Having studied and taught Eastern European history for many years, I had of course always tried to include the history of all the countries that lie east of Germany. But in doing this I became more and more aware that three distinct fields of study have to be treated and differentiated. Two of these, which are universally recognized, are familiar to many scholars of various lands and are covered in numerous textbooks and historical surveys. These are the history of the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages, which was later replaced by the Ottoman Empire, and the history of the Russian Empire, which was created by Moscow in the course of the modern period. There remains, however, the history of the numerous peoples which in both mediaeval and modern times have lived between Germany and these empires, sometimes in independent states of their own, sometimes submerged by their powerful neighbors.

The third field is equally as interesting and important as the other two because of its internal diversity. In spite of such great variety, however, it represents a clearly distinct unity which occupies a special place in the development of mankind, as I attempted to show briefly in my recent book on The Limits and Divisions of European History. Yet that whole region of Europe is neglected in the writing and teaching of general and European history, as well as in the interpretation of the subject matter. No textbook is available to the student which helps him to understand the past of that large area as a whole, nor is there any synthesized survey at the disposal of the reader who feels that a broad historical background is badly needed for grasping the implications of contemporary events. Therefore, it remained difficult to realize the significance of all the many peoples between Germany and Russia, peoples whose collective population exceeds that of either the Germans or even the Russians.

To fill such a gap within the compass of a single volume is no easy task for an individual historian. Obliged to make a strict selection among countless facts, he is unavoidably influenced by the chief directions of his own research work. And even in the case of those facts which are incidentally mentioned in the outlines of world history or in the histories of contiguous or neighboring
regions, the task of coordinating them into a picture which is inspired by an entirely different approach naturally raises new and complex problems. The origins of the whole story, in part prehistoric, have received special attention in some valuable recent works. This was an additional reason for treating these distant times, which remain filled with controversial issues, as briefly as possible. Detailed discussion of the Middle Ages, from the tenth century onward, and of the Renaissance, which is usually regarded as a typically Western development, proved indispensable. This was in view of the vitality of the mediaeval traditions for nations which were later to lose their freedom, and because of the cultural community which the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance created between Western Europe and what might be called—since there is no better name—East Central Europe.

The motivating ideas in describing the fairly well-known modern centuries of European history from the point of view of the victims were these: That a free East Central Europe is indispensable for any sound balance of power on the Continent, and that the temporary disappearance of that whole region created a dangerous tension between suppressed nationalisms and apparently well-established imperialism which usually were in dangerous rivalry with one another. Seen from the point of view of the nations of East Central Europe, which were independent between the two world wars and which again lost their freedom after the second, even contemporary history must appear in a different light.

If throughout this book, which attempts to show how far Western civilization expanded in the direction of the East, political history receives special attention, it is because for students and readers at large a knowledge of the main political events is a prerequisite framework and an indispensable basis for further study in the cultural, social, or economic field.

In addition to the results of my own research, I have tried to utilize all that I owe not only to my Polish professors and colleagues but also to the leading historians of the other nations of East Central Europe. Among the latter are such scholars as N. Iorga of Rumania, E. Lukinich of Hungary, V. Novotny of Czechoslovakia, and F. Sisic of Yugoslavia, all of whom I have met at many international congresses of the interwar period. And to these should also be added the representatives of the Baltic Countries who, under the leadership of F. Balodis of Latvia, organized the first conference of Baltic historians in 1937. I also gratefully acknowledge the experience gained through long years of teaching at the universities of Cracow and Warsaw, that of my early youth in the multinational Danubian Empire, and that of ten years spent in American centers of learning where there is an ever-growing interest in all that has to do with East Central Europe.

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New York City. January, 1952
PART I THE BACKGROUND

1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

The usual approach to European history is strangely limited. Very frequently Western Europe is identified with the whole continent and even in that western part only the big powers, particularly the empires, receive serious attention. It certainly made for progress when, in the study of some periods, a few eastern powers were also included. Thus the revival of interest in Byzantium, the Eastern Roman Empire, contributed to a better understanding of the Middle Ages. The rise and decline of the Ottoman Empire, although it was a power of non-European origin, had to be considered part of modern European history. And as soon as Muscovy developed into another empire, the history of that new Russia proved to be inseparable from that of Europe as a whole.

There remained, however, a vast terra incognita of European historiography: the eastern part of Central Europe, between Sweden, Germany, and Italy, on the one hand, and Turkey and Russia on the other. In the course of European history, a great variety of peoples in this region created their own independent states, sometimes quite large and powerful; in connection with Western Europe they developed their individual national cultures and contributed to the general progress of European civilization.

It is true that time and again some of these nations were submerged by the neighboring empires, and so was the whole group precisely at the moment when, toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, the writing of history entered its truly scientific phase. This might to a certain extent explain why the nations of East Central Europe were so badly neglected in the contemporary study and teaching of the historical sciences. And since the period of their apparent disappearance coincided with the formation of the American nation, it is even more understandable that they seemed of little interest to American historiography.

The shortcomings of such a limited interpretation of Europe became evident as soon as the process of liberation and reconstruction of East Central Europe was almost completed after World War I. But even then the so-called “new” nations of that whole region, most of them very old indeed, were usually studied without sufficient consideration of their historical background. And, both in Western Europe and in America, the realization of their importance in the making and organizing of Europe had hardly started when the normal development of that crucial region was once more interrupted by World War II. In the unfinished peace settlement after the last war, all these nations were sacrificed to another wave of imperialism in one of its contemporary totalitarian forms.

No permanent peace will be established before their traditional place in the European community, now enlarged as the Atlantic community, is restored. Historical science can contribute to such a solution by promoting a better understanding of the antecedents. But as a science, history will first have to repair its own mistake in overlooking so large a territory near the very heart of
the European Continent. That territory, which never has been a historical unit, in spite of so many experiences which all its peoples had in common, is not a geographical unit either. And as it has happened with all historical regions, it did not even have any permanent boundaries.

Hence the initial difficulty of giving to that part of Europe a truly fitting name. The difficulty is increased by the artificial character of all the conventional divisions of the Continent into a certain number of regions. If only two of them, Western and Eastern Europe, are distinguished, it is impossible to find a proper place for a territory which does not belong in toto to either part. If the conception of a Central Europe is added, it must be specified at once that there is an inherent dualism in that central region. Leaving aside its western, homogeneously German section, only the eastern section can be roughly identified with the “new” or “unknown” field of study which is being introduced here into the general framework and pattern of European history. For that very reason the name East Central Europe seems most appropriate.

That means, of course, a geographical division of Europe, not into two or three but into four basic regions. Western, West Central, East Central, and Eastern. And such a division is clearly justified, so far as the main body of the Continent is concerned. But the question arises as to how the great European peninsulas fit into that division. In the case of East Central Europe, this is the question of its relationship to the Balkan Peninsula.

The Balkans are not only geographically different from the Danubian lands, but they differ even more from the great plain north of the Sudeten and Carpathian mountains. In the days of the Mediterranean community which preceded the European, the Balkan Peninsula, and particularly its Greek extension—historically the oldest section of Europe—had been an integral part of that earliest community, and eventually of the Roman Empire. That Empire advanced to the Danube and even crossed it temporarily into Dacia. But the main part of East Central Europe remained outside; it was not even touched by Roman influence, as was West Central Europe up to the Elbe, and it definitely belonged to the historically younger part of Europe which entered the European community, and history in general, not before the centuries which followed the fall of the Empire in the West. At the same time, some of the peoples of East Central Europe invaded the European territory of the Eastern Empire, that is, the Balkans. They penetrated even as far as Greece, and definitely settled in most of the main northern section of the peninsula.

A large section of the original Eastern Europe was thus associated with East Central Europe through a historical process which disregarded the geographical factor as quite frequently happens. That very factor facilitated the eastern expansion of other peoples of East Central Europe through an early process of colonization; an advance through the practically unlimited European Plain in the direction of Asia. It was only then that the large region, which geographically is Eastern Europe, was also historically connected with Europe proper. But without discussing here the highly controversial question as to what extent that colonial area in the Volga Basin ever became fully European in the historical sense, it must immediately be pointed out that it always remained different from East Central Europe. The boundary between the two regions, hardly a natural frontier, fluctuated back and forth of course. But the clear distinction between the two is a prerequisite for a correct understanding of European history.
For similar geographical reasons, there was also no natural frontier between East Central and West Central Europe, although here again the historian has to make a distinction as clearly as possible. It was only too natural, however, that whenever in the course of history the open intermediary region of East Central Europe suffered a stronger pressure from either side, it tried to move in the opposite direction. The situation became critical when the pressure came simultaneously from both sides. Sometimes a serious threat to some of the peoples of East Central Europe also came from the south, and even from the north; through the Balkans, which they never completely controlled, or across the Baltic from the Scandinavian side of the “Mediterranean of the North.”

The southern danger increased tremendously when the Byzantine Empire, which usually remained on the defensive, was replaced by the aggressive Ottoman Empire. And since the Turkish onslaught started at a time when Eastern Europe was still under Tartar overlordship, East Central Europe had to face the impact of Asiatic forces on two different fronts. Its role as a bulwark of Europe as a whole, of Christendom and Western culture, can therefore hardly be overrated.

Equally important for general European history are the problems of the Baltic. But they are merely internal problems of Europe, and since neither the Normans in the Middle Ages nor Sweden at the height of her short-lived power succeeded in creating anything like a Scandinavian Empire, the dangers which threatened East Central Europe from the northern side proved to be only temporary. But it ought to be remembered that even the natural frontier of the Baltic Sea was neither an adequate protection nor a real barrier. It was crossed more than once by Scandinavian invasions which alternated with projects of cooperation between the countries on both sides of the Baltic. And not only northern but also western conquerors and colonists succeeded in cutting off from that sea, sometimes for centuries, the native populations of East Central Europe and their national states.

Nevertheless, thanks to their access to the Baltic during most of history, and thanks to an access to the Black Sea which was, it is true, even more contested by foreign invaders from the east and the south, the peoples of East Central Europe occupied a territory which geographically can be considered a wide isthmus between two seas. Furthermore, they also reached a third sea, another bay of the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, and approached the Mediterranean itself through the Balkans. But here, too, they met with serious difficulties in really controlling the coast line and the ports which were mostly in foreign hands. With rare exceptions, the East Central European nations did not develop any considerable sea power.

This is one of the reasons why they never fully took advantage of the geopolitical possibilities offered by the huge area which they inhabited and by its position in Europe. Another even more important reason was the obvious fact that their territory, so varied in its topography, consisted of quite a number of minor regions which were very difficult to unite in one body politic. At least three of these subdivisions must be distinguished. One of them is the central sector of the great European Plain, including parts of both the Baltic and the Pontic shores. The second is the Danubian Basin, with the adjacent Bohemian quadrilateral. And third come the Balkans, without any clear-cut separation from the preceding region, however, so that there are countries which might be considered partly Danubian and partly Balkan. For these and other reasons, any geographical determinism in the interpretation of
East Central Europe would be even more misleading than in the case of any other territory.

**SLAVS AND BALTS**

Equally misleading would be any racial interpretation of East Central European history. Practically nowhere in Europe can we identify the ethnic groups which appear in history, or even in prehistory, with races in the anthropological sense. But in addition to the usual mixture of various racial elements, there always was in East Central Europe, as there is today, a particularly great variety of ethnic groups which differ in language and general culture. It is true, however, that from the dawn of history, among these groups the Slavs occupy a central and predominant position representing the vast majority of all peoples in that whole region.

The recorded history of the Slavs begins at a comparatively late moment, not before the sixth century A.D. By their earliest invasions of the Eastern Roman Empire, at the turn of the fifth century, they came for the first time into contact with the Greco-Roman world. Therefore, though ancient writers of the preceding centuries, beginning with Tacitus, Pliny, and Ptolemy, noted a few names of tribes in the unknown northeast of Europe, including some which certainly refer to Slavic peoples, more detailed information was given by Jordanes and Procopius, the leading historians of the sixth century. The three peoples, Venedi, Sclaveni, and Antes, which the former distinguishes among the Slavs (the latter omits the Venedi, known to earlier writers but not neighboring with the Byzantine Empire), seem to correspond to the Western, Southern, and Eastern Slavs which until the present remained the main divisions of the Slavic world. And there is no doubt that in the sixth century they already occupied the whole territory north of the Balkans, east of the Elbe-Saale line and its continuation toward the Adriatic. They also reached the southern shores of the Baltic and the Dnieper River.

The question as to when they settled in that whole area is highly controversial. It is now universally admitted, contrary to legendary traditions, that the original home of the Slavs was north of the Carpathians. Furthermore, the Sudeten Mountains were not crossed, and the Elbe was not reached by compact Slavic settlements before the great migrations of the Germanic tribes toward the West. But contrary to the opinion which, under German influence, continues to prevail in Western historiography, the original homeland of the Slavs was not limited to the territory east of the Vistula. Recent archaeological research seems to confirm that from the end of the Neolithic Age, about 2000 B.C., the Slavs occupied the whole basin of the Vistula and most of that of the Oder, in addition to their eastern settlements between the Pripet Marshes and the Black Sea.

It is also highly probable that during this earliest period of their prehistory, which lasted some three or four hundred years, they lived in close community with their northeastern neighbors, the Balts. There is no agreement among linguists as to the existence of a common Balto-Slavic language, but in any case Slavs and Balts had closer relations with each other than with any other group of Indo-European peoples. Even after the final division of their community into two branches, in the early Bronze Age, the destinies of both groups remained inseparable, and next to the Slavs the Baltic peoples were always the most important native ethnical element in East Central Europe.
Originally, the Balts occupied a much larger part of that region than in modern times. It extended from the sea to which they gave its name (baltas = white), taking it in turn as the usual name of their group (the name Aistians or Aestians is very questionable), as far as the Oka River. In addition to the Lithuanians in the center of the group, who were most numerous, and to the Letts or Latvians in the north, the Balts also included the old Prussians who disappeared after the German conquest of the thirteenth century, losing even their name to the invaders.

The historical role of all the Baltic peoples started much later than that of the Slavs, however, not before the tenth century A.D. It is another controversial problem as to what extent the Slavs themselves, after their separation from the Balts, constituted an ethnic and linguistic community which might be called proto-Slavic. It seems that already, in the course of the various periods of their prehistory, including the probably foreign (Celtic or Illyrian?) impact of the Lusatian culture between 1500 and 1300 B.C. and the undoubtedly Slavic Pit Grave culture down to Roman times, the differentiation among the Slavs was making rapid progress. Their territorial expansion in three directions certainly contributed to it so that when the three main branches of Slavic peoples appeared in history each of them was already divided into various groups and tribes.

Out of the Western Slavs, only the ancestors of the Poles, who took their name from the tribe of the Polanie (field dwellers), remained in the original Slavic homeland in the Vistula and Oder basins. Another group, linked to the Poles through the Pomeranians along the Baltic Coast (Pomorze—the land along the sea) and consisting of the Polabian tribes (the name means along the Elbe) and of the Lusatian Serbs or Sorbs, advanced to the extreme western limits of Slavic expansion. South of the latter and of the Polish tribes in Silesia and the Upper Vistula region, a third group occupied Bohemia (where the tribe of the Czechs eventually gave its name to all others), Moravia and Slovakia.

It was the southern branch of the Slavs, however, which proceeded farthest, crossing the Carpathians and leaving only vague traces north of those mountains. Following the Croats and Serbs, who moved to the frontiers of the Eastern Empire and who were soon to cross these frontiers in their invasion of the Balkans, the Slovenes occupied a territory much larger than present-day Slovenia, and from the Danubian Plain penetrated deep into the Eastern Alps. As to the Eastern Slavs, it is not so easy to determine how far they extended their settlements during the millennium which preceded their first appearance in history about 500 A.D. Some of their numerous tribes certainly crossed the Dnieper and may have reached the lower Don River in the southeast, while others slowly advanced in a northeastern direction. From the very beginning all these “Antes” seem to have been divided into a western group, in the homeland of the Slavs, and an eastern group in the area of early colonization. But it is only at a much later date that the names of the East Slavic tribes are enumerated, and the origin of their common name, Rus, is as controversial as is the process of differentiation into three groups which would correspond to the Ukrainians, White Ruthenians, and Russians proper or Great Russians, of modern times.

Although very little is known about the prehistoric culture of the various Slavic peoples, the earliest references of foreign chroniclers, combined with archaeological and linguistic evidence, make us realize certain distinctive features which they all had in common with one another and also largely with the Baltic tribes. Their agriculture and cattle breeding were well developed, and such of them as occupied themselves with fishing, hunting, and the production of furs, wax, and honey had trade relations with the outside world.
It is not easy to find out to what extent differences in occupation resulted in the formation of different social groups. What is certain is that the fundamental role of large familial groups or clans constituted the first community organization under their hereditary leaders.

For a long time this seems to have been their only permanent organization. Therefore, Greek writers, such as Procopius or Mauricius, speak of their “democracy” and love of freedom. Without acknowledging any supreme power, even without any special priesthood—the elders taking care of their religious ceremonies which were chiefly based upon the worship of nature—these familial communities united in larger, tribal organizations only very slowly and under the pressure of external danger. Cooperation of such tribes in even more comprehensive groups seems to have been less frequent than quarrels among the various communities. Without being on a lower cultural level than the other “barbarian” peoples outside the Empire, and having much in common, particularly with all other Indo-Europeans, the Slavs were probably inferior to most of their neighbors in the fields of military and political organization. And the same might be said about the Balts.

Under such conditions the numerous Slavic tribes could not really control the large area of their expanding settlements nor oppose the successive waves of foreign invaders which overran that territory, dominating it temporarily and crossing it in various directions, chiefly in connection with the great migrations toward the West. For that very reason the periods which are usually distinguished throughout the long transition from prehistory to history in that part of Europe are periods of its domination by Scythians, Sarmatians, Goths, Alans, Huns, and finally Avars, none of whom had anything in common with the native population.

We know very little about the resistance of the Slavs or their earliest endeavors to create states of their own. The Antes, particularly threatened on the crossroads in the steppes north of the Black Sea, seem to have been in advance of their kinsmen. The tragic end of their struggle against the Ostrogoths, when in 374 their leader, named Boz, was crucified, together with seventy other chieftains, produced such a strong impression that the record of that event came down to us as a first memorial of an age-long fight for freedom in East Central Europe. Some kind of federation of Antic tribes appears almost two hundred years later when they were again unable to stop a new conqueror, the Avars. The memory of the latter’s harsh rule was to live long in the Slavic tradition, and it was in opposition to them that around 630 a man called Samo created what is supposed to have been the first Slavic state. Whether it can be considered the first Czech state is rather doubtful, since we do not even certainly know whether that short-lived power originated among Czechs and Moravians or among Slovenes, the western and southern Slavs being not yet separated from each other.

What is more significant, Samo was probably a Frankish merchant, or rather a Latinized Celt from Frankish territory, and some historians are of the opinion that the early rulers of the Antes were of Iranian origin. The very possibility of such assumption of foreign leadership in the first political movements among the Slavs shows the tremendous importance of their proto-historic relations with foreign elements. These elements came, on the one hand, from the Asiatic East through the vast intermediary region between two continents without any distinct boundary, and on the other hand from the Germanic West. Those early associations must be studied before the first contacts of the Slavs with what remained of the Greco-Roman world can be properly discussed.
THE SLAVS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS

THE SLAVS AND EURASIA

Eastern Europe is sometimes called Western Eurasia. This is correct, however, only with regard to the frontier region of geographical Europe which was outside the historical European community. And so far as prehistory is concerned, we may consider as Eurasian that eastern part of the great European Plain which was inhabited by non-European peoples whose closest kin were living in Asia. These peoples were the eastern neighbors of the Slavs, whose own original home, situated in the heart of Europe, could hardly be included in any Eurasia.

It is possible, however, that the Balto-Slavic homeland in East Central Europe was at a very early date partly occupied by some of the Finnish tribes which, having been gradually pushed back, remained the northeastern neighbors of both Balts and Slavs until the present. These tribes of Mongol race were in general on a lower level of culture and without any political organization. Such of them as lived nearest to the Baltic Coast became closely associated with the Indo-European Balts and developed more successfully than the others. In that region tribes of Baltic and Finnish origin are sometimes not easy to distinguish. The name Aestii, used by Tacitus, seems to include both of them, and while the Ests of later centuries—the ancestors of the present Estonians—definitely belong to the Finnish group, as do the Livs who gave their name to Livonia where they lived among the Baltic Letts, the question whether the Curs, after whom Curland was named, were of Finnish or Baltic origin is difficult to decide.

Larger and more numerous Finnish tribes were living not only in Finland itself, which does not appear in history before the Swedish conquest in the twelfth century when it first became and for a long time remained associated with Scandinavia, but also in the Volga Basin and north of it as far as the geographical limits of Europe, the Arctic Ocean and the Ural Mountains. The colonization of the Volga region by tribes belonging to the eastern branch of the Slavs, which was to become so important from the eleventh century on, certainly did not start before the seventh or eighth century, and then on a very modest scale. But from the beginning it was a process of absorption and gradual Slavization of the poorly developed Finnish tribes whose names appear, however, in those of some of the earliest Slavic settlements.

Different were the relations between the Slavs and the Eurasian peoples who were living south of the Finns. Those peoples either belonged to the Mongol race, like the Finns, but to its Turkish group, or to the Iranians, that is, to the Asiatic branch of the Indo-European race. In contrast to the rather passive Finns, these peoples of an aggressive character frequently invaded and at least temporarily dominated their Slavic neighbors, even in the prehistoric period.

When such invasions were repeated in the later course of history, the Slavs and the Asiatic conquerors, exclusively Turco-Tartars, are easy to distinguish from one another. On the contrary, there is a great deal of confusion with regard to the names which appear in the steppes north of the Black Sea from the Cimmerian period (1000—700B.C.) to the establishment of the Bulgar and Khazar states in the seventh century A.D. The ethnic origin of each of these peoples is highly controversial, and since they all exercised a strong influence upon the eastern Slavs, after controlling them politically, the question has
been raised whether even undoubtedly Slavic tribes were not originally under a foreign leadership which would explain some of their rather enigmatic names.

On the other hand, it seemed equally justifiable to look for Slavic elements which might have been included among the leading Eurasian peoples. It is indeed quite possible that when the Cimmerians, of Circassian (Caucasian) or Thracian origin were replaced (700–200 B.C.) as a ruling “superstructure” by the Scythians, that name covered various tribes of different ethnic stock, including Slavs in addition to the leading “Royal Scythians” who were well known to Herodotus and probably of Iranian origin. The same might be said about the Sarmatians who took the place of the Scythians from about 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. Again, most of their tribes, including the Alans, who were the last to come from Asia but who seem to have played a particularly important role in the first centuries of the Christian era, were certainly of Iranian origin. But the loose federation of these Sarmatian tribes probably included Slavic populations also, although later traditions, which saw in the Sarmatians the early ancestors of the Slavs, particularly of the Poles, are of course purely legendary.

The following invasions of the Germanic Goths and of the Mongol Huns, both of whom only temporarily occupied the Slavic territories before crossing the frontiers of the Empire, were of a different character. Better known than their predecessors, neither of these peoples had anything in common with the Slavs and they left no traces in Central or Eastern European history. But some Iranian elements seem to have survived through the Gothic (200—370 A.D.) and Hunnic period (370—454 A.D.). According to recently expressed opinions, some tribes of the Alans continued to control the Azov region where they mixed with the eastern tribes of the Slavic Antes. Even the Croats and Serbs, that is, the leading tribes of the southern branch of the Slavs, as well as their names, would have been of Iranian origin.

Turning from these highly controversial hypotheses to the historical facts of the sixth and seventh centuries, the Avar domination of the eastern and southern Slavs must be stressed as one of the most dangerous of the Asiatic invasions. Coming from Mongolia under the pressure of their Turkish neighbors, the Avars appeared at the gates of Europe, north of the Caucasian region, in 558. They soon became a serious threat to the Eastern Empire, and at the end of the eighth century they were finally defeated by Charlemagne, restorer of the Western Empire. The Slavs, however, who suffered cruelly from these conquerors, had to face another twofold pressure coming from the Eurasian East at the same time.

In the northeast a branch of the Bulgars, a Turco-Ugrian people who at the beginning of the seventh century had created a “Great Bulgarian” Empire in the Don region, established a state in the middle Volga area after the fall of that empire. These Volga Bulgars, who must be distinguished from the main body which moved in the direction of the Balkans, chiefly conquered Finnish territory but for several centuries also remained an obstacle to further Slavic expansion.

Much more important for the Slavs was the foundation of the Khazar “Kaganate” in the southeast. The Khazars were another Asiatic tribe, probably mixed ethnically, which first appeared north of the Caucasus around 570, when they were apparently under Turkish control. After breaking up Great Bulgaria, the Khazars succeeded in creating a large state for themselves. This
reached from the Caucasus to the lower Volga and the lower Don and from the very beginning included some Slavic populations. Uniting peoples of various races and religions under their “Khagan,” as their supreme ruler was called, they were eventually converted to the Jewish faith. The Khazars had to fight the Arabs in the Caucasian region and to face the rivalry of Byzantium in the Azov region. But almost simultaneously they also started to advance in the opposite, northwestern, direction. Here they reached the height of their expansion in the first half of the ninth century when they conquered the Slavic tribes which had crossed the Dnieper River. They even reached Kiev and demanded tribute from that area.

The Khazar domination was, however, much milder than any other which these Slavs had known, and it did not remain unchallenged by other invaders of the same territory. When the Khazars first met the opposition of Norman vikings is a moot question which must be studied in connection with the controversial antecedents of the creation of the Kievan state later in the ninth century. But even before that, the Khazars clashed in the Kiev region with the Magyars, an Ugrian (Mongolian) people who stopped there for about three hundred years on their way from the Urals to the Danubian Plain. This was another tribe, though probably less numerous, which ruled over some eastern Slavs before penetrating between the western and southern branch of the Slavic peoples, not without experiencing some Slavic influence.

That Slavic influence proved much stronger in the case of those Bulgars who, instead of moving up the Volga River to the north, proceeded southward toward the lower Danube. Long before the Bulgars crossed that river and penetrated into imperial territory, their clans absorbed so many East Slavic elements that when they settled in the Balkans—not much later than the southern Slavs, the Serbs and Croats—they were already Slavized to a large extent. The role which they played in the history of the eastern Slavs was, however, only temporary and rather limited.

In general, however, it was the eastern branch of the Slavs, first called Antes in the earliest sources and later known under the enigmatic name of Rus, which as a natural consequence of their geographical situation had already had the closest relations with the various Asiatic invaders of eastern Europe in the prehistoric period. These non-European influences, of whatever kind, hardly affected the two other branches of the Slavic people, except through the Avars and Magyars. The western Slavs, especially the descendants of the Venedi, were practically not touched at all.

This basic fact contributed, of course, to the growing differentiation among the three main Slavic groups. But it also created differences within the eastern group itself; between those Antes who remained in the original Slavic homeland in East Central Europe, where they constituted a numerous, native population and easily absorbed any foreign element which passed through their territory, and on the other hand, those Slavic pioneers who penetrated beyond the Dnieper Basin into the vast intermediary region which might be called Eastern Europe or Western Eurasia.

In that region the outposts of the Slavic world were colonists who were scattered among and mixed with Finno-Ugrian, Turkish, or Iranian populations whose number increased through continuous migrations and invasions from Asia. With only the exception of most of the Finnish tribes, all these Eurasian peoples were conquerors, stronger and better organized than the Slavs and therefore in a position to exercise a permanent pressure and
influence upon them. The question remained open, therefore, whether that whole area, with its mixed population subject to so many different cultural trends, would ever become historically a part of Europe.

THE EARLIEST RELATIONS BETWEEN SLAVS AND TEUTONS

The Germanic or Teutonic peoples were originally divided into three groups or branches, just as were the Slavs, with the difference that, in addition to a western and an eastern, there was a northern group although no southern. More than any other European peoples, all of them had close relations with the native inhabitants of East Central Europe, the Slavs and the Balts. It was the quasi-permanent Germanic pressure exercised upon the Balto-Slavs from the West which corresponded to the Eurasian pressure from the East. A theory was even developed, according to which the Slavs would have been from time immemorial under a twofold foreign domination, either German or Turco-Tartar, with lasting consequences of that situation in the whole course of history. And even more general among German scholars is the opinion that a large part of the historical Slavic homeland in East Central Europe had been originally inhabited in prehistoric times by Germanic tribes which left that area only during the great migrations, while the Slavs followed them and took their place.

Without returning to that controversy, it must be admitted that during the earlier phase of these migrations, before they definitely became a movement from East to West, some Germanic tribes spread all over East Central Europe but only as temporary conquerors. For obvious geographical reasons these tribes were those of the East Germanic group, the group which proved particularly active in the migration period and which eventually penetrated farther than any other Teutons in a southwestern direction, only to disappear completely. In Central Eastern Europe their invasion left nothing but a tradition of ruthless domination by the Goths, who were the leading tribe among those East Germanic ones.

This tradition was particularly strong among the Baltic peoples, but for a short time, under king Ermanaric (about 350-370 A.D.), an Ostrogothic empire seems to have also included most of the Slavic peoples. Defeated in the following years by Huns and Alans, however, the Ostrogoths crossed the Danube and in the well-known battle of Adrianople (378) started their invasion of the Roman Empire which led them far away from Slavic Europe. At the Baltic shores the Gothic occupation was soon followed by a long series of raids and invasions, equally dangerous for Balts and Slavs, which came from another branch of the Germanic peoples, the northern. Long before the Normans played their famous role in the history of Western Europe, bold expeditions of Scandinavian vikings not only crossed the Baltic but laid out the first trade routes through Eastern Europe, as far as the Caspian and Black Sea regions, where they established contacts with the Asiatic world. Arabic sources seem to indicate that the earliest of these connections were established along the Volga without touching the original Balto-Slavic territory. The opinion has also been expressed that Norsemen appeared and even created some kind of state organization in the Azov region, perhaps under the name of Rus, long before the Rus of the later ninth century followed the shortest route
from Scandinavia to Greece, and formed the historical Russian state with its centers at Novgorod and Kiev.

But again, these are merely hypotheses, and the historian is on much more solid ground if before studying that momentous intervention of Scandinavian elements in the destinies of the Eastern Slavs, he turns, in the chronological order, to the first recorded contacts between the western group of the Teutonic peoples the Germans proper and their Slavic neighbors. These were, of course, the Western Slavs and also the western tribes of the Southern Slavs, the ancestors of the Slovenes of today. And this is precisely the most important problem of all in the relations between Slavs and Teutons, a problem which in uninterrupted continuity and increasing significance was to last until our times.

The whole issue started when the westward movement of the Germanic tribes, after reaching the extreme limit of the Atlantic Ocean, was replaced by a return drive in the opposite direction, later known as the Drang nach Osten. Even if at the beginning it was a re-conquest of territories which Slavic tribes had occupied during the preceding migrations, it soon turned into a systematic aggression on a long front from the mouth of the Elbe to the Alpine valleys, soon threatening the Slavs in what undoubtedly was their original territory. As long as the German tribes which first clashed with the Slavs and tried to push them back were pagans like their opponents and hardly better organized politically, the chances were almost even in spite of the more warlike character of the Germans. But the situation changed completely when, after the conquest and conversion of the Saxons by Charlemagne and the inclusion of the Duchy of Bavaria in his empire, that very Christian Empire created by the Franks became the powerful neighbor of all Slavic tribes on the whole western front.

For the entire further course of Slavic history, that new situation had far-reaching consequences. Those Slavs who lived near the western limits of their homeland now came into permanent contact with Western culture, with both Roman tradition and the Catholic church. But as the first representatives of that world, they met those Germans who themselves had only recently accepted that culture and now wanted to use its values, particularly the propagation of the Christian faith, as tools of political domination. That danger had already appeared under Charlemagne, but it became even greater when, after the division of his supranational empire in 843 and the following partitions, the Slavs had the East Frankish kingdom as an immediate neighbor. This purely German state, the Germany of the future, had its likeliest possibilities of expansion precisely in the eastern direction through the conquest of Slavic territory and its organization into German marches. In that relentless struggle which started at the end of the eighth century, three sectors of the long German-Slavic frontier must be distinguished. There was first, in the North, the plain between the sea and the Sudeten Mountains.

Here the Germans had to do with the numerous Polabian and Lusatian tribes which in the past had even crossed the Elbe-Saale line. As soon as Saxony was organized as one of the largest German duchies, the Slavs were pushed back from the mouth of the Elbe and the southeastern corner of the North Sea to the southwestern corner of the Baltic Sea. The series of marches which were supposed to protect the German territory and serve as stepping stones of further expansion, started with the Northern march which was created toward the end of the ninth century at the expense of the Obotrites, the Slavic
population of what was later called Mecklenburg. The same method was tried in the whole belt east of the middle Elbe as far as Lusatia. Already under the Carolingians, in the course of that same ninth century, that area was something like a German sphere of influence, but in view of the fierce resistance of the Veletian group of the Slavs and of the Lusatian Serbs (Sorbs), the final creation of German marches had to wait until the following century, when the pressure increased under the kings of the new Saxon dynasty.

Of special importance was the next sector of the front, the central bastion of Bohemia, surrounded by mountains which stopped the German advance or made it change its usual methods. Fights with Bohemian tribes had already started in the time of Charlemagne, but on the one hand their land proved difficult to conquer, and on the other there appeared among their princes a disposition to accept the Christian faith voluntarily in order to avoid a forcible conquest. As early as 845 some of these princes came to Regensburg where they were baptized, probably recognizing a certain degree of German suzerainty. Others, however, turned at about the same time toward a first center of Slavic power which was being created by their kin, the princes of Moravia, in an area which still was beyond the reach of German invasions and in direct contact with the south-Slavic Slovenes in the Danubian Plain, where the memory of Samo’s state had perhaps not entirely disappeared. The Slovenes themselves were, however, threatened at least from the eighth century in their Alpine settlements where Bavarian colonization was in progress. Acting as overlord of the dukes of Bavaria, Charlemagne there created a first march on what was later to be the territory of Austria, chiefly as a defense against the Avars, but also in order to control the Slavic population after the fall of the Avar power. The missionary activities of the German church, especially of the bishops of Salzburg and Passau, also contributed to strengthening Bavarian influence as far as the former Roman province of Pannonia, and under Charlemagne’s son Louis the authority of the empire was temporarily recognized even by the Croats, particularly after the suppression of a revolt by the Croat prince Ludevit in 822.

That German advance far into the territory of the Southern Slavs was only temporary and exceptional, but even so it resulted in a conflict with faraway Bulgaria and in a contact between Frankish and Byzantine influence. It is, therefore, against the whole background of these international relations in the Danubian region and of contemporary developments in the Balkans, that the rise and fall of the so-called Moravian Empire must be studied. But before approaching that important turning point in the history of East Central Europe, a more general consequence of the earliest relations between Slavs and Teutons ought to be emphasized.

Just because the German power was so much stronger, the growing danger forced the Slavs at last to develop their own political organization and to cooperate in larger units under native leadership. In many cases they proved quite capable of doing so in spite of many unfavorable circumstances. In opposition to foreign aggressors whose language they were unable to understand, they became conscious of their own particularity. But in contradistinction to the Eastern Slavs who had to face semi-barbarian Asiatic invaders, mostly pagans like themselves, the Western Slavs had to realize that they could not resist their opponents without themselves entering the realm of that Roman culture which was the main factor of German superiority, and most important, without becoming Christians like their neighbors. Those among the Slavs who failed to do so were doomed in advance. The others had to find ways and means of doing it without an exclusively German
intermediary by safeguarding their independence and by organizing on their own account the East Central European region. In the critical ninth century, one of these possible ways seemed to be cooperation with the eastern center of Christian and Greco-Roman culture, with Byzantium.

THE SLAVS AND THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Long before the Croats were touched by the Frankish conquest, that same South-Slavic people, together with their closest kin, the Serbs, had entered into much more stable relations with the Eastern Roman Empire and with the Eastern church which was not yet separated from Rome. These relations were, however, of an entirely different character. In this case it was the Slavs who were the invaders. After participating, from the end of the fifth century, in various raids of other “barbarian” tribes into imperial territory, they threatened Byzantium then the only Christian Empire even during the brilliant reign of Justinian I, who by some earlier scholars was wrongly considered to have been of Slavic origin. Through the sixth century the Slavic danger, combined with that from their Avar overlords, constantly increased. More and more frequently they penetrated far into the Balkans, until in the first half of the seventh century the Emperor Heraclius permitted some of their tribes, freed from the Avars, to settle in the devastated lands south of the Danube.

These Slavs, soon converted to the Christian faith, were under the leadership of whose name, probably Iranian, was taken by his people, later known as Croats, while other tribes of the same group received the name of Serbs, which according to some authorities would be derived from servus (slave). Definitely established in the area which they occupy today, the Serbo-Croats made the region practically independent from Byzantium, defending themselves at the same time against the Avars. Culturally, however, they came under the influence of Byzantium, which never ceased to consider their territory the old Illyricum part of the Eastern Empire. Greek influence was, of course, particularly strong among the Serbs, who moved deeper into the Balkans and remained the immediate neighbors of the Greeks. The Croats, on the other hand, who established themselves farther to the northwest, were soon exposed to Western influences. This explains the growing differentiation between the two peoples, which were of common origin and continued to speak the same language.

With the ever stronger opposition between Eastern and Western Christendom, the separation between Serbs and Croats was to become much also deeper, a distinctive feature of the history of the Southern Slavs. But already in the early days of their settlements in regions well to the south of their original homeland, another problem proved to be of lasting importance. The problem of their relations with an entirely different people who simultaneously invaded the Byzantine Empire and after crossing the lower Danube settled permanently on imperial territory in the Balkans, but east of the Serbo-Croats, not at the Adriatic but at the Black Sea coast. These were the Bulgars or Bulgarians.

The southern branch of that Turkish people, who as a whole had played such an important but rather transitory role in Eurasia and the steppes north of the Black Sea, had already mixed with the Slavic tribes of the Antes in that region.
When, after participating in earlier invasions of the Eastern Empire by the Avars, as had the Slavs, they definitely crossed the Danube under their Khan or Khagan, Asparukh, in 679, a Bulgar state was established in northern Thrace in the region of present-day Bulgaria.

That state, however, which soon extended its boundaries in all directions, had a predominantly Slavic population. For in addition to the foundation of new states in the northern part of formerly imperial territory, numerous Slavic tribes had throughout the sixth and seventh century continued to raid the whole Balkan Peninsula and even Greece proper. Most of them remained there in larger or smaller groups, creating the so-called Selaviniæ, that is, permanent settlements which without being organized as political units changed the ethnic character of the whole empire. Some scholars have even expressed the opinion that the Greek population was completely Slavized, an obvious exaggeration, since the Slavs rarely succeeded in taking the more important cities which they besieged, but which remained Greek as did most of the Mediterranean coast. But while scattered Slavic settlers came under the influence of Greek culture even more than in Serbia, they in turn so strongly influenced the Bulgar conquerors that even their language was adopted by the latter, and already in its pagan period the new state must be considered Bulgaro-Slavic. And gradually the Turkish element was so completely submerged that Bulgaria simply became one of the South-Slavic nations.

The Byzantine Empire, which continued to have occasional troubles with its Slavic subjects and even had to move some of them as far away as Bithynia in Asia Minor, was seriously concerned with the rise of Bulgar power so near to Constantinople itself. Emperor Justinian II, after defeating Bulgars and Slavs in 690, had to ask for their assistance in order to recover his throne from a rival, and in reward he granted to Asparukh’s successor, Tervel, the title of Caesar when he received him in the capital in 705. In spite of a treaty which Byzantium concluded with Bulgaria eleven years later, and which established a new boundary line north of Adrianople, there was a whole series of Greek-Bulgar wars in the course of the eighth century. In 805 Khan Krum, after contributing in cooperation with the Franks to the fall of the Avars, created a strong Bulgarian Empire on both sides of the Danube. The role of the Slavic element was increased, and until Krum’s death in 814 Byzantium, which suffered a terrible defeat in 811, was seriously threatened by its northern neighbor. Constantinople itself was besieged by the Bulgars. The relations improved under the new Khan Omortag, who even assisted Emperor Michael III against a Slavic uprising and turned against the Franks, with whom he clashed in Croatia. But it was not before the reign of Boris, from 852, that the conversion of Bulgaria to the Christian faith was seriously considered. This raised entirely new issues in her relations with Byzantium.

In contradistinction to the restored Western Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire had no desire for territorial expansion. It wanted, however, to control the foreign elements which had penetrated within its boundaries and had even created their own states on imperial territory. Moreover, it was afraid of new invasions by other barbarian tribes, the first attack of Norman “Russians” against Constantinople in 860 being a serious warning. In both respects the missionary activity of the Greek church, under the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople, closely cooperating with the Emperor, seemed to be particularly helpful in bringing under Byzantine influence the Slavic populations of the Balkans, as well as dangerous neighbors, Slavic or non-Slavic.
That missionary activity, which in general was less developed in Eastern than in Western Christendom, was greatly intensified under the famous Patriarch Photius. Through an arbitrary decision by the imperial power, in 858 he replaced the legitimate Patriarch Ignatius, and this was the origin of a protracted crisis in the religious life of Byzantium. But he proved to be one of the most prominent leaders of the Greek church, one who was particularly anxious to promote the spread of Christianity even among the faraway Khazars, the neighbors of the last Greek colonies on the northern shores of the Black Sea. It was there that Constantine and Methodius, the Greek brothers from Salonika, who were equally distinguished as theologians and as linguists, started their missions in 860 or 861. They failed to convert the Khagan, who decided in favor of Judaism, but they were soon to be sent to the Slavs of the Danubian region. And at the same time it became known that Boris of Bulgaria wanted to become a Christian.

In both cases, however, the question had to be decided as to whether the converts would be placed under the ecclesiastical authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople or directly under Rome, a question which had both a religious and a political aspect that was to be decisive for the whole future of the Slavs. As yet there was no definite schism between the Roman and the Greek church, but already there was a growing tension which was intensified by the fact that Pope Nicholas I did not recognize the appointment of Photius and excommunicated him in 863. Today we know that even Photius break with Rome in 867 was by no means final, but the whole ecclesiastical conflict which lasted until 880 prepared the schism of the future. And even Ignatius, who again occupied the See of Constantinople from 867 to 877, opposed Rome in the matter of the new Bulgarian church which he wanted to place under his own authority.

The Emperor, too, though eager to remain in good relations with the Papacy, was adamant in the Bulgarian problem, and finally Boris, who was baptized in 864, after trying to find out which side would grant the greater autonomy to the new Bulgarian church, decided in favor of Byzantium, a solution which obviously was also dictated by geographic conditions and by the whole past history of the territory occupied by the Bulgars. The situation was entirely different in old Pannonia, that is in the Danubian Basin north of the Serbo-Croat settlements, where during these same years Constantine and Methodius undertook their most important mission, entrusted to them by Photius on the invitation of a new Slavic power, the so-called Moravian Empire. The outcome of their activity was to be of lasting significance, not only for the relations of the various Slavic peoples with Byzantium but also for the whole future of East Central Europe.

[...]
STALIN’S PEACE

FROM NAZI OCCUPATION TO SOVIET “LIBERATION”

The main reason for the break between Hitler and Stalin was the impossibility of agreeing on a lasting division of East Central Europe between Germany and Russia, both more imperialistic than ever before. It was not the ideological differences between the two most radical forms of totalitarianism. Therefore the claim of the German dictator that he was leading a crusade against communism did not convince anybody. The cruel treatment which the invaders inflicted upon the peoples in the occupied part of the Soviet Union excluded any chance of cooperation with anti-Communist and anti-Russian Ukrainians and White Ruthenians. Even the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians, who had hoped to liberate themselves on the occasion of the German invasion and who tried to form provisional national governments, were completely disappointed. They were placed under the German administration of the so-called Ostland which treated them so harshly, trying to mobilize all their resources in the interest of the occupants, that active and passive underground resistance were organized and secret committees for liberation were created.

As everywhere else, that resistance was encouraged by the firm belief that Hitler could not possibly win the war, since his hopes of crushing the Soviet Union in another blitzkrieg had failed, and since in that same decisive year of 1941 the United States had joined the Allies. Even before formally entering the war after Pearl Harbor, America cooperated in preparing “a better future for the world after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny,” as was declared in the Atlantic Charter which President Roosevelt, together with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, signed on August 14, 1941.

For the peoples of East Central Europe, all of whom were enslaved by the Nazis at the time, that joint declaration had an appeal similar to that of Wilson’s peace program in World War I. Less specific than the Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter included, however, the solemn promise that “sovereign rights and self-government” would be “restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.” In full agreement with that promise, the exiled governments of those allied nations which Germany had deprived of their sovereign rights and self-government were admitted to sign, on January 1, 1942, in Washington, the United Nations Declaration which reaffirmed the principles of the Atlantic Charter. The governments in exile of the allied countries of East Central Europe at the same time were making a constructive contribution to the common peace program by preparing a federal system. This was based upon the plan of a confederation which had already been announced on November 11, 1940, by the Polish government and the Czechoslovak government, the latter reorganized in London with Edward Benes again assuming the presidency, and on a similar Greek-Yugoslav agreement of January 15, 1942. Close cooperation of both groups in a federal system open to the other countries of East Central Europe was included in that project of postwar organization which was to be placed within the framework of the international organization of the United Nations.

The Soviet government also signed the United Nations Declaration and thus adhered implicitly to the Atlantic Charter, including its first article in which
the signatories promised to “seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other.” But according to the Russian interpretation, that engagement did not refer to those “aggrandizements” which the Soviet Union had gained before the drafting of the Atlantic Charter, in the years of cooperation with Nazi Germany. The claim to Eastern Poland, the three Baltic republics, and parts of Finland and Rumania was therefore never abandoned. Furthermore, the Soviet government was definitely opposed to any federation or confederation among the western neighbors of the Soviet Union, and they practically forced the Czechoslovak government to discontinue its negotiations with the Polish government in that matter. Even more than the Greek and Yugoslav governments in exile, that of Poland was considered insufficiently “friendly” to Russia because it was not prepared to yield to Russia's territorial claims.

But since Britain and particularly the United States also still hesitated to recognize these claims, another pretext had to be found before the formal break with that government. That first Russian blow to Allied unity, delivered on April 25, 1943, was motivated by the fact that the Polish government had requested an investigation by the International Red Cross into the murder of many thousands of Polish officers, prisoners of war taken by the Russians in 1939, whose disappearance the Soviet government had failed to explain for almost two years and whose bodies were now discovered by the Germans in a mass grave in the Katyn forest near Smolensk. Although the Polish government in exile did not accept in advance the German version which was later substantiated by ample evidence, namely, that the victims had been executed by the Russians, the U.S.S.R. considered the very claim to an impartial investigation “a treacherous blow to the Soviet Union,” a pressure exerted “in accord with Hitler” for the purpose “of wresting territorial concessions” from the Soviet republics.

After severing relations with the legitimate government of Poland which on the sixth of July of the same year, 1943, lost Prime Minister and Commander in Chief General Sikorski in an airplane crash, Soviet Russia openly opposed to that government the small group of Polish Communists which continued to function in Moscow as the “Union of Polish Patriots.” Contact was established with the few Communists inside occupied Poland in order to create in that country, as in Yugoslavia, a division in the resistance movement. In the Polish case it was particularly obvious that as soon as the Red Army in its victorious advance after Stalingrad could reach the territory of that allied country, the “liberators,” instead of restoring “sovereignty and self-government,” would simply replace German by Russian occupation, make impossible the return of the national government, and force upon the population a Communist-controlled regime.

The other two big powers, Britain and America, were not unaware of that danger which was a challenge to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. But their main immediate objective was, of course, winning the war, a truly global conflict in which the fate of Poland—the initial issue—had long since ceased to be of decisive importance. And Russia’s continued cooperation was essential. Furthermore, the Western democracies were under a twofold illusion. They failed to realize in time that Russia’s policy toward Poland was only part of a general pattern to be applied in all countries of East Central Europe, allied or not. And as far as Poland was concerned, they believed that the Soviet Union could be appeased and the independence of even that country saved if the requested territorial changes were admitted.

These changes did not seem unreasonable to Western statesmen, who were
quite superficially informed on Polish problems, since Russia no longer claimed the Ribbentrop line of 1939 but the Curzon line of 1920 which was a little more favorable to Poland and which had been misinterpreted as having been the Allied decision at the Paris Peace Conference regarding Poland’s eastern boundary. Therefore, although the Anglo-Saxon powers, and especially the United States, wanted to postpone all boundary problems until the end of the war, Stalin persuaded Roosevelt and Churchill at the Teheran Conference, at the end of November, 1943, that the Polish-Soviet frontier had to be agreed upon at once in view of the imminent penetration of the Red Army into the territory under dispute. He obtained the secret consent of the other two Allied leaders to the Curzon line.

As a matter of fact, when in their sweeping advance the Russians occupied the eastern half of prewar Poland as in 1939, they rapidly liquidated the forces of the Polish home army which went into the open and cooperated in the fight against the Germans. They then treated that area as an integral part of the Soviet Union. The Western Allies now persuaded Sikorski’s successor as prime minister of Poland, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, to go to Moscow. Churchill exercised a particularly strong pressure upon him to accept the Russian demands. These were, however, not at all exclusively territorial. After crossing the Curzon line, the Russians transformed the “Union of Polish Patriots” into a “Polish Committee of National Liberation” which, together with a so-called “National Council” presided over by the Communist agent Boleslaw Bierut, was established in Lublin, the first “liberated” city in what the Soviet Union recognized to be Polish territory. There, on July 22, 1944, these Russian puppets issued a manifesto taking over the power in the country. Therefore it was with the representatives of that Committee, and not only with the Russians, that Mikolajczyk had to negotiate when he arrived in Moscow a few days later, facing the demand for the creation of a new Polish government with strong Communist participation.

Under these circumstances the Poles received no credit for the Warsaw uprisings in August and September which had been partly provoked by Russian broadcasts. Instead they were left completely to the mercy of the Nazis. When in October, after the Warsaw tragedy, Mikolajczyk returned to Moscow, the pressure exercised upon him was so strong that he was prepared to yield. He failed, however, to persuade the president and the majority of the government in exile, resigned as prime minister, and was replaced on the twenty-ninth of November by a former underground leader, the Socialist Thomas Arciszewski. And while the Soviet Union on January 1, 1945, recognized the Lublin Committee as the “Provisional Government of Poland” which soon was established in Warsaw, Britain and the United States ceased to support Poland’s legitimate authorities in exile, though formally they still recognized them.

In the meantime, however, it had become obvious that the Russians wanted to control not only Poland. Delaying their offensive on the Polish front, they advanced all the more rapidly in the direction of the Danubian countries and the Balkans where they had always opposed an invasion by the Western Allies who hoped in vain to share some kind of influence in South Eastern Europe with the Russians. The Red Army first conquered Rumania which surrendered on the twenty-third of August and two days later declared war upon Germany after the overthrow of the Antonescu regime by King Michael. Bulgaria wanted to surrender to the Western Allies, but on the fifth of September the Soviet Union declared war upon that country, which had avoided breaking with Russia, and through this fictitious conflict succeeded in
conquering Bulgaria and forcing surrender terms upon her after a state of war which had lasted only four days.

The occupation of Rumania and Bulgaria was immediately followed by the Russian advance into Yugoslavia, Hungary, and the Carpatho-Ukraine, the latter a part of prewar Czechoslovakia. In the first of these countries Russian control was particularly easy to establish, since the Tito-Subasich agreement in August had already opened the door to the supremacy of the Communist leader who practically ignored the king and helped the Russians to enter Belgrade in the middle of September. King Peter’s last-minute decision to dismiss Prime Minister Subasich, which was made at the end of 1944, was simply disregarded. In Hungary the regent, Admiral Horthy, who on the fifteenth of October had tried to save the country by surrendering to the Allies, was overthrown by adherents of the Nazi alliance. But before Budapest was finally taken by the Russians in February, 1945, a new government set up under Russian auspices in Debrecen accepted the armistice terms of the Soviet Union on the twentieth of January and declared war upon Germany. Last among the countries of East Central Europe, Czechoslovakia as a whole was to be freed from the Germans. But though the Soviet Union had promised in the 1943 treaty with the Czechoslovak government in exile to restore the pre-Munich boundaries, it was already resolved to annex Carpatho-Ruthenia.

**YALTA**

This was the situation in East Central Europe when another wartime conference of the Big Three met at Yalta in the Crimea from February 4 to 12, 1945. This proved to be the real peace conference after World War II, which was by then practically decided, at least in Europe. A few weeks before Yalta, a last desperate counteroffensive of the Germans in the West had created the misleading impression that their power to resist was still considerable. Incorrect military information on the situation in the Far East was responsible for the conviction that in order to defeat Japan in a war which might last for a long time, Russia’s cooperation was sorely needed. This was the main reason why Churchill and Roosevelt (who probably paid with his life for the tremendous effort a sick man made in flying to the Crimea) considered it necessary to make another series of concessions to Stalin. Stalin too made concessions, more apparent than real, on some points, but he was adamant as far as the basic issues in East Central Europe and the secret decisions affecting China were concerned.

One of Stalin’s concessions was a promise of full cooperation in setting up the United Nations Organization. He also accepted limitation of the number of votes of the Soviet Republics in the Assembly to three instead of sixteen. In addition to the U.S.S.R. as a whole, votes were promised and really given to Byelorussia and the Ukraine at the San Francisco Conference. The choice of these two republics was in close connection with the privilege of autonomy in foreign affairs and defense granted to them in agreement with the amendment of the Soviet Constitution of February 2, 1944, which made possible such a concession to individual Union Republics under the general supervision of the central authorities. In both cases the Ukraine and Byelorussia were singled out because they had particularly suffered under Nazi occupation and had made a special contribution to the war effort. These arguments were indeed fully justified. Next to the Russian, they were also the most populous and (with the exception of Kazakhstan) the largest of the Soviet republics.
Culturally, they were more highly developed than any of the others except the three Baltic countries, whose re-annexation after the expulsion of the Germans was tacitly admitted in the peace settlement. But the privileges granted, not indeed to the White Ruthenian and Ukrainian peoples but to their imposed Communist leaders, could serve in turn as an argument that inclusion in the Soviet Union was compatible with a high degree of self-government, in order to justify further annexations in East Central Europe.

As a matter of fact, in all the countries of that region which the Red Army had occupied, there was a widespread fear that the next step would be a forced inclusion into the Soviet Union, thus indefinitely increasing the number of the sixteen Union Republics. That the Russian claims neither at the end of the war nor in the following years went as far as that was received with some feeling of relief and made easier the acceptance of the Yalta decisions even in their Russian interpretation.

Easiest to accept and even welcome, in spite of some initial doubts on the part of President Roosevelt, seemed the section of the Yalta decisions which was entitled “Declaration on Liberated Europe.” But though quoting the Atlantic Charter, the Big Three announced that in any country “where in their judgment conditions require,” they would “jointly assist” the people concerned to establish internal peace, to form “interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements,” and to hold free elections. Such interference with the internal problems of any nation, even of allies who were put on the same level as “former Axis satellites,” was left to the decision of the three signatories of the Yalta agreement, including the totalitarian Soviet Union, of course, which thus received the right to determine what were the “democratic elements” in the liberated countries. And though the planned interferences were supposed to be “joint responsibilities” of all three powers, it was easy to anticipate that in practice all would depend on the question which of the three had liberated and militarily occupied the given country.

In contradistinction to Western Europe, liberated by the truly democratic Anglo-Saxon powers and therefore left free from any arbitrary interference with unavoidable internal difficulties of its peoples, almost all East Central Europe was being occupied by the Red Army and was therefore at the mercy of the Soviet Union, without any guaranties for the Western Allies that they would really be consulted and permitted to share in the discharge of the promised “assistance.” That danger had already become obvious at Yalta in two concrete cases which seemed particularly urgent, when the internal problems of allied nations, not represented at the conference at all, were decided by the Big Three exactly as the Soviet Union, which was in control of both countries, wanted it to be done.

The case of Poland was discussed at length but the question of her eastern boundary, which was taken up first, was not at all an internal problem. It was a dispute between Poland and the Soviet Union, which in the absence of Poland was decided in favor of the Soviet Union, the host to the conference. President Roosevelt wanted to save at least the city of Lwow and her only oil fields for Poland. His appeal to Stalin’s generosity was made in vain. The Curzon line, as interpreted by the Russians, was fixed as Poland’s eastern frontier at once, while the “substantial” compensation which the again partitioned country was to receive from Germany was left undetermined and was supposed to “await the peace conference.”
More involved and therefore subject to controversial interpretation was the decision regarding Poland’s government. Her president and legal government, the wartime ally still recognized by all powers except Russia, was not even mentioned. The “provisional government now functioning in Poland,” that is, the former Lublin Committee sponsored by the Soviet Union, was to be “reorganized on a broader democratic basis.” This was indeed not the formation of an entirely new government, as the Anglo-Saxon powers wanted it, but merely an enlargement of the Communist-controlled group without any indication as to how many “democratic leaders from Poland itself and from abroad” should be included. Their choice was not left to the Polish people but to a commission composed of Mr. Molotov and of the American and British ambassadors to the Soviet Union, who would “consult” in Moscow some Polish leaders chosen by them, but again with the tacit exclusion of the legal authorities of the Republic. The “reorganized” Provisional Government was pledged to hold “free and unfettered elections,” but without any fixed date or guaranties of control, and it was to be recognized by America and Britain as soon as formed, without waiting for the result of the elections.

Not having thus “restored” but destroyed the sovereign rights of allied Poland, the Yalta Conference, without much discussion, did practically the same with allied Yugoslavia. It began by “recommending to Marshal Tito and Dr. Subasich,” without any reference to the king and the government in exile, that they form a new government based on their agreement. In that case, too, the idea of extending the Communist-controlled bodies, in Yugoslavia the “Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation,” by including members of the last parliament, was put forward. It was added that the legislative acts of that assembly should be ratified by a “Constituent Assembly,” but how and when the constituent assembly should be elected was left open.

In Yugoslavia, Tito was so strong already that King Peter transferred his power to a regency, anticipating the abolition of the monarchy by the Communist dictator whose regime, with Subasich as a mere figurehead, was now universally recognized and already represented at the San Francisco Conference. But at that conference, which opened on the twenty-fifth of April and, soon after Germany’s unconditional surrender of the seventh of May, set up the United Nations Organization, Poland, the first nation to oppose Hitler and therefore the nucleus around which the United Nations had gradually been formed, was not represented at all. The Yalta agreement, rejected by the legitimate Polish government, simply failed to work from the outset.

Before President Roosevelt’s death on the thirteenth of April, it had already become apparent, to his disappointment, that the Soviet Union hardly respected and differently interpreted the Yalta “compromise,” as the President himself called that agreement in his report to Congress. He did not live to hear Molotov’s announcement at the very beginning of the San Francisco Conference that the Polish underground leaders, invited to the negotiations regarding the formation of a new government, had been arrested by the Russians and brought to Moscow not for consultation but for trial. In spite of the indignation first raised by that announcement, Harry Hopkins was sent to Stalin one month later and the Russian list of Polish democratic leaders to be heard by the Molotov Commission was approved by America and Britain, with only the addition of Mr. Mikolajczyk who, contrary to the attitude of the government in exile of which he was no longer a member, accepted the invitation of the Commission. During the trial of the sixteen underground
leaders who received prison terms as reward for their resistance against the Nazis, the sixteen members of the Provisional Government created and sponsored by the Soviets accepted participation of five democratic Poles in the “Government of National Unity.” One of them refused, while Mr. Mikolajczyk was made second vice-premier. On July 5, 1945, America and Britain recognized that settlement and withdrew recognition from the legal Polish government.

Four weeks later, at the Potsdam Conference of the Big Three, it was declared that government no longer existed. After hearing representatives of the regime now established in Warsaw, it was decided that the eastern part of Germany, to the Oder-Neisse line, would not be part of the Soviet zone of occupation but would be placed under the administration of the Polish State.” Since the transfer to the West of the German population of these territories was authorized at the same time, that decision could be interpreted only as the delimitation of Poland’s territorial compensation in the north and west which had been promised at Yalta. Again, however, the reservation was made that the new German-Polish frontier would be finally determined at the peace settlement, while the Russian annexation of part of East Prussia, together with Königsberg, was at once approved by the other two big powers.

**BEHIND THE CURTAIN**

It took a long time before the West realized that the new Poland, much smaller than before the war in spite of the formerly German territories that had been acquired at Potsdam, together with almost all the other countries of East Central Europe, was left behind a dividing line which Mr. Churchill, himself partly responsible for that solution, now called an “Iron Curtain,” although it was quite easy to see what was going on behind that line.

The last joint action of the Western powers and Russia was the laborious drafting of peace treaties with Hitler’s satellites, all of them except Italy in East Central Europe, which was achieved between the twenty-fifth of April and the fifteenth of October at another Paris Peace Conference, very different from that of 1919. This time the most important peace treaty, which would again have been that with Germany, was postponed indefinitely, like that with Japan, in view of the obvious impossibility of agreeing with Russia as to the future of the main enemies in the war. Also delayed was the conclusion of peace with Austria, which during the war had been promised the treatment of a liberated victim of Hitler’s first aggression, and which after victory remained, like Germany, divided into four zones of occupation, with a division of Vienna even more complicated than that of Berlin. For the Russians also wanted to keep that country, closely associated indeed with East Central Europe, under their control, even after the eventual signature of a treaty with the new Austrian government to which really free elections had given a truly democratic character.

Among the remaining treaties, the only ones which under such conditions could be signed in Paris on February 10, 1947, the one with Italy greatly reduced the territory of that country which had been defeated in World War II, in favor of Yugoslavia which had to yield to most Italian claims after their common victory in World War I. Now not only Fiume (Rjeka), then the main object of controversy, but also the whole Istrian Peninsula, Dalmatian Zara
(Zadar) in the south and most of Venezia Giulia (the province of Gorizia) in the north, were transferred to Tito’s Yugoslavia. This move was strongly supported by the Soviet Union. The predominantly Italian city of Trieste, also claimed by Yugoslavia, was to be made a Free Territory. It proved even more difficult to organize this, however, than the Free City of Danzig after World War I.

With the exception of the Italo-Yugoslav frontier, the territorial settlement in the Danubian and Balkan region was to a large extent a return to the much criticized boundaries of the 1919—1920 peace treaties. Again Hungary lost what Hitler had restored to her in 1939—1940 at the expense of Czechoslovakia and Rumania. But Czechoslovakia did not regain Carpatho-Ruthenia, which she formally ceded to the Soviet Union on June 29, 1945, and Rumania did regain the whole of Transylvania but not her losses to the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. The treaty with Finland was even harsher than that imposed on that country in 1940. She now also lost to the Soviet Union her access to the Arctic Sea at Petsamo. She had to pay her powerful neighbor the same tremendous amount of reparations three hundred million dollars which was claimed from Rumania and Hungary.

The treaty with Finland did not have to promise the withdrawal of occupation troops because that country, after concluding an armistice with the Soviet Union on September 19, 1944, was not occupied by the Red Army. And in spite of the economic clauses of the treaty which made Finland heavily dependent upon Russia, she had to suffer much less political interference than any other country of East Central Europe and was permitted to again enjoy a democratic form of government, having to observe a very cautious attitude, however, in the field of foreign relations. Such comparative respect for Finland’s sovereignty and self-government, at least for the time being, can be explained by the fact that as in the past the main drive of Russia’s expansion was not in the direction of the Scandinavian region, with which Finland remained more closely associated than with East Central Europe, but in the direction of the center and the south of the Continent.

In the south, at least as far as the shores of the Mediterranean were concerned, again as in the past that drive met the decided opposition of Britain and now of the United States too. And this not only explains why Russia hesitated to press her traditional claims regarding the Straits, which Turkey was determined to defend with Western backing, but also the situation of Greece which, like Finland in the north, remained exceptionally free from Russian and Communist domination. Liberated by British troops, the Greeks, too, in 1946 could hold free elections supervised by the Western powers. These elections showed a rightist majority as well as a plebiscite in favor of the return of King George II who after his death in 1947 was succeeded by his brother Paul. After failing to seize power through violence, the Communist minority in the country could continue guerilla warfare, particularly in the northern border regions. This delayed sorely needed postwar reconstruction because the guerilla fighters were supported from the Communist-controlled neighboring states.

From the very moment of Red Army occupation, the whole of East Central Europe between Finland and Greece was indeed Communist controlled. This was true not only of the Baltic countries, which like Byelorussia and the Ukraine were again considered Soviet Republics and had to suffer once more the most violent terror and mass deportations, amounting to a gradual genocide of these small nations, but also of the remaining seven countries
which were supposed to be restored to independence. The fate of the former allies, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, of the ex-enemies, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria, and that of Albania, submerged by the Italian conquest on the eve of the war, was strangely analogous. One of the few differences in their respective situations resulted from the fact that under the pretext of protecting the communications lines with the Russian zones of occupation in Germany and Austria, strong Red Army forces were to remain indefinitely in Poland as well as in Hungary and Rumania, which otherwise should have been evacuated ninety days after the coming into force of the peace treaties.

There were also differences in the timetable of the Sovietization which in all these countries was steadily progressing on Moscow’s orders, the promise of consultation or joint action with the Western powers broken everywhere immediately after Yalta. Since comparatively free elections like those held in Czechoslovakia and Hungary did not give the Communists a needed majority, the elections in Poland, to whose complete control Russia attached a special importance as in the past, were delayed until January 19, 1947. They were then prepared and held under such pressure that the only important opposition group, the Peasant Party, was reduced to an insignificant number of seats in the Diet and could be completely excluded from the government. Its leader, Mr. Mikolajczyk, decided to escape from the country in the fall of the same year. One year later the Socialists were forced to merge with the Communists, and on November 7, 1949, the last appearances of Poland’s independence were dropped, when at the “request” of Communist President Bierut the Soviet Marshal Constantine Rokossovsky was made commander in chief of the Polish army, minister of defense, and the real master of the country.

Under these circumstances it proved to be of the highest importance that Poland alone among all the countries “behind the curtain” continued to have her free and legitimate government in exile which still is recognized by at least some powers, including the Vatican. From London it remains in contact with Poles all over the world. Before he died in 1947, President Raczkiewicz constitutionally designated the former foreign minister, August Zaleski, as his successor, and the National Council or Parliament in Exile was reopened in 1949.

King Michael of Rumania, who first was forced by the Russians to appoint a Communist government and who on December 31, 1947, had to abdicate, while a reign of terror liquidated all democratic opposition in the country, also went into exile, along with King Peter of Yugoslavia. In Bulgaria mass executions started at once after the occupation by the Red Army, and culminated in the death of the peasant leader Petkov in 1947. A year before the monarchy had been abolished, though King Boris who died during the war, probably a victim of the Nazis, had left a minor son, Simeon II. Equally easy proved to be the establishment of a Communist dictatorship in Albania under the partisan leader Enver Hoxha.

A similar “People’s Democracy,” as these regimes were everywhere called, could be forced upon the Hungarians only gradually. The royal tradition, here more than nine hundred years old, was abolished at once. But the truly democratic party of the Small Landholders first gained a decisive majority in Parliament so that the most ruthless pressure with the usual arrests and trials was necessary until its leader Ferenc Nagy was forced to go into exile. He was replaced as premier by the Communist Matyas Rákosi, whose regime became
notorious through the persecution and trial of Cardinal Mindszenty, sentenced to life imprisonment on February 8, 1949 a symbol of the resistance of the Catholic Church against Communist tyranny.

Those who hoped that Czechoslovakia with her uninterrupted democratic tradition and consistently pro-Russian policy would remain comparatively free were disillusioned when on February 25, 1948, a Communist coup also enslaved that country. President Benes, who had returned from exile immediately after a liberation to which the American forces, though already approaching Prague from the West, were not permitted to contribute decisively, now had to resign, as after Munich. He died soon after and was replaced by Communist Klement Gottwald. Jan Masaryk, the son of the founder of the republic and Benes’ closest collaborator, holding the office of foreign minister to the last moment, was either killed or committed suicide.

Russia continued to oppose any federations among her satellites, even after bringing them under complete Communist control. Only bilateral treaties among them were permitted to supplement the treaties of close alliance and cooperation which each of them had to conclude with Moscow.

Their policies were, however, coordinated under the strict supervision of both Russia and the Communist party by the creation of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in September, 1947. This now took the place of the famous Comintern, the Communist International, which was formally dissolved in 1943. But the following year, 1948, there nevertheless occurred a surprising split in the apparently well-consolidated camp of Russian satellites in East Central Europe. Tito decided to oppose Russian interference and Cominform control and to make Yugoslavia independent.

The local dictator who had started out as a tool of Russia, and whose regime had been particularly ruthless from the beginning, as evidenced by the execution of General Mihailovich and the subsequent trial of Archbishop Stepinac, the Primate of Croatia, remained, however, a Communist who pretended to follow Lenin’s doctrine more faithfully than Stalin. It would therefore be a dangerous illusion to believe that the Western democracies can find in Tito a reliable ally, and that the freedom-loving individualistic peoples of Yugoslavia now enjoy real liberty in their internal life. There is no liberty behind the barbed wire which separates East Central Europe, abandoned to Communism, from the democratic world.

EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AND AMERICA

In the desperate situation after World War II, the peoples of East Central Europe are looking toward the United States of America, which contributed so much to their liberation after World War I and which, by contributing so decisively to the fall of Hitler, hoped to liberate them again. If that second liberation within the lifetime of the same generation did not succeed, it was because Soviet Russia, too weak to conquer East Central Europe in the confused situation after 1918, was not only strong enough to do so in the even more chaotic conditions after 1945 but in that critical year still enjoyed the confidence of the United States which did not yet know its most powerful ally sufficiently well or Russia’s earlier role in the history of East Central Europe. Even less well known in America was East Central Europe itself. The historic tradition of the close association of that whole region with the Western world had been concealed by the hostility of the immediate western neighbor, Germany, which always tried to create the impression that she was the last
bulwark of the West and that east of her there was nothing but a semi-Asiatic region of transition, destined to be controlled by either Germany or Russia.

Even in the times of their greatness and freedom, the friendly relations of the East Central European peoples with the West had been almost exclusively with the Latin West, particularly with France. Similar relations with the Anglo-Saxon world were slow to develop. First of these, of course, were with England. It was not before the Wilsonian era that intimate relations were established with the United States, since in the earlier phase of America’s independence most of East Central Europe was under the neighboring empires. But in addition to the well-known participation of a few Polish leaders in the American War for Independence, there was, from the colonial period and particularly through the emigration movement of the nineteenth century, a participation of large masses of people from all East Central European countries in the rise and development of the United States. Their descendants, so numerous among the Americans of today, have of course a special interest in their respective countries of origin, whose cultural tradition, badly distorted under the present regimes, has the best chance of survival on American soil.

But East Central Europe is important for all Americans whatever their origin may be. As a world power, the United States has an interest in the whole world, and especially in those regions where peace has been frequently threatened in the past and may be threatened again in the future, and where the American principles of freedom and justice for all are disregarded. If this is true for all continents and for peoples of any race, even if their culture is completely alien to the American, it is even more evident in a case where at least one hundred millions of Europeans—one hundred and fifty if the Ukrainians and White Ruthenians are included—all of them united with the Americans by the most intimate bonds of religion, race, and culture, could be a stronghold of peace at the very frontier of Western civilization.

The tragic fate of these peoples, claimed by the East but only to be absorbed and dominated by old Russian imperialism and modern totalitarianism in its Communist form, frequently rejected by a West that is artificially limited to the Anglo-Saxon, Romance, and Germanic peoples, ought to be a matter of serious concern for America, not only for reasons of principle but also because her own vital interests are directly affected. This was realized, though only for a short time, toward the end and in the aftermath of World War I. It was quite insufficiently realized at the beginning of World War II which shocked America deeply only from the moment when Western Europe was invaded and the British Empire endangered. And at the end of that war the great mistake was made of practically abandoning East Central Europe while theoretically assuming heavy responsibilities there without securing ways and means of carrying them out.

There reappeared, therefore, a situation, familiar to those who look upon all history from the point of view of the nineteenth century, where Russia with her strictly controlled sphere of influence once more became a direct neighbor of Germany. This means a permanent pressure exercised upon the Western world with Germany as last line of defense, and a chance for the Germans, defeated at such a heavy price, to play the decisive role in the rivalry between West and East which divides Europe and the world.

For the nations between Germany and Russia, this simply means a death sentence which at the same time would deprive America of a whole group of
potential allies. Allies many of them have been in a recent past, and all of them would like to be in the future, after their terrible experiences of the present. They have been deeply impressed by American aid, official and private, in their tremendous task of postwar reconstruction, although their actual Russian masters did not permit them to participate in the Marshall Plan. They have been neither convinced by anti-American propaganda nor discouraged by the real failures of American diplomacy. They are aware that if the United States and the other Western powers continue to have diplomatic relations with their foreign imposed masters, who misrepresent them in the United Nations if they do not walk out at Russia’s order, it is because they would otherwise be entirely cut off from the free world. And they are more eager than ever before to join that world in the spirit of their own democratic tradition and cultural heritage.

How that could be achieved is not a question for the historian to answer. But history clearly shows the foundations for such a process, which had been laid in the Middle Ages, which were developed in the Renaissance at least by those peoples of East Central Europe which were still free, and which survived the crises of modern times that temporarily deprived all of them of freedom. Since the democratic Christian West ceased to be limited to Western Europe and received America as a partner and eventually as a leader, the chances for such cooperation of East Central Europe with that West were greatly improved, although in the twenty years of freedom granted to that region between the two world wars no sufficient advantage was taken of these new possibilities. But such a chance can reappear again under circumstances that are still impossible to foresee. Then a new era might be inaugurated for all those who today suffer in East Central Europe, or at least for their descendants, because for the first time in history they would belong to the same great community, not only with Western Europe but also with America.