

THE END

OF

TSARIST

RUSSIA

**THE MARCH TO
WORLD WAR I & REVOLUTION**

**AUTHOR OF
RUSSIA AGAINST NAPOLEON**

DOMINIC LIEVEN

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THE END OF TSARIST RUSSIA

WORLD WAR I AND THE
MARCH TO REVOLUTION

Dominic Lieven

VIKING

To my teachers Leonard Schapiro and Hugh Seton-Watson

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NOTE

In the years covered by this book, Russians lived according to the Julian calendar. By the twentieth century, this was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar, by which the rest of Europe operated. To avoid confusion, throughout my text I have used the Western system. In the endnotes, when dates are recorded in the Russian calendar, I have written “(OS)” behind them. When one wrote from Russia to someone outside the country, it was usual to put the dates of both the Julian and the Gregorian calendars at the top of a letter, the same being true of Russians writing from abroad to anyone in Russia. I have followed this practice in my endnotes. How to transliterate Russian names that are of non-Russian origin is always a problem. I have almost always turned them back into the Latin original, except where the person in question used some different variant even when writing in Western languages. As to Christian names, I have used the Russian variant (for example, Aleksandr) for people of foreign origin when they were fully assimilated but the English version (for example, Alexander) for foreigners and subjects of the tsar who retained their non-Russian ethnic identity. As regards terminology, I have tried to steer a course that neither distorts realities nor confuses the lay reader. For example, to avoid long explanations about the shifting meanings of the terms “slavophile,” “Slavophile,” and “pan-Slav,” I have used the word “Slavophile” as a generic term to cover all those who emphasized the significance of Russia’s Slav identity as a guide to government policy at home and abroad.

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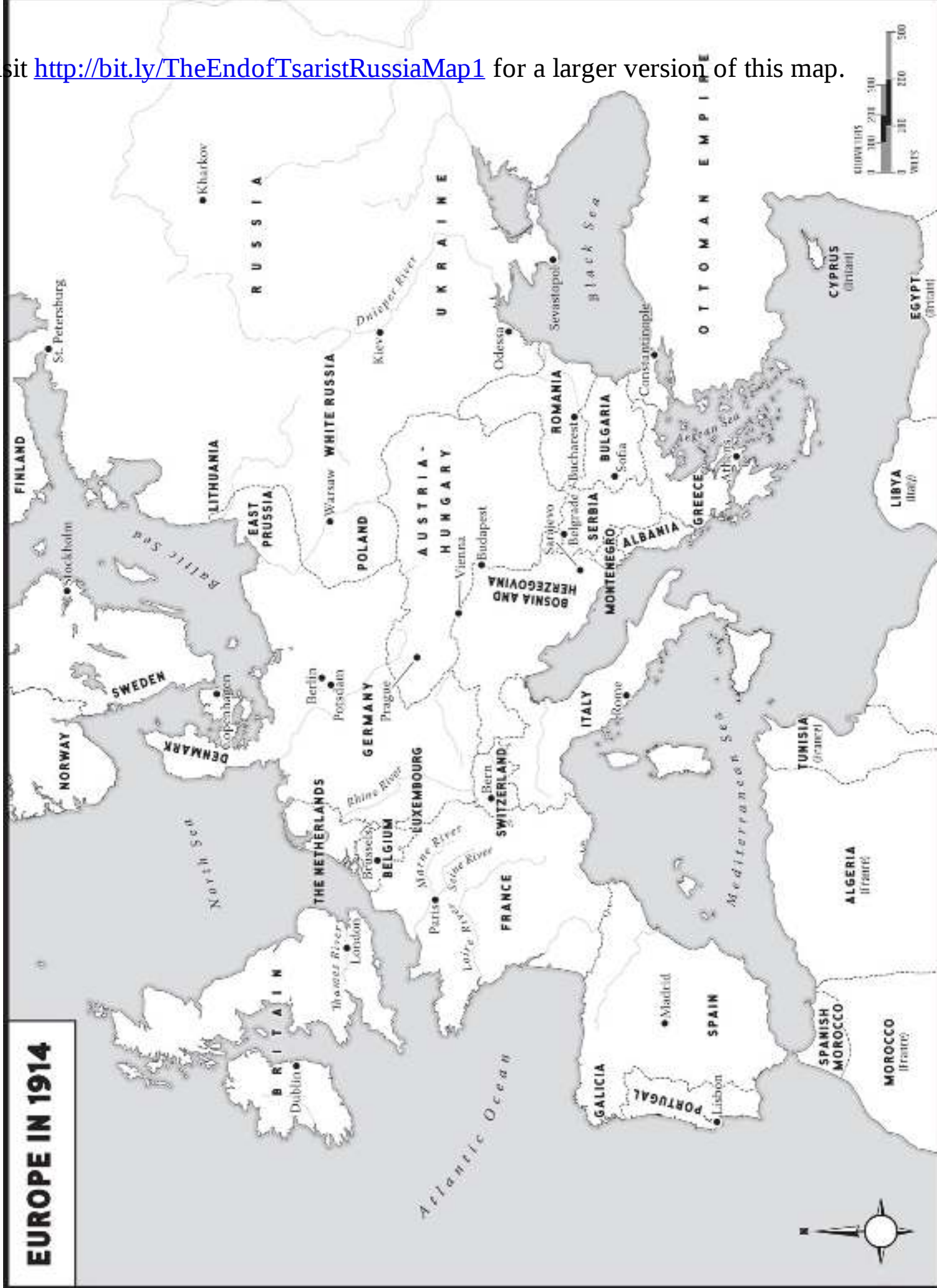
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Nicholas II after Germany declares war on Russia

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The Council of Ministers, summer 1915

Visit <http://bit.ly/TheEndofTsaristRussiaMap1> for a larger version of this map.

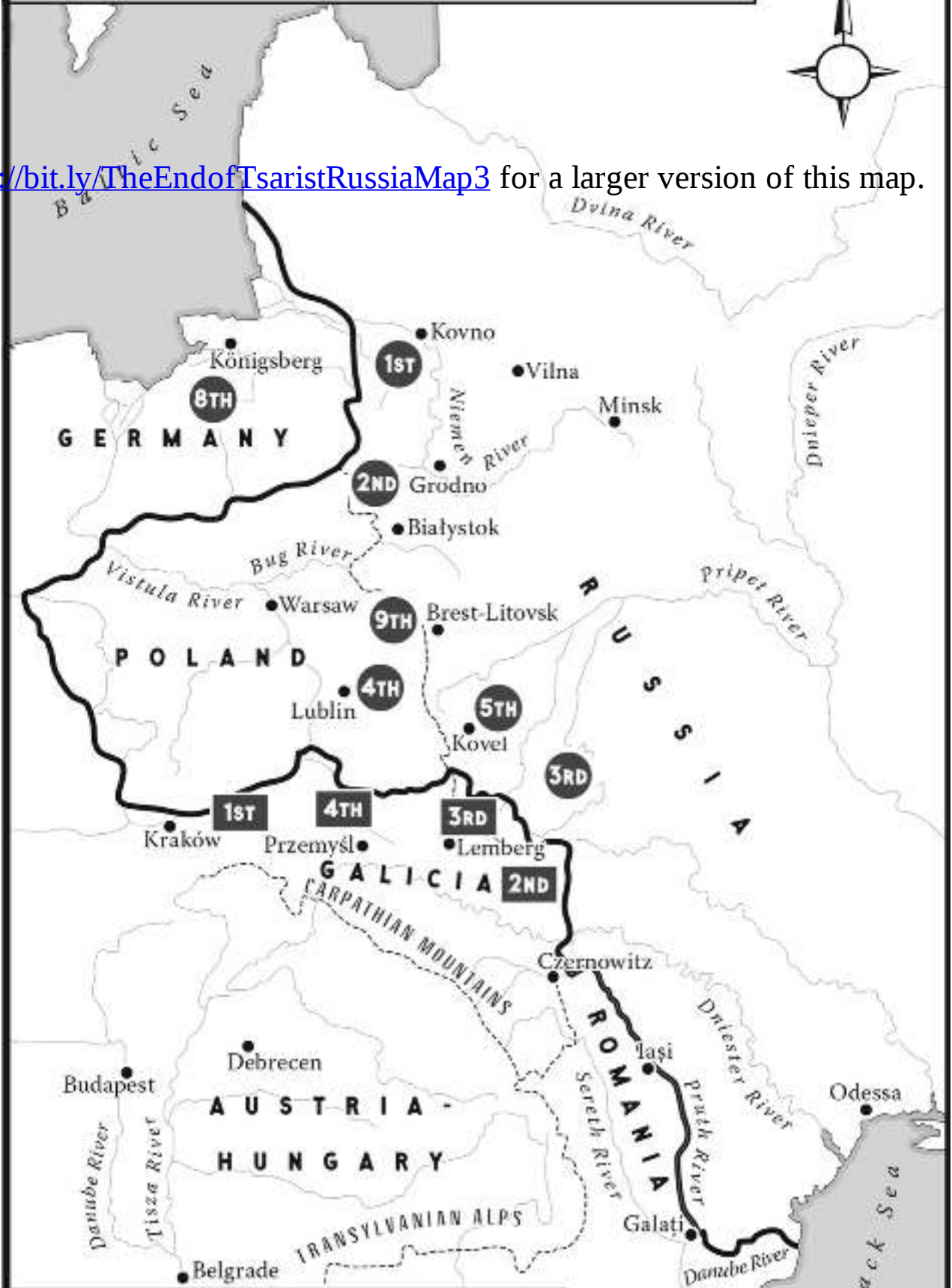


THE BALKANS AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BEFORE AND AFTER THE BALKAN WARS

Visit <http://bit.ly/TheEndofTsaristRussiaMap2> for a larger version of this map.



RUSSIA'S WESTERN BORDER



KEY



RUSSIAN ARMIES



AUSTRIAN AND GERMAN ARMIES

KILOMETERS

0 100 200

MILES

0 100 200

Visit <http://bit.ly/TheEndofTsaristRussiaMap3> for a larger version of this map.

INTRODUCTION

As much as anything, World War I turned on the fate of Ukraine.* To an English-speaking audience, this statement will seem final confirmation that most professors are crazy. No Allied soldier believed he was risking his life over Ukraine. Few of them had heard of the place. The same was true of German soldiers in 1914. In connection with the war's centenary, a flood of books will be published in English. Very few will mention Ukraine. Most of these books will be about the experiences of British, Dominion, and American soldiers and civilians during the war. Many others will debate the impact of the war on the society and culture of the English-speaking world. Ukraine's fate had nothing to do with any of this.

Nevertheless, my statement is not as far-fetched as it seems. Without Ukraine's population, industry, and agriculture, early-twentieth-century Russia would have ceased to be a great power. If Russia ceased to be a great power, then there was every probability that Germany would dominate Europe. The Russian Revolution of 1917 temporarily shattered the Russian state, economy, and empire. Russia did for a time cease to be a great power. A key element in this was the emergence of an independent Ukraine. In March 1918, the Germans and the Russians signed a peace treaty at Brest-Litovsk that ended World War I on the eastern front. In this treaty, Russia was forced to recognize Ukraine as an independent country in principle and a German satellite in practice. Had the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk survived, Germany would have won World War I. To win the war, Germany did not need outright victory on the western front. A draw in the west combined with the eclipse of the Russian Empire and German domination of east-central Europe would have sufficed to ensure Berlin's hegemony over the Continent. Instead, Allied victory on the western front resulted in the collapse of German hopes for empire in the east. As part of the armistice that ended World War I, Germany had to renounce the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and abandon its conquests in eastern Europe. Soviet Russia moved back into the vacuum, reconquering Ukraine and re-creating the basis for a Russian Empire, albeit in communist form.

This underlines a basic point about World War I: contrary to the near-universal assumption in the English-speaking world, the war was first and foremost an eastern European conflict. Its immediate origins lay in the murder of the Austrian heir at Sarajevo in southeastern Europe. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, led to a confrontation between Austria and Russia, eastern Europe's two great empires. France and Britain were drawn into what started as a conflict in eastern Europe above all because of fears for their own security: the victory of the Austro-German alliance over Russia would tilt the European balance of power decisively toward Berlin and Vienna. It is true that victory in World War I was achieved on the western front by the efforts of the

French, British, and American armies. But the peace of 1918 was mostly lost in eastern Europe. The great irony of World War I was that a conflict which began more than anything else as a struggle between the Germanic powers and Russia to dominate east-central Europe ended in the defeat of *both* sides. The dissolution of the Austrian Empire into a number of small states incapable of defending themselves left a geopolitical hole in east-central Europe. Worse still, the Versailles order was constructed on the basis of both Germany's and Russia's defeat and without concern for their interests or viewpoints. Because Germany and Russia were potentially the most powerful states in Europe, the Versailles settlement was inevitably therefore very fragile. It was no coincidence that World War II also began in eastern Europe, with the invasion of Poland, one of the key creations of Versailles, by its German and Russian neighbors in September 1939. After a generation's truce, World War I in many ways truly ended when the Soviet army took Berlin in May 1945.

This book places Russia where it belongs, at the very center of the history of World War I. Above all, it studies Russia's part in the war's origins but also in the way that the conflict developed and in its long-term consequences. But if this book might be called a Russian history of World War I, it is also an international history of the Russian Revolution, concentrating mostly in this case too on the revolution's origins. Russia was crucial to international relations in Europe, but the same was true in reverse. Russia's struggle to be a European and then a world power has had an enormous influence on modern Russian history. Probably no other factor has had a greater impact on the fate of the Russian people. Never was this truer than in the years between 1904 and 1920 that this book covers. Without World War I, the Bolsheviks might conceivably have seized power in Russia, but for many reasons explained in this book, they would most likely have been unable to retain it. Yet if the war played a huge part in the history of Russia's revolution, the opposite was also true. The Russian Revolution offered Germany its best chance of winning World War I. More important, the October Revolution in 1917 ensured that Russia did not participate in the remaking of Europe at Versailles and remained a revisionist power in the interwar period. Deep suspicion and antipathy between the Russians and their former British and French allies undermined efforts to check Adolf Hitler and avoid a second world war.

There are many reasons to write a Russian history of World War I. No event in history has been researched more minutely than the origins of this war. Although western European historians may come up with new interpretations of the war's causes, they are unlikely to unearth major new evidence. In this sense, Russia is the last frontier. In the Soviet era, diplomatic and military archives were closed to Western historians. Limitations existed on what Russian historians could write or sometimes see. It was therefore much to my benefit that I was able to spend the best part of a year researching

for this book in the key Russian archives. The most crucial of these archives was that of the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. It closed one week after I finished my research because the building is subsiding rapidly into the Moscow metro. It has not yet reopened and is unlikely to do so in any near future. The materials I found in the Foreign Ministry archive and six other Russian archives offer a much fuller and sometimes distinctly new understanding of Russian foreign policy and of the forces that lay beneath it.

It is important to study World War I from a Russian angle because Russia played not only a crucial role in international relations in that era but one that is often misunderstood or sidelined. But that is far from the whole story. A Russian perspective encourages one to see and interpret World War I as a whole in very different ways than do historians who examine these years on the basis of British, American, French, and German viewpoints and assumptions. This book is therefore by no means just a study of Russia's World War I. On the contrary, it is a study of the war as a whole from an original standpoint. If Russia necessarily occupies center stage, a good third of the book is devoted to other countries and to the European and global context.

In the communist era, the Russian angle on World War I was a Marxist-Leninist one. The war—so it was argued—occurred as a result of imperialist competition between the great powers for colonial markets, raw materials, and sites for investment. Neither I nor many other serious historians of World War I today subscribe to this view. On the other hand, I do believe that the war had a great deal to do with empire and imperialism as I understand these terms. In my view, empire is first and foremost about power. Unless a state is (or at least has been) a great power, it cannot be a true empire. But empires are great powers with specific characteristics. These include rule over huge territories and many peoples without the latter's explicit consent. For me, imperialism means simply the ideologies, values, and policies that sustain the creation, expansion, and maintenance of empire.

Empires and imperialism defined in this way dominated most of the globe before 1914. For the core, imperial people, empire was seen as a source of glory, status, and a meaningful role in mankind's history. The geopolitical basis for the age of imperialism was the conviction that continental-scale territory and resources were essential for any truly great power in the twentieth century. For a European country—and Europeans still dominated most of the globe in 1914—such resources could only be acquired through empire. Some parts of the globe were annexed; others were dominated to varying degrees as protectorates and spheres of political and economic influence. A key problem in international relations by 1900 was that almost no unclaimed territories remained that the imperialist predators could share out among themselves. The European powers bargained with each other over territory, status, and influence. Behind this bargaining always lay

calculations about power and about the readiness of the rival states to go to war in defense of their demands. Although most of the great powers claimed that they were advancing the cause of civilization, none were inclined to consult the wishes of the peoples they subjected. Looming on the horizon by 1900 was nationalism's challenge to empire. If imperialism seemed the wave of the future in terms of a state's global reach and power, ethnic nationalism appeared to be the best way to consolidate political communities and legitimize their governments. The growing clash between imperialism and nationalism is what I describe as the key dilemma of modern empire.¹

Imperialism, nationalism, and the dilemma of modern empire were at the core of World War I's origins. To anglophone ears in particular this sounds strange. The words "empire" and "imperialism" suggest that the war's causes lay above all in Asia or Africa. The point here is that in British and American understanding, modern empire is mostly something that happens outside Europe. This partly reflects the fact that the British Empire did indeed exist almost entirely outside the Continent. For Lenin, and after him for most Marxist historians, modern imperialism was by definition the last phase in capitalism and was linked to the struggle between the developed countries of western Europe for colonial markets and raw materials in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. In contemporary British and American history departments, the study of empire is closely entwined with questions of race, gender, and so-called postcolonial studies, because these are seen as central to contemporary British and American society, not to mention relations between the First and the Third Worlds. Once again this tends to exclude empires within Europe from the picture.

The idea that empire in the twentieth century was something that happened outside Europe also feeds easily into deeper assumptions about a fundamental division between Europe and its white former colonies, on the one hand, and the nonwhite world, on the other. A shorthand for that assumption are the terms "First World" and "Third World." The idea of a "Second World" disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. One goal of my book is to resurrect the term "Second World" and to apply it to Europe's periphery before 1914. This Second World stretched from Ireland and Iberia in the west to Italy and the Balkans in the south and the Russian Empire in the east. Although very diverse, these countries shared certain problems as they confronted the era of mass politics that was just emerging for all of them by 1900. Russia's problems are sometimes clarified by comparisons with those of its Second World peers, as I hope to show in this book.

The Balkans was quintessentially a Second World region. Did elites in London and Berlin regard this region as fully European? More to the point, how did rulers in Vienna view the region? It is one of this book's arguments that Austrian policy toward Serbia

took similar forms and was underpinned by ideas similar to those defining European imperialism across the rest of the globe. In the 1960s, when Yugoslavia headed the nonaligned movement, it was easy from Belgrade's perspective to see Serbia's wars between 1912 and 1918 as the triumph of a national liberation movement. Serbia's struggle against Germanic imperialism could be equated to the fight for independence of, for example, the Algerian and Vietnamese peoples. The tale took on a particular resonance because Serbia suffered higher casualties relative to its population than any other people involved in World War I except for the Armenians. Thanks partly to the atrocities perpetrated by Serb nationalists in the 1990s and partly to the general delegitimation of heroic nationalist narratives among contemporary Western historians, this Serbian interpretation now appears indefensible to most Europeans. Nevertheless, to view World War I's origins in the Balkans through the prism of empire does offer interesting insights. The basic point was that Austrian imperialism in the Balkans faced more risks than similar policies in other continents. For this, there were many reasons, most of which boil down to a single word: "Russia."

The Balkans became an enormous source of international tension because of the decline of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled most of the region since the fourteenth century. This empire had sprawled across Europe, Asia, and Africa; by 1900, its demise appeared imminent on all three continents. Bosnia, where the archduke Franz Ferdinand was murdered, had been an Ottoman possession until 1878 and formally still belonged to the Ottomans until it was annexed by Vienna in 1908. The crisis that followed the annexation was a major stage on the road to 1914. So too was the Italian invasion of Ottoman Libya in 1911, which in turn sparked off the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. The Austrian attempt to crush Serbia in August 1914 was the direct result of these wars, which had resulted in the triumph of Balkan nationalisms over the Ottoman Empire. Vienna hoped to confine its action to the Balkans in 1914. Instead, the conflagration spread across Europe.

One reason why the crisis of the Ottoman Empire caused so many headaches to the European powers was that the ultimate prize—namely, possession of Constantinople and the Straits—appeared to be coming rapidly into view. Russia in particular had great economic, strategic, and historical interests at stake as regards this prize, which it came very close to acquiring during World War I. A number of historians have recently stressed both Russia's ambitions at the Straits and how these contributed to the tensions that led Europe to war in 1914.² They are correct. To understand the origins of World War I, one must study the sources of Russia's ambitions in the region and examine the debate within Russia's elites and government over how far its ambitions should stretch. That is another key aim of this book. But Russian ambitions at Constantinople and the Straits have to be seen within the context of an imperialist age, in which the British took over Egypt to secure their hold on the Suez Canal and the Americans seized the Isthmus

of Panama in order to control the key strategic and commercial highway between the Atlantic and the Pacific. As we shall see, the Straits on balance mattered more to Russia than even Suez or Panama did to the British or the Americans.

The Austro-Russian clash in the Balkans that led to war in 1914 was in one sense a traditional battle between empires to secure clients, power, and prestige. But by 1900 what I call the dilemma of modern empire was becoming crucial to the growing confrontation between Petersburg and Vienna. To a degree seldom recognized in English-language works, this conflict had much to do with the future of the Ukrainian people, roughly three-quarters of whom were Russian subjects in 1914, the remainder living in the Habsburg monarchy. For some of Russia's most perceptive and influential observers in 1914, this source of Austro-Russian conflict was much more important than anything that happened in the Balkans. This takes us back to the crucial significance of Ukraine for European geopolitics at that time, a theme that I underlined in the first sentence of this introduction and one that runs throughout this book.

Nevertheless, the immediate cause of World War I was Austria's attempt to destroy the independent Serbian state, which the government in Vienna saw not just as a strategic threat but also as a potentially fatal source of subversion among the Habsburgs' Slav subjects. On the whole, the present tendency among historians is to play down the nationalist threat in the early twentieth century both to the Habsburgs specifically and to empire as a whole. There is certainly considerable merit in challenging the nationalist narratives that have dominated so much of the writing of history. Even declining empires were much tougher than they seemed to many contemporaries, as the sterling performance in World War I of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires (among others) was to show. In contemporary Asia, the existence of multinational states such as India, Indonesia, and Iran is a reproach to anyone who believes that the triumph of European-style ethnic nationalism is an inexorable law of modernity. But one must not push the argument too far: ethnic nationalism has been an extremely powerful force in modern history. It played a big role in undermining all the great empires that existed in 1900 both inside and outside Europe. The dilemma of empire and nationalism helps to place World War I within the broader context of twentieth-century global history.

Maybe in retrospect most Europeans exaggerated the power of nationalism and attached undue significance to blood, language, and ethnicity, but the fact that they so often did think this way mattered enormously to politics and international relations before 1914. Neither the domestic politics nor the foreign policies of the Austrian and Russian empires, to take but two examples, make much sense unless this factor is taken into account. The ties of Germanic solidarity that bound together the Central Powers (that is, Germany and Austria) were in one sense a figment of the imagination, in another sense

crucial geopolitical reality. The same was true of the bonds that linked the English-speaking peoples in the twentieth century. Any study of Russia's path to World War I has to investigate the idea of Slavic solidarity, in other words the so-called Slavophile tradition in Russia and its impact on concepts of Russian identity and on Russian foreign policy. Aspects of Slavophilism were both unique and of vital importance to Russian policy before 1914: in this book, I will attempt to explain how and why this was the case. But it is also important to see ideas of Slav solidarity in the context of a world that also believed in the solidarity of the Anglo-Saxons and of the Germanic peoples. Russia was neither as unique nor as exotic as either its admirers or its detractors claimed. More important, belief in the strength of transnational ethnic solidarity played a crucial role in pushing international relations toward the disaster of 1914. The myth of the inevitable clash between Slav and Teuton, for example, was nonsense but dangerous and powerful nonsense for all that.

In trying to place both World War I and European history in a broader perspective, I may seem to be challenging Europe's uniqueness. That is very far from my intention. In reality, World War I could probably have broken out only in Europe. No world war could erupt in the Western Hemisphere because in that half of the world American hegemony was unchallenged by 1914. Despite British fears, the same was still true of British domination of south Asia. A world war was unlikely to erupt over Africa because no European power cared enough about the continent to risk a global conflict over an African question. Faced with British resistance in 1898, Paris retreated from its confrontation with London over east Africa. The emperor William II made it clear to all that he would never risk a European war over Morocco. Nor would European powers willingly fight each other over an east Asian or Pacific question. Before a world war could start in the Asia-Pacific region, its leading states—Japan, China, and the United States—would first have to become modern great powers. Before 1914, a world war was always likeliest to originate in Europe, where six of the eight great powers lived in proximity and where their most essential interests were to be found.

The European international system of six independent great powers was always at risk of breakdown and war. Great-power relations in the pre-1914 era were an inherently risky game that included significant elements of bluff and gambling. As already noted, behind the exquisitely polite facade of *ancien régime* diplomacy, the game largely revolved around calculations about the power of rivals and their willingness and ability to back up their claims with force. The so-called balance of power was both a key element in reality as regards European stability and a vital element in the calculations of diplomats about how to preserve peace and security in Europe. This basically meant that the five continental powers existed in a state of rough equilibrium, with each determined never to allow any other country to dominate the Continent. Should any continental country seem

too powerful or aggressive, then Britain—Europe’s semi-detached offshore great power—would throw its weight into the balance against it.

By 1900, this system was facing a number of challenges. German unification in 1871 had greatly strengthened Prussia, traditionally one of Europe’s weaker great powers. The Industrial Revolution, moving from west to east across Europe in the nineteenth century had further complicated calculations of power. In 1914, it was rational to believe that if Germany was today’s potential hegemon, then Russia would probably be tomorrow’s. To confuse matters further, by 1900 Europeans lived in the first period of what one might describe as anglophone liberal globalization. Obsessive chatter in Germany about “world power” and “world policy” reflected awareness of this fact. Maybe, some believed, it was now out of date to think of a European balance of power, and one should instead use a global measure, in which case the vast potential of the United States represented an obvious challenge to all European countries. Russian critics of their country’s foreign policy before 1914 sometimes made this point in an effort to undermine the logic of a balance-of-power policy that saw Germany as a threat. British elites were in turn divided as to whether Germany was a bigger threat in Europe than Russia was in Asia and on how best to react to this double challenge. A perennial problem in international relations is that calculations of power entail assessments of rivals’ intentions as well as of their capabilities. In addition, in the last resort power can be measured only by war. Much of the present book is taken up with questions of power. This means not only Russia’s power and potential but also how these were judged by allies and enemies. It means too how the Russian government and elites judged the power and the intentions of other countries. Assessments of rivals’ power were a constant source of fear and insecurity, not least because the elements at the core of these assessments were so uncertain.

If international relations were just about diplomatic exchanges and military power, then this book would have been much easier to write. In reality, a state’s foreign policy is always influenced to varying degrees by domestic factors. I spend a great deal of time in this book explaining how the Russian system of government worked and which people and institutions made and influenced foreign policy. As we shall see, these are complicated issues that can be understood only on the basis of deep immersion into the ways of Russian institutions and the values and behavior of the Russian elites. A point to note is that “public opinion” played an important role in influencing and constraining Russian foreign policy in the prewar years and was on the whole hostile to Germany. But this public opinion reflected the views of upper- and middle-class Russians, never of the mass of the people, who would bear the heaviest burdens in the event of war. Studying Russian public opinion helps one to understand both why Russia entered World War I and why it was defeated.

Although the Russian case is unique, in this respect too international comparisons are nevertheless very important. In the two generations before 1914, European society as a whole had been transformed more fundamentally than in centuries of earlier history. It was hard for anyone to keep his balance amid dramatic economic, social, and cultural change; predictions as to where change might lead in the future could inspire even great giddiness. A common feature across Europe was the growth of civil society and its impact through the press, lobbies, and political parties on governments. In contemporary parlance, civil society is always supposed to be on the side of the angels. As regards international relations in pre-1914 Europe, this was not true. Civil society, meaning above all the press, often played a big role in stoking international conflict. This might be just a question of pandering to public prejudices and thirst for sensations, but it rattled and bedeviled policy makers nonetheless. More serious were systematic efforts to use foreign policy as a means to generate nationalist support for governments at home, in the process undermining the rational calculations on which diplomatic bargaining was based. No great power, Russia included, was entirely innocent in this respect.

Whereas the nationalism of the dominant people might inject dangerously irrational and unpredictable elements into foreign policy, nationalist movements among minorities might put an empire's very existence in question. In 1914, the Irish question was distracting the British government's attention from foreign policy. The Ukrainian issue was threatening to have a big impact on future Russian relations with Austria. Only in Vienna, however, was minority nationalism perceived in 1914 as an immediate existential threat that foreign policy might resolve. Nothing can excuse the manner in which Austria's leaders tipped Europe into an unnecessary war. In mitigation, all observers believed that nationalism posed a uniquely serious threat to Austria. Great powers in decline are seldom comfortable neighbors, especially if the declining great power is also an empire faced by an acute nationalist threat. In 1956, the British and French empires met their "1914 moment" at Suez, when they sought to reassert by force their fading power and prestige in the face of Arab nationalism. They acted with a combination of desperation, arrogance, and miscalculation very familiar to historians who have studied Austrian behavior in 1914. The Suez adventure faced more public opposition in London and Paris than Austria's policy had in Vienna in 1914. Nevertheless, what stopped the Suez adventure in its tracks was not democracy in Britain and France but the firm veto of their senior partner in Washington. The contrast with Berlin's behavior in 1914 was fundamental.

One way to impose some order on the many factors that explain Russia's descent into World War I and revolution is to think in terms of levels of analysis. At one extreme, there is what I like to call the God's-eye view. Viewed from high in the stratosphere, all "details" such as individual human beings and their personalities, all elements of chance

and contingency, or indeed even any narrative of events simply disappear. At this level, one finds only long-term, structural factors such as the ones already outlined in this introduction. They include globalization and geopolitics, the European balance of power and the dominant ideologies and values of the era. No study of why Russia and Europe went to war in 1914 can ignore these hugely important matters. But it bears remembering that in 1914 war occurred after a diplomatic crisis lasting less than two weeks. If the archduke Franz Ferdinand had not been assassinated in June 1914, it is unlikely that Europe would have gone to war that year. A war postponed might have been a war avoided. Alternatively, a war fought two years later over a different issue might, for example, not have involved Britain and might have ended in German victory, thereby radically changing the path of subsequent European and Russian history. In July and August 1914, fewer than fifty individuals, all of them men, made the decisions that took their countries to war. To study what these men did in this brief period, day by day and sometimes hour by hour, falls within the worm's-eye view. Personality, chance, and chronology loom very large. Although the worm dominates my story most completely as regards July 1914, the crisis that took Europe to war cannot be studied on its own. It was the last—and in many ways the product—of a series of crises and developments that stretched back to 1905 and require the worm's careful attention.

Between the eye of God and the eye of the worm, there are intermediate levels. It is impossible to name all the questions that belong here, but together they connect the structural factors visible in the stratosphere and the worms who made the decisions that ended in catastrophe. Obvious intermediate-level elements are the systems of government that determined who made decisions and the institutions that influenced how these decision makers thought and acted. The worm's narrative tells the story of what decision makers did and said: the intermediate level explores their underlying assumptions, values and mentalities, linking individuals' and groups' thinking and instincts to the global and Russian ideological and cultural currents visible from the stratosphere. How did decision makers understand the meanings of power and the nature of international relations in this era? How did they envisage a future European war? These questions underpin much of the narrative of diplomatic and military decision making but lurk too far removed from the day-to-day decisions for the worm to take them fully into account. At the intermediate level, one needs to carefully probe terms such as "great power" and "balance of power" that tripped so easily and frequently off the tongues of statesmen and diplomats. The meanings of these terms take one to the core of international relations in this era. Above all, two elements dominated Russian foreign policy before 1914: The first was commitment to something called a balance of power. The second was a conception of Russian identity and of the Russian people's place in Europe and in history. The poor worm cannot hope to delve into such matters as he pursues his narrative. The worm's-eye narrative is also in a sense the story of the winners—in other words, of those who

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