à terre* in Continental Europe at the expense of the Germans. This law is fundamental; it is under this law that England has for over 300 years consistently refused, even though she might easily have acted otherwise, to undertake the government of any part of the Continent of Europe. It is under this law that Austria has rightly been driven from the Italian Peninsula and that France has been confined to her natural frontiers. In the modern world Germany, and Germany alone, claims that it shall be violated for her sole benefit, and that these Slavonic States should be condemned to a position of perpetual servitude for the benefit of German trade.

The real problem then is, do the Serbs, whether of the Kingdom or the neighbouring Austrian provinces, exist

for their own sake? Is their government to be a thing to be tried, as is the government of other countries, entirely in reference to the people themselves, or is it to be judged in reference to its effect upon Germany? Are Serbia, Bulgaria, and Roumania to be looked upon merely as a road and corridor between Central Europe and the Black Sea, the Bosphorus, the Ægean? To this question there can be but one answer,—at least in America, for every American who accepts the German point of view is thereby guilty of treachery to the very principles on which his own state has been established.

We must then, for the moment, put away from our minds the problem as it appears to those who live at Vienna and at Berlin, and consider it purely from the point of view of the inhabitants of Belgrade, Serajevo and Agram. And as soon as we have done so, how simple it all becomes! Here is a great country, extending from Monastir to Ragusa and Cattaro; it is inhabited by some fifteen millions of people; from one end to the other there is no difference of language as great as that which exists between Devonshire and Midlothian; throughout it all men can understand one another; there is no essential difference of rank or class, of nobles or of peasants; the people have the same traditional institutions throughout; their culture is based on the existence of the village community and the undivided family, a fact which separates the Slavs from the races of Western Europe; and, if there be a difference of religion—for some are Catholic and some are Orthodox—it is not greater than that which exists between England and Scotland and Ireland. Nowhere on the face of the world is there a country of which it may be said so definitely that all its people should have a common government, and a government carried on by men of their own race and in their own language.



## VI

## AUSTRIA

I WRITE with no hostility to Austria; there is no reason why any Englishman should feel any ill-will towards a State which has again and again been an ally of Great Britain in the wars of the past, and which has, perhaps alone of all Continental countries, never entered into rivalry with her. Austria is the one country of which it may be said that it never has had, in the past, and, so far as we can see, will not in the future have any objects of ambition which would compete with British interests. The part which Austria has played in the past has been a great one, and in many ways an honourable and beneficent. For 200 years she was the bulwark of Europe against the Turks, and, notwithstanding all the faults of her internal administration, she has succeeded in maintaining the essentials of civilised government and civilised life among the diverse populations over whom she has ruled. This has been no easy task. Among the mountains of the Carpathians and on the plains of the Middle Danube, where Europe verges upon Asia, men of different races, languages, and religions live inextricably mingled together—Roumanian and Magyar, German and Ruthenian, Moslem and Jew and Slovenian. Here have been slumbering the passions of religious and racial animosity, and were the strong arm of the Central Government withdrawn, then, as was in fact seen during the Revolution of 1848, tumults and civil war would arise which would be fought out on the methods with which we have become familiar in Macedonia. The establishment of the strong Austrian Government was perhaps an essential stage during the period of transition from Turkish rule to national independence, but it was only a period of transition and it cannot be perpetuated. It could perhaps have con-

tinued, but on one condition alone, that the Government at Vienna should have realised that the Empire must be transformed into a federation of free nations, such as Switzerland in fact is, in which equal rights would have been given to all. They have chosen the other path. A privileged position has been granted the Germans and the Magyars; these two races, either of whom is a comparatively small minority of the whole, have claimed a privileged position. In order to support and maintain this they have during the last generation learned to depend in international policy upon the German Empire, so that the great strength, military and economic, of Germany has in fact been used to maintain a form of government in Austria and in Hungary which, if the Empire had stood alone in the world, would have collapsed long ago. The result of this has been that Austria has steadily declined from the great and independent European position which it once occupied—it has become affiliated to Germany. Attempts have been made now and again to reassert its freedom of movement; they have always failed, and Austria has come to heel. It had become a "brilliant second" to Germany. After the war this process would inevitably continue further; closer bonds of union, commercial and military, would be established, and even though Germany were defeated in the war she would emerge stronger than ever, because the authority which emanates from Berlin would in fact rule as far as the Adriatic. There was room in Europe for an independent Austria; there is no place for an Austria which has become a junior partner in the great firm of Central Europe.

During the war we have looked to see if there were any sign of a rejuvenation of Austria; there is none. Hungary remains as it was before—virile, warlike, ruthless—but the Austrian armies are fighting under German generals; it is the support of Germany alone by which the resistance of the Empire is still bolstered up; the Government at Vienna remains indolent, corrupt, wanting in initiative, blind to the great problems of

the future. We look to Austria for some response and we get none. The old Austria has in fact disappeared.

But if this old independent Austria has gone, then it is essential that there should be built up in its place new States large enough to be self-dependent. This can only be done by creating a large South Slavonic State which would intervene between Germany on the one side, the Adriatic and the Ægean on the other. This, entering as we may hope into some federal union, not only with Roumania but also with Hungary and Bulgaria, will form a solid block which will for the first time give to the inhabitants of these regions that political power, military and commercial strength, which, owing to the misfortunes of their history, they have been for so long denied.

Do not let us be foolishly optimistic. Let us not ignore the profound difficulties which confront Europe in the settlement of these great problems. Whatever the issue of the war may be, it is no easy task to destroy and to create States, to establish a centre of government where none has existed before, to create order out of chaos, to build up armies and courts of justice and administrative departments and all the paraphernalia of government, and to ensure that the orders which they issue shall be obeyed and that the administration which they create shall be effective. If this is difficult at any time, much more so will it be when these countries have been for three years exposed to the worst ravages of warfare and the towns and villages are lying in ruins, when the population is decimated by disease and starvation, when all the habits of civilised life have ceased.

It is easy enough to talk of creating a Polish State, a Bohemian State, and a great South Slav State, but long and difficult will be the course that has to be run before it has been achieved in practice. It may well be that we find that the full achievement is indeed at this time impossible. We cannot at one stroke completely solve problems which are inherited from centuries of aggression and misgovernment. It will indeed take gen-

erations to undo the mistakes of the past and the disasters of the present. But even if we recognise this, we will also recognise that it makes all the difference whether we start in the right or in the wrong direction. There are certain great principles of government which never can cease to be true. If we grasp them firmly and guide our course by them every step will lead in the right direction. We can take an example from the past. At the Congress of Vienna one hundred years ago Europe was confronted by a similar situation; then it chose the wrong course. It neglected the sound and eternal principles of statesmanship; it ignored the rights of the peoples, the aspirations of the nations, and cared only for the rulers and the States. What was the result? It has taken a hundred years of revolution and warfare to undo what was then done and to set Europe once more upon the right course. Belgium, Germany, Italy—in each of these countries the settlement of Vienna has been overthrown, and it was right that it should be overthrown. But how much did the effort cost! What was the loss to Europe of the wasted years before the effort was successful! Now we have to do not with the Western but the Eastern lands of Europe; now we have the same problem before us. How are we going to approach it? Are we to start from the kings and the rulers of the existing States, the kingdom of Prussia, the Russian Czardom, the Austrian Empire? These indeed are the entities of which diplomacy in the past has taken note. For a hundred years it has been the constant cry of all who have called themselves Liberal that diplomacy should recognise not rulers but peoples, and this means that the new settlement of Europe should ask itself, not how much territory has to be awarded to Germany, to Russia, to Austria, but how are the Poles, the Bohemians, the Croatians, the Roumanians to be governed? In truth the terms of the Allies, in that they have taken note of this, will always form one of the greatest landmarks in European history. We need not therefore be discouraged if our new Poland, our new

Bohemia, our new South Slavia does not, either in the nature of its institutions or in the delimitation of territory, precisely meet the demands of every idealist. It would be sufficient if we laid the foundation-stones on which future generations will build. The world will not cease to progress; all that matters is that it should move in the right direction. It is for us to give the direction.

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