

Empire at All Costs: London, Vienna and the Causes of World War I

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Empires and nations are opposites, that is, they are opposed political systems. The former seeks to expand continually, and in the British case, for the sake of profit. Normally, nations seek independence, unity and internal development. Much of their time is spent keeping empires away. In World War I, the insecurity of the decrepit empire of the Hapsburgs was the direct and efficient cause of it, while of course, London's eternal obsession with eliminating any kind of competition was also important. This paper seeks to show how Vienna bears much of the blame for the war, and what drove these two artificial, unnatural empires to drag Europe into several generations of slaughter in order to justify them.

I.

World War I was not a clash of nations, but the competition of empires. Two specifically, the Austrian and British, acted so arrogantly that they unleashed the most violent war in history up until that time for the sake of maintaining empires as immoral as they were unnatural. The periphery of Europe was the scene on which Vienna sought to shore up its patchwork imperium while London refused to countenance any competition from the “uncultured Hun.”

The increasingly untenable and divided empire of the Hapsburgs required war in order to keep the ramshackle empire together. In Meyer's (2007) work, he argues that Vienna, seeking the destruction of Serbia in the Balkans, required the creation of an artificial “Bosnian” and “Albanian” identity. The purpose was to keep Serbia divided from Montenegro and the Adriatic and hence, dependent on herself.

Vienna's arrogance eventually alienated all of her allies, and, as the war developed, she proved a most incompetent ally. In her attempt to shore up her economy, Serbia was targeted as the obstacle for Vienna's control over Balkan resources, ports and labor. If London could ensnare most of the world for the sake of the elite's profit, then Austria-Hungary could at least get the southern Slavs as substitute. Unfortunately, Austria did not have the strength, identity or resolve to do more than start the war. It was up to others to finish it.

Austria's false belief that she had a blank check from Berlin led to the reluctant mobilization of Russia and began the most mindless slaughter in history. This purported “permission” from Berlin to do what she pleased meant that Austria could provoke Belgrade and Petrograd without consequence.

There is no evidence whatsoever that the Serbian state was behind the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand. First of all, the Archduke was probably the most pro-Slavic of the royal family. The Austrian government rejected the idea that Serbia was in any way involved (Fromkin, 2004: 169). The Hungarians and Germans had an interest in his demise, not the Slavic states. Secondly, Serbia had lost a huge number of men in the two Balkan wars that ended just a few years before. Serbia was broke and bleeding, desperately requiring a long stretch of peace to recover. To believe she had any interest whatsoever in provoking Austria, with German backing no less, is absurd.

Third, the demands of Vienna were absurd and designed to give Vienna an excuse for war. In the ultimatum, Vienna sought the ability to suppress whatever publications or political groups they chose (in Serbia); oversight of Serbian education (especially history) and the right to remove any Serbian politician from office. Strangely, they told Belgrade who to arrest for the crime. Since Vienna had already concluded that Belgrade was not involved in the assassination, this was a deliberate attempt to provoke Serbia. The Russians demanded the papers from this very investigation, which were naturally refused. Worse, Vienna demanded that anyone expressing hostility to Austria-Hungary needed to be reported, and, probably more absurd of all, that Vienna's recent absorption of Serbian areas, especially Bosnia, be accepted as legitimate.

In other words, to avoid the war Vienna desperately wanted and needed, Serbia would have to become a voluntary colony of Vienna. These demands, read with shock and dismay in Berlin, and the Kaiser asked the Austrian general staff to tone down its demands. Regardless, these prove that Austria is the main cause of the war. The British Prime Minister Asquith called these demands "bullying and humiliating" and Churchill called it the most "insolent document of its kind ever devised" (all from the Fromkin book, 186-190). The world was stunned to learn that Serbia accepted most of these demands, except the one giving Austria the right to involve itself in criminal investigations in Serbia.

Serbia had sold off its independence to Austria to avert war. Of course, Austria invaded regardless (and was defeated). Vienna's disillusioned German allies saw Austrian behavior as immoral to an extreme, and the Kaiser argued that Serbian's acceptance of most of these absurd demands meant that Austrian war plans were present from the start. Austria needed war and, given Serbia's heroic sacrifice for the sake of peace, forced the issue once all cause for war was gone.

Austria was the European Turkey. Deeply divided, economically stagnating, and facing a Hungarian oligarchy making increasing demands on the German part of the state, war was the only way to better her economic status by taking Balkan resources and solidifying German trade. War would unify many of the constantly bickering ethnicities of the empire and provide a common purpose.

Finally, eliminating Serbia from the Balkans was the only way that Vienna could ensure cheap resources and port cities such as Thessaloniki. The problem was when Russia stated that any invasion of Serbia would force a mobilization from Petrograd, Vienna now was in an awkward position. That Vienna attacked Serbia regardless of this knowledge proves that Austria fired the first, completely unnecessary shots of the war, and, additionally, that she was aware that a world war would be the result of her short sighted policies. As war neared, the initially hawkish Chancellor of Germany, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, condemned Vienna for its irresponsibility. Initially an integral part of Austria's aggressive policy, by the early Summer of 1914 he writes to the Austrian general staff that Germany "will not permit itself to be frivolously drawn by Vienna into a world conflagration."

II.

Historiography requires a method as serious as its subject matter. For World War I, a single cause, even Austria's insecurity or London's pomposity, is insufficient to make an argument. Vienna was the efficient cause of the war, but the war would have remained a local Balkan conflict had the roots of conflict not been everywhere in Europe. In terms of method, it is best to treat history as the dialectical interchange of the individual and society as well as the social group and the society as a whole. Hence, London banks required the state to impose its regime in Russia and, with luck, Germany. The military elite of Vienna and Paris would, of course, be put out at this, and that level of London's financial monopoly would show the fragile unity of Europe's elite financiers.

Second, that nationalism is not imperialism and in fact, they are opposites. Bulgaria and Serbia were nations, Vienna and Petrograd were not. By definition, an empire is multinational, or else it would just be another nation. Therefore, nationalism and imperialism (that is, empire) are opposites and normally, it is the arrogance of imperial powers that provoke nationalism as a philosophy of resistance. This is essential: Vienna's empire was breaking down in that each of the ethnic groups in that imperium were politically conscious and often aggrieved with the Viennese bureaucracy. Serbia and Bulgaria, for example, sought independence and ethnic unity, which was itself a tall order. Empires on the other hand, are never satisfied with what they possess. Therefore, the moral distinction between the two goals cannot be ignored. The needs of the nation are far more defensible than that of an empire constantly expanding.

Third, given her unique historical position, Germany could be seen as both a nation and an empire. Hemmed in on all sides, Germany was a nation that possessed the economy and industry to become a substantial imperial force. Russia, Austria, France and Britain, on the other hand, are most certainly not nation-states, but were empires of long standing.

Finally, in any analysis of World War I, only a detailed, specialized focus on a specific empire or nation is required. Without such an approach, nations and empires are reduced to slogans that assume an empire, as a singular unit, makes decisions. In the Austrian empire, for example, the emperor was no dictator. When trying to understand why this empire was so utterly intransigent concerning Serbian growth in the 20th century, the historian must understand the economic demands of Hungary, the view of the army and that of the German bureaucracy, just to name three.

While Britain cared only to use Germany against Russia and hence eliminate her two most rapidly advancing competitors, Russia and Britain were allies only on paper. Petrograd and London had nothing in common and were vehement enemies for most of their existence. In 1905, as Britain and Russia were at war in Japan, Central Asia and China, a growing Germany might begin the process of colonizing Europe herself. This included the Balkans, the bedraggled Austrian empire, parts of Turkey and, if they were lucky, chunks of France. If Germany were largely barred from the third world, then nothing short of Europe would do as a substitute. Austria was in the same boat, though in her case, keeping Bosnia was too much for her fragile structure.

Germany naively sought to use Austria to fend off Russia while using allies such as Bulgaria to move into the resource-rich Balkans. The one thing both empires had in common was the desire to check Petrograd. France's move towards a pro-Russian position in the late 19th century was not surprising. It is possible that London, seeking Vienna's future in vivid colors, sought Russia over Germany. The bet was that Austria would disintegrate and Germany, fighting Russia, would solve two problems at once. Albion was proven correct on all counts.

Unlike Austria, however, Germany saw the new Balkan states as potential partners rather than obstacles. Germany's confidence is contrasted to Vienna's fragility in how each viewed Serbia or Bulgaria and hence, the war itself. In the early 20th century and again in the 1930s, Berlin brought the Balkan nations into economic dependence upon her, which was in the interests of all concerned. The Austrians were upset since German policy permitted the Slavs and Greeks to bypass Vienna and attach themselves to the dynamic Berlin. Leaving Vienna to her own internal contradictions seemed inevitable.

The British empire, unlike the Russian, was a for-profit corporation. Russia's possessions were contiguous to her and were granted either by voluntary consent, such as Georgia or Armenia, or conquest after lengthy warfare, such as the Turkish tribes of Central Asia financed by London. In the Balkans, the Hungarian nobility, long a part of the bourgeoisie, sought expansion into the Balkans to check Russia.

The development of German technology threatened London's dominance. Russia's economy was growing at a massive rate (as was her population), and the tottering Turkish empire meant independence for the Orthodox states of Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece. Russia would be the winner, and in a panic, Britain sought the maintenance of the Turkish empire. Keeping Turkey artificially alive had been western European policy for some time. Now, France had defected as she too, saw Germany with alarm. London's banks saw the royalist, traditionalist and rapidly advancing Russia as an alternative to their own usury. The long term British idea was to do away with the tsar and annex this cornucopia of resources before the Germans could.

Germany and Britain were evenly matched. The Franco-Russian alliance made it impossible for Germany, therefore, to maintain a war on two fronts. To rely on Vienna shows how fragile the German plan was, and that, since Austria's weakness was well known, Vienna was a liability to her. Worse, the Central powers not only required a strong Austrian presence, but a strong Turkish one as well, though few at the time could have given this much credence. The fact that the Serbs twice defeated the far larger Austrian forces in 1914 did little but confirm Berlin's fears about this crumbling ally.

The war can only be grasped as caused and concluded by many social forces, personalities and institutions, each defining their interests separately: the public, the state, the empire, ethnicity, the crown, the legislature, the media, the bureaucrats, the military and economic elites, just to name the more important. All of these have their own set of goals that may or may not be identical to the state that they find themselves controlling. The big issue is then how all these groups worked within a global context. In other words, these interests were capable of coming to a compromise that made the war a possibility, then a reality. The titular royal rulers of these empires, almost alone, were the only ruling element that was not enthusiastic about the war.

III.

One of the most important questions about the war is how two important and rapidly growing economies, Russia and Germany, ended up on opposing sides. They had almost all major variables in common and were natural allies. They were both sabotaged by Britain, their monarchical leaders were closely related, and ideologically, Germany and Russia were very similar. Importantly, they both gave the British Tory nightmares.

Russian economic growth from 1895 to 1914 was roughly 10% yearly, with growth of industry at well over 15%. Germany's numbers are similar. In addition, the oil boom in southern Russia (Baku, in Azerbaijan, more specifically) the British ruling class put the empire on war footing. It is worth noting that Germany and Russia were cooperating in exploiting the Azeri fields. Britain spent a fortune arming Japan, Turkey, and the Central Asian nomads against Russia as a result. Since Germany had no interest in these regions, her money was well-spent in building her industrial and transport infrastructure (Henry, 1905 for an analysis of the oil issue).

From the British point of view, the clear victory of either Germany or Russia was unacceptable, since the victor would remain an important source of competition. London had no choice but to set these two powers at odds. The fact that Russia and Britain fought on the same side could only be understood by the analysis of Central Asia. The rise of Japan, for example, is primarily because the British were selling Tokyo their own naval secrets, scrap metal and oil from the colonies. Russia fought Japan in 1905-1906 because Britain was threatened with Russian eastward expansion and her alliance with China and Tibet.

The fact that Bulgaria sided with the central powers is of immense significance, yet only Brose seems to stress this central point. The concept is that if Serbia and Greece were to side with the allies, then Bulgaria, eternally insecure after the Treaty of Berlin cut off huge

amounts of her territory, was fairly easy to manipulate. Bulgaria was the Balkan weak link, since she felt herself cheated after the Balkan Wars. Bulgaria had a strong army and a firm sense of national pride. The one significant weapon in Vienna's arsenal was that Bulgaria could not fight on the same side as Serbia.

Why did these empires continue the slaughter even when it became clear that the war was in no one's interest? The very fact that all empires involved had elected legislatures thrusts the point home that the ruling classes were far less ready for war than the masses. The masses, prodded by the irresponsible press, were screaming for blood in 1914, yet, Tsar Nicholas and his cousin, Wilhelm, were very worried about the consequences.

Meyer answers the question, in part, by dealing with propaganda, absolutely critical to understand the war itself. The creation of the new "information agencies" was the bureaucratic manifestation of this "democratic" form of warfare. Democracy is the culprit, since the masses, the press and politicians – as opposed to the crowned heads who sought peace primarily – were the main cheerleaders for the war.

Meyer's work leads the reader to conclude that which he does not have the heart to say explicitly. The basic conclusions drawn here are, firstly, that the masses that were so important to Wilsonian democratization, were easy to manipulate and were overwhelmingly patriotic. Military life was glorified even as the trenches ground up the best of European manhood. Worst of all, the press and the state were easily able to remove questions of money or oligarchy from the table, and impart the impression that the "honor" of the empire was identical with the average steel worker. The monarchist movement in all European countries had been predicting this for decades. Whoever controls the press, broadly speaking, can control the "democratic will." As it turns out, the emperors were right, but seemed powerless in the face of a huge and well funded bureaucracy and media.

When the war was over, nothing was the same. While Britain bled severely, she might be seen as a possible "victor". Britain's banks cleaned up as the dazed and bleeding states of Germany, Austria and Russia were too weak to resist. Free trade and liberal democracy became dominant at this time not because there is anything inherently superior to this form of government, but only that it was capable of using its financial resources to restructure the planet.

World War I, outside of the immense level of European casualties, was about redrawing the European map. Rome had been the European aspiration since the early middle ages and Greeks, Austrians, Turks and Russians all looked to this lineage. For the first time since the ancient world, Rome was no longer the normative center of European politics. The democratic nation, rather than the "Roman" empire, became the main focus of power after the War.

The global nature of this war comes into even greater focus when the aftermath is included. Britain, herself suffering from the aftermath of the war, was alone capable of rebuilding into an empire of Promethean proportions. Russia, once the Bolsheviks were firmly in charge, expanded to the south. Hitler, and many of his followers, wanted to use eastern Europe as a means of rebuilding German power. During the Depression, Germany was alone a growing economy. Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest, and Sophia, to name four, thrived on the coattails of Berlin as the western world declared bankruptcy.

The powers that were now to reshape the world realized that it was only through foreign exploitation that could provide the resources to rebuild. The Levant was crucial to international trade while Central Asia linked the Balkans, the Black Sea, India and the Far East in a single horizontal line. Africa was drowning in resources while finance capital was able to skim from the profits of every single investment made globally.

The only good thing that came from this war was the ironic justice that Vienna, who fired the first shots with full knowledge of what was to follow, never returned to Europe.

Condemned by history as the cause of the slaughter, the unnatural, synthetic imperium of the Hapsburgs would never be seen again. Unfortunately, the ideological empire of Lenin and the materialist, Darwinian and mercantile empire of the Rothschilds were all that existed to replace it. The failure of the resulting liberal experiment throughout Europe in the 1930s brought these two empires together and, once again, the cream of Europe was sent to an early grave so that London, Washington and Moscow can determine the globe's history until this very day.

IV.

The scattering of Serbs throughout Europe after the 16th century conquest meant that a small, educated elite became quite cosmopolitan. Many Serbs were, as a result, educated in Central and Western Europe. The rest were spread throughout the Balkans and Eastern Europe. This meant that, as the independent Serbian state developed in the 19th century, new social divisions arose. The best educated of the Serbian migrants were influenced by Russia, others Austria, and still others by the western Enlightenment. This social division meant that many Serbs returning to Serbia from Austria, Germany, Hungary or Italy were basically strangers to the peasants whose ancestors struggled under Islamic oppression for several centuries.

These newly educated Serbs were the first to live in cities and took over the machinery of the newly independent state in the 19th century. They adopted ideologies typical for western Europe, but not for the peasants that stayed behind (Stokes, 1990: 385ff). This created sharp divisions in Serbian politics. The constitutional nationalists in the Liberal or Progressive Party were educated in Austria while the populist Radical Party represented the pro-Russian rural peasantry. This in turn created an eastern vs. western division among Serbian intellectuals still existing today (Pavlowitch, 2002: 58-59).

This also meant that Austria-Hungary was brought into contention for the final status of the Balkans after independence (Dragnich, 1975: 351). The price of Austrian sponsorship turned out to be dependence on them both economically and militarily (Pavlowitch, 2002: 31-33). Much of the political maneuvering in independent Serbia was how to break this dependence, which, in the 20th century, meant alliances with France and Germany (Pavlowitch, 2002: 112-119).

The period from 1815 to 1830 in the history of Serbia was based on a strange parallel power between Turkey and Serbia. In Belgrade, the Turks continued to control aspects of the economy, while the prince ruled the northern parts of old medieval Serbia (Stokes, 1990: 30-38). These princes came from two families, the Karageorgevic and the Obrenovic.

These two families developed out of the early 19th century rebellions against Turkey hence, were not of ancient royal blood. They earned their royal position in displaying bravery and martial skill. Their entire claim to royal status was in their anti-Islamic crusade. Therefore, these two royal houses, of which only the Karageorgevic survives today, are only about 200 years old. Since the Turks destroyed the old nobility, no claimant of the older lines remained (Clarke, 1945: 144).

V.

The needless slaughter of World War I had no clear ideological cause. There was no moral crusade, even an imaginary one, that justified this carnage. Scientific elites, for the first time, were forced to reconsider their arrogant claims to objective truth. Technology was used to create the most deadly weapons in history up until that time: air warfare, the tank, the portable machine gun, poison gas, landmines and flame throwers are just a few examples of what science needed (and needs) to answer for.

If there was no moral crusade to justify the carnage, than what happened? Austria-

Hungary was threatened by Serbian growth as Britain was threatened with the Russian. This terminally ill empire, seemingly with nothing holding it together but the German civil service, looked ashen faced as the Russian empire registered double-digit industrial growth, the colonization of the far east, an exploding population and new oil wells in Azerbaijan. This required western support for Islamic movements in order to control Russia.

More specifically, Austria and Britain were worried that the pathetic spectacle of Turkey just meant that Russia could have three satellites, at a minimum, in the Balkans. Montenegro, Serbia and Bulgaria were just the more obvious. Greece and Romania were two others easily able to see a common life under Petrograd. Austria saw Russia in the same way that England saw Germany: as a testament to their own arrogance and claim to universal dominion. After all, the “Mongol savage” could not possibly create an advanced civilization. Yet, the west had to look at Russia, her growth and near autarky with dismay and humiliation.

That the price for this was war did not matter. Vienna was well aware that its crusade against Petrograd meant German involvement. They also knew that German involvement will not leave London and Paris sitting idle. To predict that this will be a pan-European war was not difficult. Tsar Nicholas II, highly sensitive morally, realized that his own mobilization meant total war. This is why he ordered only a partial mobilization and authorized force only if Russian territory were to be breached. This also implied that Islam, in many important respects, needed to be supported in Turkey as well as Bosnia and Kosovo in order to weaken Slavic states.

Austria-Hungary started World War I. Placing blame on the “Black Hand” or some other suitably menacing secret society is not history, but wishful thinking. The assassination of the pro-Slavic Ferdinand was not in the interests of Belgrade or Sophia. The Archduke was deliberately sent off his planned route. His visit was on Vidovdan, the most significant political celebration of Serbian identity of the year. It was a day guaranteed to produce volatility. That the Archduke's security detail seemed to have vanished all seem to point to Vienna's complicity in the death of the irritating Archduke.

Even if that is not true, Austria's reaction alarmed even Germany. Serbia had just finished three wars in the Balkans and was exhausted. That Belgrade would risk yet another war with Vienna and (by definition) Berlin is absurd. Austria had a clear interest in war: Russia needed to be stopped before her empire spanned Asia, Europe and even parts of North America.

For Vienna, the Church of Rome, and the Hungarian bourgeoisie, nothing could be worse than a Russia capable of taking on all Europe by herself. Yet, this is where Petrograd was heading. Add to this the allegiance of Sophia, Athens and Belgrade, plus the small but nearly invincible mountain tribes of Montenegro, and Petrograd would be unstoppable. Vienna, and before that, London, spent a small fortune financing the absurd project of keeping Turkey alive far past her expiration date. Islam remained an important aspect of this immoral foreign policy in Turkey, but also the Balkans and the Caucasus.

Austria-Hungary needed war to keep her ramshackle Empire together. Ukrainian against Pole, Hungarian against Croat, Czech against Slovak and German against everyone spelled doom for the eternally stagnant Vienna. As a Catholic version of Turkey, war could galvanize society, cement her alliance with Germany, and permit her to occupy the wealthy port cities of Thessaloniki or Dubrovnik, as well as Dalmatia. Serbian mineral wealth is legendary, and easy access to the Aegean and Mediterranean made economic sense for an economy in terminal decline.

Hungary, never recovering from Nicholas I intervention against her nationalist in 1848, saw Russia as the utter archetype for “Asian despotism.” As the noble clans of the Magyar state controlled a dependent and half-starved peasantry, this arrogant oligarchy saw peasant land ownership in Russia (about 90% of the land by 1914) and rapidly rising incomes

as an open mockery of their lack of legitimacy. The Magyars exploited Carpathian Rus' without mercy, as Polish magnates, another eternal opponent of the "savage Mongol" kept Ukrainian peasants in Galicia in permanent dependency and illiteracy.

Given this amoral position, Magyar support of Turkey is given its context. Hungarian nobles (which, in an odd curve of history, were the same as her bourgeoisie) would more likely give away their slave girl harems than see Russia rule the Balkans. Worse, the arrogance of her plutocracy did not even respect Vienna, as her own oligarchy did not want to take orders from German bureaucrats.

This was made more obnoxious to the Magyars since, in the post-1848 world when tariffs fell, their wheat production grew about 500% by 1900. Even more, Magyar business interests were also paying a substantial amount on Vienna's debt, reaching 58 million crowns and year. As if to rub their noses in it, this newly creative Magyar robber-baron class bought up much of Austria's manufacturers, and, for a time, acted as a serious competitor to Germany. After all, it was the incredible growth of German industry that forced Budapest and Vienna to cooperate in the first place. Neither state could take on both Germany and Russia alone (economically speaking), so a military alliance with Berlin and continued cooperation were in the interests of all.

The only problem was Berlin's attitude towards Russia. Rationally, it seemed clear that Berlin saw an ally in the tsar to balance Paris and London. Clearly a nightmare for Magyar Brahmins, London opium dealers and French decadents, no cost was spared making sure that Petrograd and Berlin found some reason to fight. The arrogance of London, Paris and Vienna were being successfully challenged by the tremendous growth and vitality of Belgrade, Petrograd and Berlin. This could not stand.

This is not to give a free pass to London. Despite their clear belief that they had the divine right to rule the planet, they did not look kindly on competition. After several centuries of trying to undermine Russia in the Balkans, Central Asia and the Far East, the London banking cartel began to see Berlin as a greater threat than the more distant Petrograd.

Austria-Hungary as a political entity had no legitimacy. Germany can claim a unity in language and a scientific establishment second to none. England can claim an ancient Constitution and some vague contribution to common law doctrine. Russia can point to her advanced factory legislation and almost universal peasant land ownership. Austria could point to nothing but her dependence on Germany.

Whether it be the protection of the virile Prussian core of Germany or her own first-rate civil service, Vienna had a constant and pathological inferiority complex. While many of her emperors such as the venerable Franz Josef, Josef II or Maria Teresa were ethical rulers of principle, the society they inherited was absurd, unbalanced and nothing short of a cynical oligarchy based on parasitic rent seeking, especially among the noble elite in Hungary.

World War I was the fairly clear result of all the above. Serbia was a thorn in Vienna's side. Having the temerity to focus on their national development rather than serving Vienna. The failing Austrian economy and her continually falling behind Germany and Russia, the Balkans were to Vienna a means to buttress her own economy. Serbia required a long period of peace to replenish their massive losses in the Balkan wars, and significantly, to break all ties of economic dependency on the Frankenstein monster to the north. In no way did war serve Serbia's interest. It did Austria's, at least in theory.

Worse, Serbia was in debt. Again, blaming either Serbia or Russia for the war is as historically viable as Budapest's claim to moral legitimacy. Serbia and Berlin, to the agonizing chagrin of almost everyone, were establishing lucrative trade relations bypassing Vienna. Between 1905-1908, Serbia registered phenomenal economic growth on Berlin's coattails. Serbian trade with Berlin was almost half of her total international exchange.

Foreign capital from Paris and Berlin was flooding Serbia, meaning that Vienna was

increasingly irrelevant to Serbian economics. Since the Serbian peasantry were self-sufficient and non-monetized, no trade sanctions could affect them. Not only does this suggest that this kind of “primitive” agriculture has its advantages, but that Vienna had few weapons at her disposal other than violence.

VI.

As early as 1910, Vienna was in the process of mobilizing its divided and polyglot armed forces against Serbia, (possibly) Bulgaria, and clearly, Russia. Nothing made this clearer than Austria's first attempt to start a war with Belgrade, the annexation of Bosnia. This was a direct result of the Germano-Serbian alliance. Further, the Magyar bourgeoisie created the Croat “Party of Right,” a suitably anti-Serb Croat nationalist party. Their policy was to create divisions between the two groups. This was even more cynical since Vienna had traditionally used Croatia against Hungary.

Trying to strangle Serbian trade, creating high tariff walls against Serbian pork only meant that Belgrade went to Berlin, Petrograd and Paris. This short-sighted policy backfired on the Magyar nobility only rarely versed in economic science. To add insult to injury, the arrogance of Budapest and Vienna forced Serbs, Bulgars and Montenegrins to consider early versions of the Yugoslav concept. This had originally included Bulgaria, but German promises of increased territory brought Sofia to the Central Powers.

Hence, by 1910-1912, Vienna had decided that war was the only option. Insolently refusing to starve themselves, Serbia had outfoxed the creaking bureaucratic dinosaur of Austria-Hungary. War was needed while the Balkan powers were still recovering from the Balkan Wars. War was needed sooner rather than later because Russia too, given her growth and population, was very close to becoming invulnerable. If Germany was drifting away from the pitiable Austrian empire and moving to join with far more virile powers such as Russia or Serbia, then yet again, war was needed – and soon. Austria-Hungary required war for their very survival.

Proving Austria's obsession with stopping Russia, Hungarian Prime Minister Andrassy offered Belgrade assistance in unifying all Serbs into one state on the condition that she turn on Russia. After the murder of the Archduke, Serbia scurried to satisfy the outrageous demands of Vienna. Vienna, without proof, claimed that the “Black Hand” was an arm of the Serbian government. Notwithstanding Serbia's execution of Col. Apis, Vienna was creating a pretext for war, regardless of its absurdity. Germany was clearly against the war, since peace was in the interests of her growing scientific establishment and technical development. Austria and Austria alone required war.

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