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# From Theory to Practice: the *New Europe* and National Self- Determination in the First World War (1916–1920)

*'Marginalize: to put or to keep (someone) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or a group.'* While this definition of Merriam-Webster might sound static, one must keep in mind that the essence of history is nothing but change. Thus, it is for no surprise many groups that were initially marginalized finally succeeded in making an impact on the flow of events in time. The current study focuses on the international group of intellectuals and politicians that gathered around the British Great War-era periodical of the *New Europe* (1916–1920). This association aimed at the reconstruction of the Old Continent along national lines, which they propagated with the notion of 'national self-determination'. The revolutionary goals and rhetoric of the society initially resulted in a marginalized state – but by the end of the war, both the *New Europe* and national self-determination had their breakthroughs and thus, their impact on the inter-war settlement.

Everything started in the foggy landscape of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Scotland with a young student of history: ROBERT WILLIAM SETON-WATSON, who showed a peculiar interest in the whereabouts of the so distant and so mysterious Habsburg Empire. Actually travelling across the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy between 1905–1910, Seton-Watson did not only explore the state itself, but also met the representatives of various national elites. During this time, Seton-Watson could also get to know the Czech politician and intellectual TOMÁŠ GARRIGUE MASARYK (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981: 19-40). The two of them finding each other marked the start of a grandiose project: that of the *New Europe*, that wielded and produced determinative ideas in relation to the settlement after the First World War.

## Project: The New Europe (1916-1920)

The tour through the realms of the Dual Monarchy was a mind-opening one for the Scottish traveller. It turned out that most nationalities of the empire – or

at least their elites – were deeply unsatisfied with the current situation, being under the rules of the Austrian and Hungarian governments (Jeszzenszky, 1987:20-21). Being sympathetic to the cause of a monarchy of shared interests, Seton-Watson initiated a project that gained great importance in the future. The Scottish intellectual planned to start a quarterly review to provide more details upon these matters and to gain the support of the Western public for various national movements. The project was running under the title *The European Review*; as for the provisional list of collaborators, many of Seton-Watson's friends from the Monarchy appeared on them.<sup>1</sup> However, the actual publication of *The European Review* was cancelled due to the outbreak of the First World War (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981: 98-99).

This latter change of revolutionary nature in international politics influenced Seton-Watson towards new directions – or to be more precise, it happened due the impact of his October meeting in Rotterdam with MASARYK that the Scottish intellectual devoted himself to the cause of destroying the ancient empire of the Habsburgs (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981: 101-102, 111). The Czech politician himself demanded only the equalization of nations in Austria-Hungary until 1914 – however, he opted for Czech independence after the start of the Great War. In order to gain external support for this goal, MASARYK established the intelligence service and propaganda organization of the so-called 'Maffie'. The Czech leader also utilized important connections back from the pre-war era, SETON-WATSON being one of them (Neville, 1919-1923: 7, 21). Meeting the Scottish intellectual in Rotterdam, MASARYK presented his new dream: the formulation of a new state comprised up from the historical crown lands of Bohemia and the areas of Northern Hungary inhabited by the Slovaks – in other words, the future Czechoslovakia (Neville, 1919-1923: 24).

1 The prospects of *The European Review* can be found in: Seton-Watson Collection (hereafter cited as SEW), UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, box 2/2, fold. 1.

Emigrating from the Habsburg Monarchy in late 1914, the Czech politician finally decided to move to London in September 1915. The Czech politician – possessing knowledge on the earlier project of the *European Review* – started to agitate his Scottish friend to found a new 'weekly' as soon as he arrived to Great Britain. MASARYK emphasized the necessity of this with the need of counter-weighting the influence of the so-called 'Austrophile' voices. Furthermore, he also argued that the hesitant attitude of the British government towards the Habsburg Empire made the appearance of a firm political voice arguing against the existence of the latter necessary.<sup>2</sup>

The old-new idea – now gaining the name *The New Europe* – found influential supporters in the figures of the journalist HENRY WICKHAM STEED (Thompson, 1999: 169-170), the archaeologist RONALD BURROWS and the British Liberal MP A. F. WHYTE. With them joining the duo of SETON-WATSON and MASARYK, five individuals composed the basis of the team behind the periodical (Hanak, 1961: 373-376). As for the supporting crew of 'collaborators', members of separatist national movements from the Habsburg Empire, but also intellectuals and politicians from Great Britain, Japan, the United States, France, Italy, Russia and Serbia published on the pages of the newspaper (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981: 439-441). To sum it up, both the process of foundation and the actual network of the *New Europe* were of a truly international nature.

When it comes to its actual appearance, the opening number of the weekly was published on 19 October 1916. According with to its letter of introduction, the *New Europe* first of all intended to observe the framework of foreign and war politics and to provide all the inter-related information to the public (The New Europe, Vol. I, No. 1, 1916: 1). The press organ also intended to rally those who aimed at the future re-organization of Europe on the basis of nationality, minority rights and the correction of state borders with respect to economic and geographic details (The New Europe, Vol. I, No. 1, 1916: 1).

The crew of the newspaper tried to initiate this course of revolutionary changes not from below, but from the upside. Consequently, the main audience aimed at were the politicians and other key figures in the countries of the Entente (May, 1961: 53). Thus, the *New Europe* appeared not only in Great Britain, but also in Italy, France and the United States (Hanak, 1961: 394). The association actually tried to interfere in contemporary political mechanisms and to utilize an opinion of constructive criticism in relation to governmental acts.<sup>3</sup> However, with its focus

being on the former area, the staff of the *New Europe* also tried to shake up the British public opinion from its traditional apathy towards the outside world by informing it about the less known areas of the European continent (Hanak, 1961: 375).

The innovative newspaper gained widespread popularity shortly after the publication of its first volume. Positive critiques were voiced from the sides of the *Times*, the *Observer*, the *Spectator*, the *Punch* and the *New York Times* (May, 1961: 53). In other words, audiences in Great Britain and the United States greeted the *New Europe* with enthusiasm.

However, negative judgements were not absent either. The main accusation from the side of critiques was that the group of the periodical neglected British interests for the sake of their 'mania' to re-draw the map of Europe (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981: 282-283). The hostility towards the *New Europe* also took a material form in the field of British politics. While he was physically incapable to perform his duties in the army, authorities suddenly called SETON-WATSON into service in March 1917. It turned out later that it was the Liberal MP JOSEPH KING who initiated this act, hoping to marginalize the stropy group of the newspaper (Messinger, 1992: 165).

However, all the ill will fired soon back as it was the Department of Information, the British intelligence service that employed SETON-WATSON. Upon his entrance, familiar faces welcomed the Scottish intellectual as many of his colleagues at the *New Europe* had already worked in the same office (Sanders, Taylor, 1982: 82). It is no wonder that the co-editor of the newspaper, GEORGE GLASGOW described this development retrospectively as the 'conquest' of the Department of Information by the group of the periodical (Hanak, 1961: 394) – the latter gaining rich opportunities to collect information and to represent its cause.

Due to the gained advantages, the propaganda campaign of the association could reach its peak in 1918. In addition to this, the last year of the war also saw the establishment of the British Department of Enemy Propaganda under the press baron LORD NORTHCLIFFE in February. As indicated in its name, the organization aimed at producing material to exercise an effect on the populations of hostile countries. Naturally, Austria-Hungary was also a target – with the related section headed by STEED and supervised by SETON-WATSON. In other words, the thoughts endorsed by the *New Europe* could finally form an important basis of British propaganda and the group could gain adequate weight in order to press the government to move closer to their aims (Sanders, Taylor, 1982: 89-92) (Messinger, 1992: 171).

In November 1918, the Entente finally triumphed in the war – in parallel to this, the Habsburg Empire fell

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2 Masaryk, letter to Seton-Watson, 2 May and 22 August 1916. SEW, box 17/16, fold 6.

3 Seton-Watson, letter to Dr. Prothero, 23 October 1916.

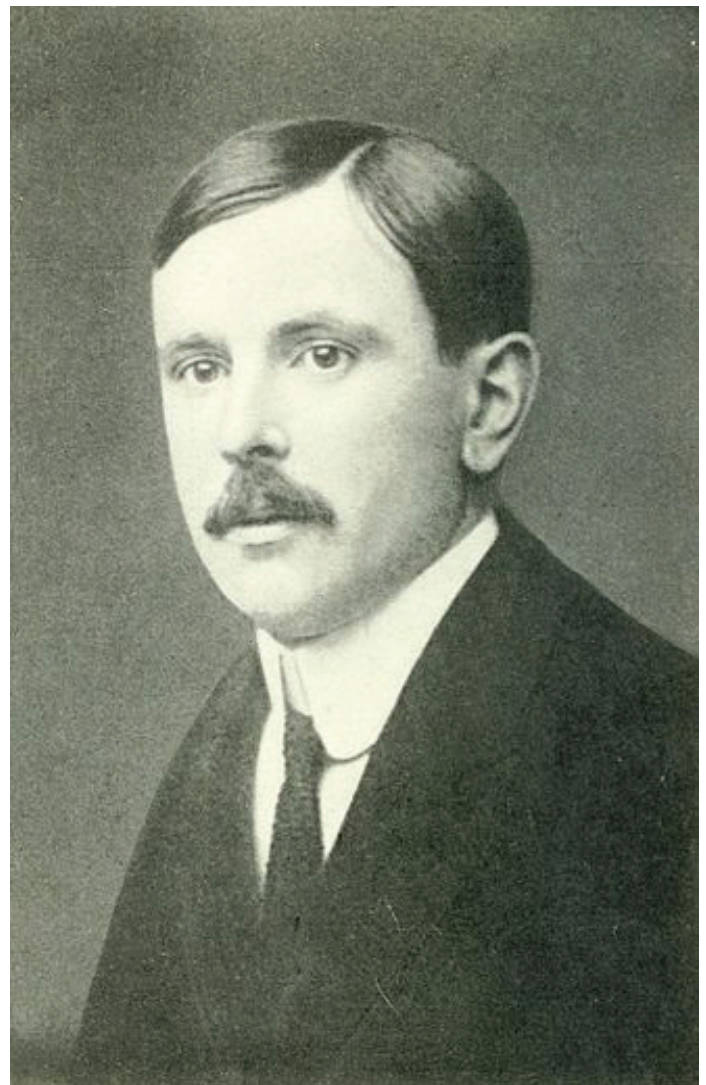
apart due to its defeat. Thus, the *New Europe* had a new task to prepare for: to make an impact on the decisions of the Peace Conference of Versailles. And indeed: while SETON-WATSON was present as an expert of the British delegation, MASARYK could star as the founder of the brand-new state of Czechoslovakia. However, the final victory of the *New Europe* was preceded by four years of struggle – for the triumph of a principle: that of ‘national self-determination’. In fact, the association made great use of the famous notion – earlier than the most famous Great War-factors, but not without external influences.

## ‘National Self-determination’ Before and During the First World War

While public opinion usually connects the famous Great War-era notion of nationalism to the emblematic figure of the American President *Woodrow Wilson*, ‘self-determination’ actually had a long pre-history even before the First World War. The American scientist professor KARL SHOEMAKER successfully showed this in his article titled *World War I, Self-Determination, and the Legacies of Medieval Jurisprudence* – published in a 2014 issue of Turkish periodical *Uluslararası Suçlar ve Tarih* (International Crimes and History). Shoemaker traced back the origins of the theory to the Christian concept of state sovereignty in the late Middle Ages. As a further step of development, the Enlightenment introduced the reason-based interpretation of the rights of ‘nations’ in natural law. Finally, PASQUALE STANISLAO MANCINI – the Italian jurist and statesman of the 19th century – advocated that instead of states, national communities should form the new basis of international legal order (Shoemaker, 2014: 61-70).

According to the analysis of DENIS MACK SMITH, the self-determination of nations also formed the essential core of GIUSEPPE MAZZINI. After the Great French Revolution that emancipated individual liberty as an international right, the Italian revolutionist waited for another radical turn for the sake of national liberty (Smith, 1669: 11-15). The late influence of MAZZINI on the development of the self-determination should not be undervalued. As STEFANO RACCHIA and NADIA URBINATI stressed in their introduction written to *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini’s Writings on Democracy, Nation Building and International Relations* (2010), the thoughts of the Italian politician had a deep impact on WOODROW WILSON (Racchia, Urbinati, 2010: 1-3).

However, the influence of self-determination was not restricted merely to the spheres of mentality: the concepts also made its way to the international politics of



Robert William Seton-Watson

the long 19th century. The Constituent Assembly of France during the Great Revolution already stood firmly against the idea of deciding in territorial questions without the involvement of inhabitants. The various stages of Italian unification between 1848–1870 made practical use of this thought as they were always legitimized by local plebiscites – in accordance to the Mazzinian principles (Qvortrup, 2015: 550-551). By utilizing the notion of self-determination, the Great Powers also legitimized and helped the secessionist movements of the Balkan peoples against the Ottoman Empire (Shoemaker, 2014: 61, 70).

It was of great importance that on the eve of the Great War, the Leftist parties of the great Eastern states – the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia – engaged in a fierce debate about the notion. While the Austro-Marxist OTTO BAUER utilized self-determination in order to argue for the federalization of the Habsburg Empire means of extraterritorial national autonomy, the Russian Bolshevik VLADIMIR ILYICH ULYANOV – better known by



his pseudonym 'LENIN' – understood the term as a right of 'national territories' to secede from the empire. Thus, LENIN essentially accepted that the multi-ethnic structures of the East would break up with the utilization of the notion – which view gained huge importance soon enough with the developments of the First World War (Zoltan, 1999: 100-101).

Up until 1917, the traditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century quite dominated the political matches of the Great War. Both the sides of the British–French–Russian Entente and the Central Powers led by Germany and Austria–Hungary designed their infamous plans of war aims and secret treaties with these in mind; as opposed to the power struggle, the opinion of ordinary citizens had little of an importance. As surprising as it might be, it was the Tsarist Russia, the most conservative of all Great Powers to bring a change into these schemes. As EREZ MANELA pointed it out in his fundamental work *The Wilsonian Moment*, the main watershed was the revolution of February 1917. On April 9, the so-called Provisional Government announced that it rejected the 'imperialist' ideas of rule and conquest. As opposed to these, the new establishment of Russia propagated the self-determination of peoples as a its new guideline for politics – due to the influence of the Leninian Bolsheviks (Manela, 2007: 37).

The Bolshevik *coup d'état* of November 1917 made a further step in the subject in accordance to their pre-war ideas with the proclamation titled *The Rights of Peoples of Russia to Self-Determination*, issued in a mere week after their take-over. The American scientist BETTY MILLER UNTERBERGER also argued in her book *The United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia* (1989) that in addition to the declaration of self-determination as a right of nations to political independence, Lenin and his associates also adhered that a system of cultural rights should be established for national minorities (Unterberger, 1989: 83-84).

As for their main goal, the new leadership of Russia aimed at a worldwide revolution – and national self-determination was utilized as a tool for the achievement of their ideals. This way, the Bolsheviks could attempt to gain the support of minorities in the Russian Empire along with those of the oppressed populations all around the World – a quite considerable force in the era of colonialism. Thus, a serious challenge awaited the answer of the contemporary Great Powers situated in the opposing camps of the war (Manela, 2007: 37).

As shown by BORISLAV CHERNEV, the Russian author of the article *The Brest-Litovsk Moment* in a 2011 volume of *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, those were the Central Powers proved to be the ones to be quick and clever enough to react first. Germany and the Habsburg Empire actually adopted

the language of self-determination and used it against the original adherents when voicing their demands to Russia on the peace negotiations of Brest-Litovsk. Naturally though, the Central Powers demanded the utilization of the idea only in relation to the nationalities of the Russian Empire – and not to those of their own (Chernev, 2011: 372). The upcoming treaty of Brest-Litovsk marked a real revolutionary change as a consequence, being the first international contract to be signed on the basis of self-determination - TRYVGE THRONTVEIT emphasized this with a right in his article *The Fable of the Fourteen Points* (Throntveit, 2011: 458).

As opposed to the Bolshevik government and the Central Powers, the leading states of the Entente – Great Britain, France and the allied United States – became gravely handicapped. Popular support at home, reliance of alliances and stability of colonial rule: all were at stake due to the winds of change. Thus, a reaction to the condensing smoke signals coming from the East was a must.

The Entente did indeed give an answer to all these challenges on 5 January 1918 – or to be more precise, the British Prime Minister LLOYD GEORGE did so. As interpreted by by THRONTVEIT, the Western politician adopted the language of self-determination in order to counteract the dangerous poison of Bolshevik influence. During the course of this dangerous game, LLOYD GEORGE applied the notion both to the territories and the populations subject to the hostile forces and to the British Dominions as well (Throntveit, 2011: 459).

Thus, it was only after earlier international developments that the American President WOODROW WILSON announced his support of national self-determination – not in the famous Fourteen Points of January 18, but in the less known Four Points of February 11. It must be emphasized that this interpretation of self-determination had other sources than the already discussed wartime impacts. As shown by MANELA, the republican ideas of individual rights, Anglo-American liberal tradition and the Monroe Doctrine all influenced this development (Manela, 2007: 23-24).

In fact, Wilson had already advocated the idea of self-determination in 1898, in connection to the islands of the Philippines freshly annexed by the United States as a consequence of a war of with Spain. The events of the Great War 'only' added further importance to this idea of the politician – now leading a strong neutral country as its President. Desiring to have a say in the course of the First World War, Wilson introduced the notions 'government by consent', 'equality of nations' and 'international co-operation' to the World as the fundamental basis of his vision in his 'Peace without Victory' speech of January 1917. MANELA emphasized it that the powers of the Old

World took this as a direct challenge to their establishment – as a consequence, they flatly rejected the ideas adhered by the fire-eater American reformist. The situation only changed due to the United States entrance into the First World War in April 1917 and the already discussed revolution at the turn of 1917/18 (Manela, 2007: 16).

When it comes to this final announcement, WILSON finally approved the ‘government by consent’ in case of those national communities with ‘well-defined aspirations’ (Manela, 2007: 14-42). This definition, however, was an unstable and vague one; thus, it provided grounds for countless interpretations ever since the American President’s announcement of early February. Thus, a lot of tensions were created between various states and nations – while in many cases, both parties were followers of the same thought (Throntveit, 2011: 425-426).

When it comes to the actual notion of ‘nation’, the Wilsonian interpretation was a term based on popular sovereignty. MANELA stressed that while Wilson borrowed the actual notion of ‘self-determination’ from the Bolsheviks, he applied it to state populations intentionally to oppose to the ethnic approach to the latter (Throntveit, 2011: 42). In contrast, LYNCH considered the same phenomenon as an outcome of the influence of American civic nationalism on Wilson (Lynch, 2002: 424).

In opposition to his first standpoint, Wilson finally shifted from to an ethnic understanding of national self-determination due to the exigencies dictated by the wartime situation. MAGDA ÁDÁM showed in her *The Versailles System and Central Europe* that as all hopes in the multi-ethnic empires of Eastern Europe fell down with the Russian Revolution and the Habsburg Empire losing independence to its German ally, the creation of nation-states proved to be the only alternative left for the Entente (Adam, 2003: 4-14). And as infamously imperfect the creation proved to be, it was still WILSON who achieved the widespread acceptance of ‘self-determination’ – that left its mark on the settlement of Versailles after the war. Thus, MANELA described the turn of 1918/19 as the ‘Wilsonian Moment’ with a right.

However, it was also the author of the same-titled book who stressed that the idea of self-determination lived a life on its own in the Great Britain of the Great War as a concept adhered by Liberals and Leftists well before 1918. MANELA connected this to the influence of the WILSON (Manela, 2007: 36-39). In contrast to this, British historians HUGH and CHRISTOPHER SETON-WATSON stated that

[The *New Europe*] was ‘Wilsonian’ long before Wilson himself (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981: 195).

The American historian PAUL LATAWSKI also identified London as one of the main centres of the self-determination discourse in the Great War and the circle

of the *New Europe* as an especially eager receptive of the notion (Latawski 1990: 94). The related discourse of the press organ, however, had to be integrated in a whole set of ideas and concepts.

## The *New Europe*, the ‘Principle of Nationality’ and Self-Determination

Soon after the Great War broke out in 1914, the public opinion of Great Britain saw the declaration of the so-called ‘principle of nationality’ from the journalist C. ERNEST FAYLE, the leading articles of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Morning Post*. The latter parties made use of the notion to argue for the dissolution of the hostile Habsburg Monarchy in accordance to its national units (Hanak, 1961: 43). Late scientific literature usually equates the principle of nationality to self-determination and handles the former as a synonymous term that appeared earlier during the course of the First World War (Latawski, 1990: 87) (Regan, 1996: 129).

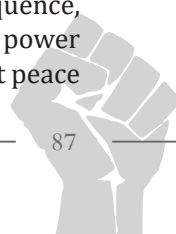
However, I argue that while they had their connections, one could identify fundamental differences between the two notions – and I can show evidence for this argument in the image of the leading article of the *New Europe* on 17 October 1918. The writing *Our Peace Terms* was a draft of declaration proposed for the Entente for the moment of victory, with its co-writers - BURROWS, STEED and SETON-WATSON – expecting the Allied powers to state

2. That [the consent of the governed] necessarily involves the right of every national unit to control its own destinies, and to decide its State-allegiance (self-determination).

3. That the principle of nationality is a vital factor in the European political situation, and the satisfaction of legitimate national aspirations must precede the creation of an international order (The *New Europe*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1916: 30-31).

As for myself, I see the separate mentioning of the ‘principle of nationality’ and ‘self-determination’ as not a means to avoid the repetition of words, but as a sign of distinction between the notions. In order to justify this view, I will look at the related discourse of the *New Europe*.

As for the principle of nationality, the Russian statesman VLADIMIR KOVALEVSKY was the first to announce his views on the matter in the issue of 2 November 1916. The politician adhered that nationalism produced fundamental tensions in Europe and thus contributed to the out-break of the First World War. As a consequence, the new settlement of the future had to yield to this power without compromises in order to secure permanent peace



for the troubled Old Continent (The New Europe, Vol. I, No. 3, 1916: 79-81).

In the next issue, the article *The Reorganization of Europe* – most possibly written by MASARYK – added an important aspect to this explanation: that of democracy. According to the author of the writing, the countries of the Entente fought as a federation of free nations for the 'democratic principle of nationality' – in contrast to the Central Powers that represented the archaic and disgusting spirits of brutal centralism and absolutism (The New Europe, Vol. I, No. 4, 1916: 101). The lines of *Wanted – A Foreign Policy* (4 December 1916) unfolded this idea further, adhering that the reconstruction after the war should not be built on the basis of forceful conquests (The New Europe, Vol. I, No. 9, 1916: 263).

Developing this argumentation further, it was stressed in the leader of the 18 January 1917 issue (*The Allies' Programme*) that the new settlement must count with the rights of nations to an independent development on their own – however, the principle of nationality was not mentioned for a single time in connection to this. STEED and SETON-WATSON mentioned the latter only as a process formative, yet not emancipated in the field of international politics. In contrast to KOVALEVSKY, the British authors also stated that political, religious and economic factors might have an equal or even a bigger weight with respect to the future settlement than that of nationality<sup>4</sup> (The New Europe, Vol. II, No. 14, 1917: 2-3).

The March article of HUGH A. LAW also utilized a similarly confusing mixture of democratic and national ideas dealing with the topic of Ireland. The author demanded that the principle of nationality and the universal rights of liberty should be respected in connection to this dominion of Great Britain – in other words, he stressed 'self-government' should be given to the Irish (The New Europe, Vol. II, No. 21, 1917: 236).

Besides 'self-government', other synonymous expressions to 'self-determination' also appeared in the *New Europe* – with WOODROW WILSON being one of the sources. Steed's and Seton-Watson's *The Allies' Programme*, an article commenting on the Entente's answer on 10 January 1917 to Wilson's 'Peace without Victory' speech, held the view that nations should be free to control their destinies (The New Europe, Vol. II, No. 14, 1917: 2). The February 1 issue interpreted this as a right or 'liberty' of choice – this time, connecting this opinion directly to the American President (The New Europe, Vol. II, No. 16, 1917: 79). On the other hand, an additional source on the question appeared on March 29 – in the

image of an 'unnamed' Russian Socialist after the victory of the February Revolution in Russia, who asserted every nation should have the possibility to decide on its own fate (The New Europe, Vol. II, No. 24, 1917: 340).

After more than half a year was dominated by the principle of nationality, the notion of self-determination finally entered the pages of the newspaper in April 1917. The article titled *Poland's Freedom* in the April 5 issue welcomed the developments made by the regime established during the February Revolution of Russia. 'Self-determination' as such was mentioned for the first time; as for its meaning, it was explained as being equivalent to the nation's rights to unity and to exercise power to determine its own future through democratic means (The New Europe, Vol. II, No. 25, 1917: 380-381).

In fact, this writing displayed two peculiar features about the self-determination discourse of the *New Europe*. Firstly, the *Poland's Freedom* was actually published before the Russian proclamation of April 9 that advocated the principle openly for the first time during the Great War – which, as a matter of fact, showed the deeply knowledgeable nature of the group on the news of Eastern Europe. Secondly, the association of the press organ clearly and directly connected an international break-through to the first revolution of Russia – not to the later examples of LENIN and WILSON.

This 'Februarian' viewpoint was held strongly by the group of the newspaper, as shown by a memorandum (*Self-Determination / The Self-Determination of Nations*) produced during the course of 1917. The anonymous author of the writing stated that 'New Russia' placed the ideological struggle of the war on a new level. They also emphasized that the Western Powers of the Entente needed to acknowledge the idea of self-determination. In addition to this, the author advocated that the principles of democracy should be favoured as opposed to secret treaties and the selfish interests of power.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to their friendly approach to the policy of the First Russian Revolution, the collaborators of the *New Europe* criticized the Bolsheviks for 'misusing' the idea of self-determination. ALEX LEEPER – the expert of Russian topics as indicated by his pseudonym 'Rurik' – stated rightfully that the ideology of the former negated nationalism in the end, aiming for a socialist world-revolution. Therefore, the Bolshevik utilization of self-determination was nothing more than a 'mere idle phrase'<sup>6</sup> (The New Europe, Vol. V, No. 57, 1917: 199).

5 *Self-Determination / The Self-Determination of Nations*. SEW, box 3/3 fold. 2.

6 As for the equality between 'Rurik' and Alex Leeper, see Hanak, „*The New Europe*”, 371.

4 As for the question of authorship, see Seton-Watson and Seton-Watson, 191.



As for the twisted adaptation of the concept by the Germany and Austria–Hungary, SETON-WATSON set up an interesting scheme. The Scottish intellectual pointed it out rightfully that self-determination was not applied to those nationalities that inhabited the realms of the hostile empires. However, he also announced that in fact, the governments of the Central Powers understood the notion not as one valid for peoples, but for state structures (The New Europe, Vol. VI, No. 68, 1918: 75-76).

It seems like 'state' was actually a counter-concept to that of 'national self-determination' within the framework of the NEW EUROPE – as shown by the critiques of both the Central Powers, but also the approaches of WILSON and LLOYD GEORGE to the Habsburg question in early 1918. As the Entente politicians made use of the new idea but did not preach the need of destroying the hostile Eastern empire, their opinions were labelled as dangerous 'half-solutions' as opposed to the actual will of local nationalities inhabiting the Eastern state by the authors of the *New Europe* (The New Europe, Vol. VI, No. 68, 1918: 91-92).

On the other hand, while the mentioning of 'self-determination' was only occasional between April–November 1917 and became a bit more frequent from the Bolshevik *coup d'état* on, the policies of LLOYD GEORGE and WOODROW WILSON meant a breakthrough from this aspect. From 10 January 1918 on, the notion was mentioned in every issue. Thus, it can be concluded that while the *New Europe* group was being attentive towards the application of self-determination was used by First Revolution of Russia, started to be keen on the subject with the revolution of November and could not take their eyes of it from the beginning of the last war-year on.

However, the heavy discussion on self-determination did not mean that the principle of nationality would have disappeared from the pages of the newspaper – although its usage became extremely rare from April 1917 to January 1919. In fact, one could have realized that self-determination merged on the side of the principle of nationality, but not as its substitute in the NEW EUROPE. An interview with the Russian Socialist GEORGI PLEKHANOV was extremely exciting in connection to this: the politician talked about the 'right of nations to dispose of themselves' – in other words, self-determination – as the *application of the principle of nationality in its most democratic form* (The New Europe, Vol. IV, No. 44, 1917: 159). Based on this statement, I argue that the principle of nationality was seen as a general scheme of European reconstruction strictly connected to the national approach – the democratic elements were later attachments to this. In contrast, self-determination was applied to individual units and was intertwined with the idea of democracy

from the beginning. It is also important to emphasize once more that the *New Europe* adopted the latter notion not from LENIN, WILSON or even GEORGE LLOYD, but from the discourse of the first Russian Revolution. Furthermore, the group of the periodical also had a peculiar area of application when it comes to self-determination: that of 'Central Europe'.

## In the Focus: 'Central Europe'

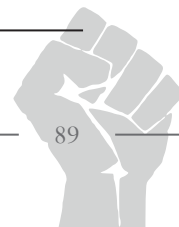
An ambitious choice of name and aspirant aims of re-organization, coupled with the conditions set up by the war-time situation: as a consequence, it was only natural that *New Europe* group adhered their ideals mainly against the Central Powers. And indeed: the 'new Europe' in its real, material form had to be built on the ruins of Germany, Austria–Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria defeated by the Entente.

In fact, the society strived to start and utilize a counter-project to the German plans of building the imperial sphere of *Mitteleuropa* ('Central Europe'). The first leader of the newspaper – the *Pangermanism and the Eastern Question* of MASARYK – adhered that the latter was a combination of Germany's wartime alliances and conquests. On this basis, the rulers of the Reich aimed at nothing less but the subjugation of the Old Continent, Africa and Asia (The New Europe, Vol. I, No. 1, 1916: 15). In reality, the German government did not pursue the goal of becoming a 'world-power' - 'only' that of becoming equal to Great Britain and Russia (Smith, 1986: 172); however, even the most ignorant citizens of the United Kingdom could not have turned away their heads from such a threat.

It was due to the influence of MASARYK that the *New Europe* actually adopted and utilized the German term of 'Central Europe' as a spatial notion (Nolte, 1995: 12). While no precise definitions appeared on the pages of the newspaper in connection to this expression, other wartime writings related to the group did circumscribe this area. For example, MASARYK equated this area to 'the East of Germany, Austria – Hungary, the Balkans and the Eastern part of Russia (Poland)' [sic!] in the memorandum *At the Eleventh Hour* of 1916.<sup>7</sup>

The Czech politician described the problems of this area as the formative 'Eastern Question' of Europe (The New Europe, Vol. I, No. 9, 1916: 272-273) – once again, re-using an already existing expression that had been connected to the troubled situation of the Balkans during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hayashi, 2007: 4). Defining a conflict area determinative to the future of the Old Continent, the aim of the *New Europe* group was to untie this Gordian Knot

7 *At the Eleventh Hour*. SEW, box 2/3 fold. 3, 29.



of problems through the peace settlement after the Great War. MASARYK's *The Reorganization of Europe* specifically identified the Southern Slav, Romanian, 'Bohemian', Polish, Ruthenian and Italian national movements as sources of various political questions waiting for solutions – and creating various kinds of difficulties in the making of the 'new Europe'<sup>8</sup> (*The New Europe*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1916: 102).

Consequently and naturally, the multi-ethnic and hostile Habsburg Empire was entirely within the focus of the *New Europe*. However, the Western and especially the British public traditionally identified the ancient realm as a necessary element in the network of European relations – the idea that it should be destroyed was too wild to be accepted before 1918 (Zbynek, Klimek, 1997: 21). The same was true when it comes to the policy of the Entente as shown by the hesitant attitudes of Wilson and Lloyd George towards the question. This was to be combated by an excessive campaign of propaganda from the side of the *New Europe*.

As for a start, MASARYK argued already in the first leader that the past and the present of the Monarchy was one of absolutism, centralism and oppression. However, the Czech politician relied not only on emotional impacts but also the strategic considerations of the war – thus, he stressed the importance of Austria–Hungary in the German plans of imperialism (*The New Europe*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1916: 10-15). This was unfolded this further in the *Reorganization of Europe*: MASARYK described the Dual Empire both as an enormous source of manpower and as providing fundamental strategic connection to the Balkans, Asia and Africa (*The New Europe*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1916: 100). It was only a logical consequence that the ancient Habsburg Empire had to be destroyed for once and all for the sake of the Entente's interests.

The principle of nationality and self-determination were also effective weapons in the struggle against the very existence of Austria–Hungary: the application of the former idea was obviously equivalent to the dissolution of the multi-ethnic empire, while the latter showed the coinciding will of local nationalities. As the author of the article *Le Paix Integrale* stressed that in early 1918: nothing could have blocked the peoples' determination to secede from the Monarchy – if the Great Powers of the Entente would not have accepted their separation, then they would have torn the Habsburg Empire apart by means of civil war (*The New Europe*, Vol. V, No. 65, 1918: 386-387).

However, while it was easy to argue against the existence of the Monarchy, the questions brought up by

the activities of the local Great Powers allied to Great Britain created a more complex group of problems. For instance, while being oppressive in terms of national policy towards its minorities, the topics of Russia were to be treated carefully by the *New Europe* (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981: 196-197). As a consequence, the group could not support the otherwise sympathetic cause of Polish independence until the fall of Czarism – as stressed by SETON-WATSON in 1916.<sup>9</sup> It is for no surprise that the authors of the *New Europe* celebrated the Eastern empire's later endorsement of self-determination loudly.

On the other hand, the yet-to-be-fulfilled national movements also announced excessive territorial claims that opposed the principle. For example, the Romanian government voiced demands in relation to the Hungarian-inhabited lands of the Central Plains and the ethnically mixed region of Banat – which the *New Europe* group naturally criticized (*The New Europe*, Vol. IV, No. 40, 1917: 5-6). Speaking in the name of the former side, the statements of DUMITRU DRĂGHICESCU were not hopeful with regards to the future. The Romanian politician denounced the oppressive policy of the Hungarian government in his article *Hungary and the non-Magyar Peoples* (25 April 1918); however, he could have accepted the latter in case the Magyars would have constituted an absolute majority in their country (*The New Europe*, Vol. VII, No. 80, 1918: 38).

No wonder that various collaborators of the *New Europe* warned the public – and their co-workers – about the dangers hiding within the depth of nationalism. With his article published right after that of DRĂGHICESCU, JOHN MAVROGORDATO stressed the danger that the clash between nations might create hatred and instability in the future as well (*The New Europe*, Vol. VII, No. 80, 1918: 69). Furthermore, the anonymous author of the writing *Through Liberation to the New Commonwealth* (5 September 1918) asserted that the historical lack of democratic traditions coupled with the tensions produced by the former times of oppression might result in the establishment of oppressive systems in Central Europe (*The New Europe*, Vol. VIII, No. 93, 1918: 169-172).

On the other hand, it was inevitable that national minorities would exist in the future. No other solution was possible due to both the mixed ethnic conditions of the area and the need of creating states strong enough to oppose the power of the German Reich. Thus, MASARYK stressed the importance of economic and strategic factors in the with regards to the settlement after the war, aiming to create and secure the future of a local nation-state

8 The article also mentioned the problems concerning the Danish and French nations – which, however, were not parts of the Central Zone or Central Europe.

9 Seton-Watson, letter to Dr. Rajchman, 28 November 1916. SEW, box 6/1, fold. 9.



himself. However, SETON-WATSON was hesitant to accept any major compromise of the principle of nationality – as a consequence, the Czech politician admittedly tried to put this opinion of his in a neutral setting to make it acceptable for his Scottish friend.<sup>10</sup>

The authors of the *New Europe* worked out two solutions for these problems – both based on self-determination. First of all, the fulfilment of national needs was seen as only inter-mediate steps towards the future establishment of greater structures. SETON-WATSON emphasized in his *An Open Letter to British Labour* (21 February 1918) that larger local federations could have been better solutions on the long run than nation-states as they would have inspired the local communities to cooperate with each other. Surprisingly, the author asserted that even Austria-Hungary could be re-created after the war – if the former inhabitants make this decision by their own will (The New Europe, Vol. VI, No. 71, 1918: 167).

In addition to this, the introduction of 10 October 1916 already proposed the establishment of minority rights as a solution for problems. The author of the article *La Victoire Intégrale* grabbed the main lines of this settlement representatively. Firstly, the writer mentioned that a system of voluntary migrations could lower the quantity of minority groups. In addition to this, future nation-states should have accepted and respected civil liberties and the cultural rights to the use of national language, to worship and education as standards (The New Europe, Vol. IV, No. 45, 1917: 228-229).

Besides supra-national federation and minority rights, self-determination-based autonomy was also a living concept within the *New Europe* group. It was the British historian ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE who dealt with all these aspects in his memorandum *The Draft Treaty of Peace* (December 1917). The author asserted that the clash between various territorial claims and the mixed local structures of ethnicity made the complete fulfilment of self-determination in Central Europe impossible. As for a solution, he proposed that territorial autonomy should be guaranteed to those nationalities that could not gain their independence due to this phenomenon. Furthermore, he also stated that all involved populations should have a saying in connection to the question of secession from each other. Surprisingly, TOYNBEE even made a peculiar map of the reformed Habsburg Empire, asserting that the latter could survive and live on as a federation of Central European nations after the war.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the ancient Monarchy fell apart after 1918 – and the new nation-states

actually showed those oppressive tendencies towards their minorities which the Enlightened authors of the *New Europe* feared so much.

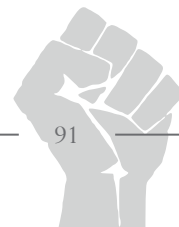
## Conclusion

The ‘principle of nationality’, national self-determination, and as a consequence, the total reorganization of the Old Continent – despite them not being fresh, the *New Europe* still upheld these ideas too early and in a manner too active for the audiences and the governments of Entente until 1918. This resulted in a marginalized position, in which the society was in and was also held in. On the other hand, the *New Europe* group succeeded in overcoming these difficulties; this happened both due to the lucky developments of the Great War, but was also a result of hard work. During the course of the latter, the association developed a language of self-determination earlier and independently from the emblematic figures of LENIN and WILSON. This was proved by the relationship between the former notion and that of the ‘principle of nationality’ in this discourse, the connection between which was provided by the influence of the First Russian Revolution. Upon this basis, the group of the periodical could develop excessive plans in relation to the area of ‘Central Europe’ – along with identifying problems already during the First World War that proved to be determinative as for the period after 1918.

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10 Masaryk, letter to Seton-Watson, 2 November 1916.

11 Toynbee, Arnold J., *Draft Treaty of Peace* (28 November 1917), 2–3. SEW, box 2/3 fold. 3.



## Sažetak

*Bence Bari,*

**Od teorije do prakse : Nova Europa i nacionalno samoodređenje u Prvom svjetskom ratu (1916.-1920.)**

*Marginalizirati – postaviti ili svesti nekoga na bespomoćnu ili nebitnu poziciju unutar društva ili društvene grupe. Iako ova definicija zvuči zaostalo, čovjek mora imati u vidu da je glavni pokretač povijesti - promjena. Upravo zbog te činjenice nije iznenađujuće da su mnoge društvene grupe koje su prvotno bile marginalizirane uspjele promijeniti tijek povijesti. Ovaj se znanstveni rad bavi međunarodnom grupom intelektualaca i političara koji su se okupili u Velikoj Britaniji za vrijeme (i poslije) Prvog vjetskog rata (1916.-1920.). Ovaj pokret je težio rekonstrukciji Starog kontinenta (Europe) s obzirom na državne granice, a propagiran je terminom nacionalnog samoodređenja. Njihovi revolucionarni ciljevi i stanje u društvu su prvotno rezultirali marginaliziranom državom – ali do kraja rata su se ideje Nove Europe i nacionalnog samoodređenja proširile i imale utjecaj na međuratno razdoblje.*

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