

THE EUROPEAN WAR

And Something of the Causes and Forces Which Have Led To It.

BY HERBERT PEELE

Such a war as the world has never seen since the days of Napoleon is imminent.

On the 29th day of July Austria, the great imperial European power with a population of fifty millions and a fighting force of about one million men, declared war upon and attacked Serbia, an ancient but small kingdom in the Balkan peninsula with a population of three millions and an army of two hundred thousand.

The occasion which was made the pretext for the attack was the assassination on June 28th of the Austrian crown prince in the capital of Bosnia, a province in the northwest of the Austrian empire adjoining Serbia and formally annexed to the Austrian empire in 1908. The assassin was a Serb. Austria declares that the assassination was the result of an active conspiracy of Servians. Following the assassination she made demands upon Serbia which were equivalent to an ultimatum. Serbia replied, as senting to all the demands of her greater neighbor, excepting one; namely, that Austro-Hungarian officials be permitted to sit on boards of inquiry regarding cases of conspiracy of Servians against Austrians. A government which permits officers of a foreign power to sit in its own courts cannot long preserve its dignity, autonomy or independence and Serbia's refusal to accede to this demand appears but natural.

But why should the conflict between Austria Hungary and Serbia be so far reaching in its effects as to threaten, if indeed it has not already involved, all Europe? A hurried glance over the pages of history will give us the answer.

The history of Serbia can be traced back for fifteen hundred years. Her people are Serbs and belong to the same branch of the white race as do the Russians. The Serbs came into the Balkan peninsula in the middle ages with the Bulgars and both established strong empires in that region. In the fourteenth century the Turks invaded Europe and overwhelmed both empires. They also conquered Hungary and besieged Vienna, the capital of Austria. They were driven back before the walls of that city largely by the help of the defeated but not conquered Servians.

Serbia, however, remained a Turkish province for several centuries after the Ottoman invasion, indeed until 1878 when she was declared independent by the treaty of Berlin. From that time the Turk's influence in Europe has grown steadily less and a year ago the Balkan states, Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria, succeeded in driving Turkey into Constantinople. Had there then been a federation of the Balkan States it would have enjoyed the protection of Europe just as the Swiss federation does and the present conflict might have been avoided. Small jealousies, however, prevented this alliance, as each of the States wanted to be the head of the proposed federation.

Bosnia, where the assassination of the Austrian crown prince occurred, was until its annexation in 1908 a Servian province as was also Herzegovina. The annexation of these provinces by Austria cut Serbia off from the sea coast and strengthened the suspicion long felt that Austria desired to make of Serbia a part of its dominion.

Imperial Austria, often called Austria Hungary, as pointed out in the Current Comment column of this newspaper in the issue of July 14th, is a constitutional monarchy. The two States are nominally independent and have been led to join forces from the fact that the crown of both has descended by intermarriage to the same head. The empire was established in its present dual form in 1867 but the Hapsburgs, the family of the present emperor, Francis Joseph I., rising into prominence six hundred years ago are said to have controlled both Austria and Hungary for centuries.

However much Austria may have desired to invade Serbia and control the Balkan peninsula she would never have dared to take this step in the face of all Europe had it not been for the very

plausible excuse given her by the assassination of her crown prince. But yearning to prevent her ancient enemy, Russia, from reaching the Mediterranean as well as desiring very greatly to do so herself it was natural that she should not let this opportunity of invasion escape her.

That Russia should view with equanimity Austria's designs upon Serbia was not to be expected. Russia's inhabitants, as has already been pointed out are one in race and in sympathy with the people of Serbia, but this is not all. Russia has no seaport from which her war vessels may reach the sea save on the ice bound Arctic coast. She has been coveting such a port from the time of Peter the Great. She sought to reach the Mediterranean a century and a half ago by an attack upon Turkey and was balked in this attempt in the Crimean War, a war in which England played the leading part.

A little over a decade ago Russia attempted to reach the Pacific through Korea but she was cut off there by the indomitable Japanese.

At the time of the Crimean War England feared that if Russia controlled Constantinople and the Balkans her own interests in the far East would be threatened; but Russia lost great prestige in the War with Japan, and England's bitterest rival is now not Russia but Germany. Consequently, England would rather see Russia in possession of Constantinople than Austria, which is an ally of Germany and with which Germany must maintain friendly relations. Under these circumstances, that Russia should not resist Austria's designs toward ascendancy in the Balkans is hardly believable.

After Russia comes to the aid of Serbia then Germany must fly to the help of Austria. After Russia and Germany are drawn into the conflict it is hard to see how England and France can stay out of it. Indeed, hostilities between France and Germany, as stated in the last issue of the Advance, have already begun.

At first glance it would appear that France had less concern in the contest as to who shall have ascendancy in the Balkans than any European nation. But France is still smarting over her defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1870 and over the loss in that war of the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine. She has long sought opportunity to measure her strength again with Germany in the hope of acquitting herself with better credit. That she would remain aloof, therefore was not to be expected and now that Germany, realizing this, has taken the aggressive, violated the neutrality of Luxemburg and invaded French territory, it is hard to be conceived.

At this writing, England alone remains aloof and with each passing day her aloofness grows less perceptible. Already she has declared that if the French coasts are attacked England will not remain neutral. On the other hand she does not commit herself to Germany's suggestion that she will remain neutral if the French coasts are left free from attack.

Italy is the most uncertain factor in the struggle. Italy is in alliance with Germany and Austria under much the same terms that England, France, and Russia are allied. Therefore, in the event that England comes to the help of her allies, no doubt Italy will be called to the aid of hers. But Italy's freedom was gained largely through the help of England, and the power that crushed Italy under its iron heel was none other than this same house of Hapsburg, now ruling in Austria. It is a question in the minds of many whether in the event of a desperate struggle, Italy could be relied upon to stand wholeheartedly by her present allies.

EDITOR'S NOTE—As this article was being written England declared war against Germany—an event the news of which came too late to allow its occurrence to be taken into account. Changes in the situation brought about by this declaration are noted, however on the front page.

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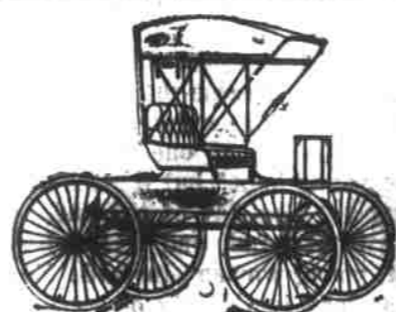
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