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978-1-107-12062-4 - European Elites and Ideas of Empire, 1917–1957

Dina Gusejnova

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EUROPEAN ELITES AND IDEAS OF EMPIRE,
1917–1957

Who thought of Europe as a community before its economic integration in 1957? Dina Gusejnova illustrates how a supranational European mentality was forged from depleted imperial identities. In the revolutions of 1917–1920, the power of the Hohenzollern, Habsburg, and Romanoff dynasties over their subjects expired. Even though Germany lost its credit as a world power twice in that century, in the global cultural memory, the old Germanic families remained associated with the idea of Europe in areas reaching from Mexico to the Baltic region and India. Gusejnova's book sheds light on a group of German-speaking intellectuals of aristocratic origin who became pioneers of Europe's future regeneration. In the minds of transnational elites, the continent's future horizons retained the contours of phantom empires.

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DINA GUSEJNOVA is Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Sheffield.

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*To my grandmother, Nadezhda Dmitrieva,
who always says: in this house, where everybody is a writer,
nobody seems to have a pen.*

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Preface

I belong to a post-nostalgic generation. A day before the coup that triggered the collapse of the Soviet Union in August 1991, I was on a brief return visit to Moscow, having recently moved to a unified Germany with my parents. What drew me to this topic was a wish to understand the way people feel about the disintegration of empires, and what the political consequences of such a feeling might be.

I was sentimental about friends, relatives, games, and certain tastes, but had no concept of states or nations at this point. For my parents and their circle of academics and publishers, on the other hand, the previous decade had been a time of interesting changes. The international ‘Republic of Letters’ had already become more permeable in the 1980s, as the Iron Curtain started to go. At the time, George Soros was supporting numerous academic initiatives in eastern Europe. One evening, he visited our apartment, and my mother took this as a welcome opportunity to provoke some doubts about things that I had been exposed to at school. ‘Do you know who this uncle is?’ she whispered. ‘He is a capitalist!’ More confusions were soon to come. In 1990, my parents were finally allowed to take up academic scholarships in Germany, which they had received in the late 1970s but were not allowed to pursue at the time. Now they were free to see the objects and hear the languages, which they knew in great detail from slide shows and books but never imagined they would see in real life. The formal dissolution of the Soviet state was a promise of freedom, which many understood in terms of geographical mobility and the opportunity to travel to places where, in a sense, European culture had been produced.

They began in northern Italy. During the odd four-hour visit to the Uffizi, I was puzzled by their exclamations like: ‘Oh, I didn’t know this Fra Angelico was so small. In the reproductions it always seemed very big.’ In Florence, a policeman kindly let us drive the wrong way up a one-way street because he thought we were exotic. In Fiesole, on the way to the European University Institute, my father tried to order food in Latin only

to find that nobody understands him, after which he had to resort to imitating the sounds of various animals that he wanted to eat. Even an elderly monk who got a ride up the hill with us told us that they ‘only speak Latin in the Vatican’.

In Liguria, the great theorist of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, who had been our guest in Moscow in the 1980s, hosted us in his little house of stone, boiling water on an old stove that we call in Russian ‘burzhuika’, the ‘bourgeois one’. Perched against a rock above the small village of Glori, near Imperia, the house boasted an incredible view of the Mediterranean, with the contours of Corsica somewhere in the mist. In 1992, Soviet Russia began to recede into the distance, like Corsica. Meanwhile, Moscow was taken over by rampant capitalist slogans such as ‘Moscow property will always have value’.

In central Europe and the United States, ironic nostalgia for the lost Soviet civilization had become a commercial product and a successful model for making works of art. In another attempt at education, my mother decided to take me to *documenta X*, Germany’s most celebrated modern art fair at Kassel, where I saw Ilya Kabakov’s installation *The Soviet toilet*, perhaps the first piece of ironic counter-nostalgia that I am aware of. It was simply baffling to me at the time that someone could take an object of use that was still fresh in my memory, supply it with a neat German label, and have hordes of international tourists pay to visit it. Even disgusting toilets, especially those, had become important in this collective Anatomy of Nostalgia, which eventually saw numerous expressions like the Museum of Communism in Prague, Café *Das Kapital* in Moscow, books like Alexei Yurchak’s *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* (2006), and transnational post-Soviet Balkan fusion bands like Gogol Bordelo.

The first time I could try out my own version of a post-nostalgic story of a state that is no more was when I had to teach Marx’s *Capital* in an introductory course in social theory called ‘Power, Identity, and Resistance’ at the University of Chicago. To a group of undergraduates from the American Midwest, China, and Nigeria, born after the Cold War, the fact that I was born in the Soviet Union suddenly began to form part of my package of curiosities in European culture. I even saw Ilya and Emilia Kabakov there once during an event organized by the Renaissance Society. But he no longer wanted to talk about toilets, his wife and manager asserted: his new subject was ‘utopia’.

The political influence of people who, living in the aftermath of the First World War, imagined themselves as a rare, soon to be extinct, species from a past world interests me because I have lived in three societies in which

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'leopard identities' – to allude to Lampedusa and Visconti – play an important role: Russia and the Russian community abroad; Germany, particularly East Germany; and the United Kingdom. In each of these communities, it is common for intellectuals to think of themselves as mediators to a bygone world, be it the Soviet Union, divided Germany, or the British Empire. At the same time, in Germany and later in Cambridge, people around me had grown up being unequivocally enthusiastic about the European Union. Looking back at the 1990s and early 2000s, European integration then seemed to hold a palpable promise of progress, untarnished by the crises of economic inequality and migration. The people in my book inhabited a world that combined impressions of Europe's imperial past with visions of its future, with all the ideological baggage that such a combination entails. Trying to understand them helped me understand the messy, contradictory connections between empire and utopia, which remain alive in Europe today.

Studying imperial memory academically unexpectedly opened up a humorous connection between the different kinds of memory and nostalgia I had encountered in German and Russian society. As a PhD student in Cambridge, I was once seated next to the wife of the master of Peterhouse, Lady Wilson, whose grandmother was the Baltic Baroness Moura Budberg. After I explained that one of the subjects of my research was a Baltic German nobleman called Hermann Keyserling, she exclaimed to her husband: 'Please meet Dina. I just found out that we are related!'

I began to reconstruct an image of Europe that I had only known from my own grandparents' accounts of their past. What they have in common with that of the nobles I studied is the international, or at least interregional, geography that underlies their memories. Two of my Jewish grandparents were nostalgic for the peripheral cosmopolitanism of central Europe, of Odessa on the Black Sea and Czernowitz in the Bukovina. My grandfather from Azerbaijan reminisces about the cosmopolitan city that was Baku, and his house, which used to belong to a Caucasian princely family, the Utsmievs, but after the Soviets took over, was filled with many different families of German, Armenian, Jewish, and Russian descent. My Russian grandmother, daughter of a *kulak* who lost everything in 1929 and saved his family by landing a job as an accountant for Moscow State University, also has an 'international' kind of nostalgia. She came to Austria with the Soviet military on 16 May 1945, at the age of 19. The four years she spent there working as a stenographer for the Allied Control Council gave her a very vivid sense of the imperial past that was still haunting the city. Somewhere between these two aftermaths of empires, the post-Soviet and the post-Habsburg, are the contours of this book.

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Generous funding from the AHRC, Peterhouse, the Kurt Hahn trust, the Marie Curie European doctorate, the DAAD, a Harper-Schmidt fellowship, and a Leverhulme early career fellowship enabled me to travel widely for purposes of archival research and academic exchange. I am particularly grateful to Philip Pattenden, the senior tutor at Peterhouse, and to Andreas Heiner from the Leverhulme Trust, for their support throughout this time.

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My very special thanks go to Andreas Vlachos for having trust in our common itineraries while the counts were taking over.

My grandmother, Nadezhda Dmitrieva, has been assembling an archive of aristocratic memory from our local newspaper, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, in the past years, upon my request. This model of cultural memory in a postsocialist state and other conversations with her have supplied this book with the most important, if less visible, arc to the present. I dedicate this book to her, the real historian in the family.

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The remaining faults are mine.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| AV | Archive of the Convegno Volta, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome |
| Barch | Berlin-Lichterfelde, Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives) |
| CSA | New York, Columbia University, Special Collections |
| DA | Dečín, Czech Republic, Štátny oblastny archív |
| DAG | Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft |
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| GSA | Weimar, Goethe-und-Schiller Archiv |
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| HKN | Hermann Keyserling Nachlass, Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek |
| IISG | Amsterdam, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Archive |
| Kessler, <i>Diaries</i> | Harry Graf Kessler, <i>Das Tagebuch 1880–1937</i> , Roland S. Kamzelak and Ulrich Ott (Eds.), 9 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004–10); Vol. 5, 1914–16, Günter Riederer und Ulrich Ott (Eds.) (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008); Vol. 6, 1916–18, Günter Riederer (Ed.) (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006); Vol. 7, 1919–23, Angela Reinthal (Ed.) (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2007); Vol. 8, 1923–26, Angela Reinthal, Günter Riederer und Jörg Schuster (Eds.); Vol. 9, 1926–37, Sabine Gruber and Ulrich Ott (Eds.) (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2010). |

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|---------------------------|---|
| Kessler, GS I, II, or III | Harry Graf Kessler, <i>Gesammelte Schriften in drei Bänden</i> , Cornelia Blasberg and Gerhard Schuster (Eds.), 3 vols. (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1988) |
| KN | Kessler Archive, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach |
| LHASA | Hans-Hasso von Veltheim Archive, Ostrau; Depositum Veltheim at the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle (Saale) |
| MT | Mikhail von Taube archive, Columbia University Libraries, Rare Books and Manuscript Library, New York |
| MWG | Max-Weber-Gesamtausgabe, 23 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988–2015). Vol. I:15, Wolfgang Mommsen and Gangolf Hübinger (Eds.), <i>Max Weber. Zur Politik im Weltkrieg</i> (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984); Vol. I:16, <i>Zur Neuordnung Deutschlands. Schriften und Reden 1918–1920</i> , Wolfgang Mommsen and Gangolf Hübinger (Eds.) (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988); Vol. I:17, <i>Wissenschaft als Beruf. 1917/19. Politik als Beruf. 1919</i> , Wolfgang Mommsen and Wolfgang Schluchter, in collaboration with Birgitt Morgenbrod (Eds.) (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992); Vol. I:22–24, Edith Hanke, with assistance from Thomas Kroll (Eds.), <i>Teilband 4: Herrschaft</i> (Tübingen: Mohr, 2005) |
| Nansen/UNOG | United Nations Records and Archives Unit, Nansen Fonds, Refugees Mixed Archival Group, 1919–47, Geneva |
| RGVA | Moscow, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (Russian State Military Archives), formerly Osobyi arkhiv |
| RNCK | Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi Archive, Moscow, Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (Russian State Military Archives), Fond 554 |

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In December 1917, delegations from Russia, Ukraine, Austria-Hungary, Prussia, Bavaria, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire travelled to Brest-Litovsk in the prospect of peace. In this ruined market town, only the train station and the nineteenth-century citadel were still standing. Before the war, Brest used to link the inland colonies of the Russian Empire with its commercial veins. Now under German control, it served as a market for a different kind of commodity: political prestige.

On the table were not only issues of territorial integrity but the question of legitimate succession to Europe's vanishing empires.¹ The Russian Empire's losses in the war precipitated a revolution in Petrograd in February 1917, which enabled the Bolsheviks, a party formed in exile, to assume control over the state in a coup in October of that year. They saw themselves as the vanguard of a new humanity, which had come to replace Europe's bankrupt imperial elites. After the tsar's abdication and the failures of the Provisional Government, they handled the Russian Empire's defeat and initiated the peace talks.² Two years after the event, journalists

¹ For more on Brest-Litovsk before the war, see Kh. Zonenberg, *Istoria goroda Brest-Litovska. 1016–1907, etc.* [History of the city of Brest-Litovsk] (Brest-Litovsk: Tipografia Kobrinca, 1908).

² There is, of course, a very large literature on the Russian Revolution and Civil War. To indicate directions which are important to the present book, I concentrate on references to works which link the revolution to processes of imperial decline and war and put these in comparative perspective. See especially Mark von Hagen, 'The Russian Empire', and Ronald G. Suny, 'The Russian Empire', in *After Empire. Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building. The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 58–73 and 142–155; James D. White, 'Revolutionary Europe', in *A Companion to Modern European History. 1871–1945*, ed. Martin Pugh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 174–193; for revolution as a consequence of war, see Peter Gatrell, *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); and Katja Bruisch and Nikolaus Katzer, *Bolshaiia voina Rossii: Sotsial'nyi poriadok, publichnaia kommunikatsia i nasilie na rubezhe tsarskoi i sovetkoi epochi* (Moscow: NLO, 2014). For a comparative and theoretical perspective, see the classic by Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), and Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492–1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). For a more comprehensive literature, see Jonathan Smele (ed. and annot.),

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such as the American John Reed presented the Bolshevik rise to power as an inevitable revolution with global potential.³

Nikolai Lenin, a pseudonym he derived from the river of his Siberian exile, considered the collapse of imperial governments in the war to be the final culmination of global capitalism. He noted that previous theoretical models of imperial crises, which he had studied in libraries in London, Bern, and Zurich, failed to predict the impact of wars between empires on the ability of revolutionary groups to gain control over states. Now that even the former Russian Empire with its tiny working class had Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, a revolution seemed more likely in the rest of Europe as well.⁴

However, this is not in fact what happened in most of central Europe in the decades between 1917 and 1939. Even if we compare the changes during this time with more critical, non-Bolshevik perspectives on the Russian case, central Europe experienced a less radical transformation in this interval. The societies west of the new Russian border did not change their social, institutional, and economic basis to the same degree. Some of the more radical changes, such as giving women the vote, which immediately increased the number of active citizens in Europe, were not the work of new republican governments. Thus in Britain, a surviving empire and a monarchy, national citizenship and women's suffrage also replaced imperial forms of subjecthood after the First World War.⁵

This remained so until the new divisions of Germany and eastern Europe, which took place in the aftermath of the Hitler–Stalin pact of 1939 and the Yalta Conference of 1945. Before this time, seemingly radical changes like the abolition of monarchies in twenty-two German princely states and in Austria were the effects of mostly liberal constitutional reforms. Acts of retribution against the old elites were also more moderate in central Europe than in Russia. Most members of the Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and other families survived in exile. There were no

The Russian Revolution and Civil War, 1917–1921: An Annotated Bibliography (London and New York: Continuum, 2003).

³ John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919); on the history of the revolution as a story, see Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁴ Lenin's commentary on Hobson was first published as Nikolai Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Petrograd: Zhizn' i Znanie, 1917).

⁵ For the intellectual and practical transition via 'imperial citizenship, see Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). See also Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial, 1890–1920. Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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twentieth-century Marie Antoinettes west of the Curzon line, even though writers like the Austrian Stefan Zweig did invoke her name in a bestselling biography.⁶ Revolutionary situations did happen between 1918 and 1922 in various cities, like Munich, Berlin, Kiel, Turin, and Budapest. But in many cases, radical movements associated with disbanded officer corps of the old imperial armies were more successful there than the contemporary socialist and anarchist movements or the relatively local sailors' mutinies. Moreover, new leaders on the left and the right, including Mussolini in Rome, Friedrich Ebert in Weimar, Adolf Hitler in Potsdam, and Franco in Spain all sought public accreditation from the representatives of Europe's traditional elites.⁷

By 1924, the most charismatic of the revolutionary leaders on the left, people like Kurt Eisner in Munich, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Berlin, and Giacomo Matteotti in Rome, became victims of political assassination alongside liberal reformers such as Walther Rathenau; others, such as Antonio Gramsci, Béla Kun, and György Lukács, were imprisoned or went into exile. Among historians, there were only two brief moments when the events in Germany were discussed under the label of 'revolutions'. The first was when the Russian socialists such as Larisa Reisner and Karl Radek hoped to encourage a revolution there in the early 1920s.⁸ The second time was in the aftermath of 1968, when historians who were disenchanted with the actions of the Soviet Union in their own lifetime sought to recover an alternative history of European socialism.⁹

This book argues that intellectual communities and transnational cultural networks played a key role in establishing a consensus against revolution in central Europe. Looking chiefly at the decades between the revolution in Russia in 1917 and the beginning of Europe's post-war integration in 1957, I suggest that during this period, the old elites of continental Europe managed to convert their imperial prestige into new forms of power. The limited degree to which the Bolshevik revolution was

⁶ Stefan Zweig, *Marie Antoinette: The Portrait of an Average Woman* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1933).

⁷ Cf. Christoph Kopke and Werner Treß (eds.), *Der Tag von Potsdam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

⁸ Cf. Larisa Reisner, *Hamburg auf den Barrikaden. Erlebtes und Erhörtes aus dem Hamburger Aufstand 1923* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1923).

⁹ Cf. Richard Watt, *The Kings Depart: The Tragedy of Germany. Versailles and the German Revolution 1923* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968). For a more balanced recent account of the revolutions in Germany, see Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin, 2003), and Christopher Clark, Introduction to Viktor Klemperer, *Victor Klemperer, Man möchte immer weinen und Lachen in Einem. Revolutionstagebuch 1919* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2015).

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able to spread west, this book argues, had much to do with the existence of media in which some vocal members of the European intelligentsia could discuss their own implicated role in the process of imperial decline, and even share a certain degree of enthusiasm for the revolutions.

The post-imperial transition in central Europe between 1917 and the 1930s was closer in character to British imperial reforms between the abolition of slavery of 1833 and the Representation of the People Act of 1918 than to the revolutions in Russia.¹⁰ Why did revolutions not gain more public support west of Russia? There cannot be any one answer to this question, but this book contributes something to this larger question by highlighting the factor of social prestige in the transformation of power. Recovering the transnational sociability and intellectual production of a group of, mostly liberal, German-speaking authors, it reveals the persistent authority of people who belonged to the former elites of multiple continental empires.¹¹ They considered themselves implicated in Europe's imperial past, even though, as one of them put it, they were 'historically speaking, dead'.¹²

Memoirs and autobiographic reflections were one domain in which their imperial memories circulated. But the German-speaking aristocratic intellectuals of interwar Europe also became political activists and theorists of internationalism in interwar European institutions such as The Hague Academy of International Law, newly founded academies of leadership like the Darmstadt School of Wisdom, or the League of Nations unions.¹³ Joining voices with more radical contemporaries who criticized parliamentary democracies and bourgeois values from the Left and the Right, they formed a peculiar international from above, which had the power to give or deny recognition in Europe's informal circles of elite sociability. In this way, the old Germanic elites fulfilled a double function. In Germany, they helped to overcome Germany's intellectual isolation by mobilizing their international connections. Internationally, they embodied the 'old' world of Europe's continental empires. They also became self-proclaimed representatives of Europe in encounters with the new intellectuals of the non-

¹⁰ See Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹¹ Otto Neurath, *Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft. Bildstatistisches Elementarwerk. Das Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsmuseum in Wien zeigt in 100 farbigen Bildtafeln Produktionsformen, Gesellschaftsordnungen, Kulturstufen, Lebenshaltungen* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1930).

¹² Hermann Keyserling, *Reise durch die Zeit* (Vaduz: Liechtenstein, 1948), 53.

¹³ Noel Annan, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', in *Studies in Social History*, ed. John Plumb (London: Longmans, 1955).

Western world, including global stars such as the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore.

The position of German intellectuals changed dramatically between the two peace treaties that ended the First World War. At Brest-Litovsk, Germany and Austria-Hungary were winning and dictating the terms. By contrast, the Peace of Versailles not only prominently marked Germany's defeat as a nation. It also identified the old German-speaking elites as the representatives of more than one dismantled empire. As this book will show, however, paradoxically, this gave Germanic intellectuals greater international reach. As figures of precarious status, they provided the post-imperial societies of Europe with a personal vision of transition that they otherwise lacked.¹⁴

As members of a transnational elite, they actively resisted thinking about their present in terms of 'old' and 'new' regimes, which many contemporary political movements tried to establish. Such attitudes to revolutions have been previously expressed in British political thought in response to the French Revolution and the anti-Napoleonic struggles.¹⁵ In the new international situation emerging around the League of Nations and other international bodies, the association of the German elites with multiple vanished empires, offered a unique form of cultural capital.

Looking back at the decade which followed Brest-Litovsk, Baron Taube, a former Russian senator remarked: 'We are truly living in strange times. Former ministers, field marshals who had been dismissed and monarchs without a throne' are putting the work they had been trained to do to rest in order to put to paper in haste the things which they had lived and seen 'in happier days, when they were still in power'.¹⁶ But even as memoirists, these 'subjective witnesses of the first rank', Baron Taube argued, could not be trusted because in remembering, they wanted to expiate themselves. By contrast, he thought that his own memory of the events he dubbed the

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, 'Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power', in *Culture and Its Creators. Essays in Honor of Edward Shils*, ed. Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols-Clark (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971), 150–171.

¹⁵ Classic examples are Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Dodsley, 1790), and William Wordsworth, *Tract on the Convention of Sintra* (1808) (London: Humphrey Milford, 1915), as discussed in Michael Hechter, *Alien Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1. For a problematization of the conservative/progressive optic in the intellectual history of revolutionary periods, see Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 1–23, and an unpublished paper, 'Edmund Burke and the Origins of Conservatism' (2015).

¹⁶ Michael Freiherr von Taube, *Der großen Katastrophe entgegen. Die russische Politik der Vorkriegszeit und das Ende des Zarenreiches (1904–1917)* (Berlin and Leipzig: Georg Neuner, 1929), 1.

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‘Great Catastrophe’ had more public value, if only because many senior diplomats representing their empires at Brest-Litovsk were also soon removed from the political stage.¹⁷ People like Taube were not just observers in the ‘second row of the ministerial lodge of the Russian empire’. He belonged to a rank of past historical actors, who were also leading internationalists of their generation.

To reconstruct how the intellectual communities of Europe remained connected through shared imperial mentalities, I look at authors who were social celebrities or well known in these circles. Some of the most visible personalities in these circles of post-imperial sociability were authors and intellectuals of aristocratic background, often with connections in imperial civil service or international law. These included the diarist Count Harry Kessler, a committed internationalist who was a Prussian officer with Anglo-Irish roots; Count Hermann Keyserling, a Baltic Baron who became a philosopher of global travel and identity, and Baron Hans-Hasso von Veltheim, a German Orientalist with a cosmopolitan social circle. The Austrian prince Karl Anton Rohan, a lobbyist and founder of the organization that preceded UNESCO, was a more important personality connecting old Europe with intellectuals, bankers, and industrialists of the post-war era, as well as building some ties to the nascent fascist movement in Italy. Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, the activist of Pan-European unity, was equally well known in central Europe, Britain, and the United States. Baron Mikhail von Taube was an international lawyer from the Russian Empire teaching in Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands. As individuals and members of a wider network of intellectual communities, these authors and others of similar background contributed to the growth of an internationalist mentality by sharing experiences of the First World War, as well as successive crises of European democracies and economies. Their family networks past and present gave them a personal connection to multiple processes of revolution and reform which took place almost simultaneously in Ireland, Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. They were, to adopt Donald Winnicott’s term, ‘transitional’ subjects for post-imperial societies.¹⁸ Their family histories, connecting

¹⁷ His own reflections comprise Michael Freiherr von Taube, *Rußland und Westeuropa (Rußlands historische Sonderentwicklung in der europäischen Völkergemeinschaft)*, Institut für internationales Recht an der Universität Kiel (Berlin: Stilke, 1928); and Prof. bar. M.A. Taube, *Vechnyi mir ili vechnaia voina? (Mysli o „Ligi Natsii“)* (Berlin: Detinets, 1922).

¹⁸ Donald Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (1965; London: Karnac Press, 1990).

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them to the history of more than one empire, helped others make sense of the transition from imperial to post-imperial Europe.

Power, prestige, and the limits of imperial decline

Readers of international news were unlikely to have heard of Brest-Litovsk before the peace treaty. In 1915, the English-speaking educated public was interested in the region mostly because it was home to the bison, Europe's biggest animal, whose extinction was imminent because of the protracted war. 'But for the jealous protection of the Tsar it would, even here, long since have vanished', lamented the *Illustrated London News*, if it weren't for the 'zoos or private parks such as those of the Duke of Bedford, and of Count Potocky, in Volhynia'.¹⁹ Few could foresee then that in 1918, Europe's last tsar and his family would vanish even before the last bison.

But to more astute analysts of modern empires such as John Hobson, the war merely highlighted what he had already observed nearly two decades earlier: empires persisted despite the fact that the majority of their populations lacked a common interest in imperialism.²⁰ Instead, as complex systems of social and economic relations, empires brought benefits to particular, increasingly global, commercial, and financial enterprises, which included the old dynasties as the oldest holders of capital in their empires. These national and transnational minorities were the chief beneficiaries of empires, and as such Hobson's readers such as Lenin concentrated their critique on them.

Other theorists of empire agreed with much of this analysis but were more sceptical in their conclusions. They believed that cultural values such as prestige were just as significant in maintaining stability in empires, which meant that even the supposed enlightenment of imperial subjects about their true interests would not necessarily lead to revolution. What I want to underline is that intellectuals and civil servants working for empires were among those minorities who benefited from empires by enjoying the existence of special honours, cultural goods, and the benefits of a multicultural identity.

In this book, I look at one of the subgroups of these intellectual elites who could be described as a kind of European imperial intelligentsia. Like the Russian origin of this term suggests, this group comprised critics of

¹⁹ 'Menaced with Extinction by War: European Bison in Lithuania', *Illustrated London News*, 4 September 1915, 299.

²⁰ Hobson, *Imperialism*, 35.

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imperial governments who were simultaneously profoundly implicated in their imperial economic and cultural systems of prestige. They questioned the way ideas of the nation, of culture and civilization, were used to justify imperial rule, and yet they also questioned the way these were used by the revolutionaries.²¹ In this capacity, they can serve as guides to a social and intellectual history of continental European imperialism that could build on the work of scholars of the British Empire and, more recently, expanded in the form of the history of international political thought.²² In addition, their perspective on empire opens up new possibilities for a more modest form of global and transnational history of imperialism after the age of empire.²³ The theorists and witnesses of the twentieth-century revolutions engaged with modernist forms of narrative and contemporary traditions in philosophy to make sense of their particular condition. They lived in an age in which empires declined, yet imperialism persisted. Moreover, their ideas of empire had formed in a trans-imperial context, reflecting the character of elite sociability in the Belle Epoque as well as the cultural traditions of European education.²⁴ Yet their peculiar endorsement of imperialism without empires was frequently constructed in highly traditional forms of writing, which hearkened back to the idea of a united Europe. Their golden age was anchored in the ‘non-radical’ moments of the enlightenment, in the cosmopolitan nationalism of liberals such as Mazzini, in technocratic idealism of the Saint Simonians and Cobden, and the aesthetic reform movements of William Morris and the Theosophical Society.²⁵ The political thought of the twentieth-century internationalist configuration that is at the centre of my attention in this book takes the

²¹ On the German distinction between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, see Raymond Geuss, ‘*Kultur, Bildung, Geist*’, in *Morality, Culture, History*, ed. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29–51.

²² See, notably, C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780–1830* (London: Longmans, 1989); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire. The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²³ For a much grander nineteenth-century global history of empires, see Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), esp. 419–468.

²⁴ On the transnational character of imperial formations, see Ilya Gerasimov, Sergey Glebov, Jan Kusber, Marina Mogilner, and Alexander Semyonov, *Empire Speaks Out. Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

²⁵ I take the view that the radical thinkers of the enlightenment were generally less characteristic of the concept, at least in the way it was received subsequently, than Jonathan Israel has tended to present it. For the original statement of the ‘radical enlightenment’ thesis, see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For a critique of this view, see David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

form of autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, and classical dramatic fiction, along with treatises and other works of theory.

As one French publisher put it in 1920: ‘Que nous réserve le vingtième siècle? L’Europe pourra-t-elle maintenir son hégémonie exclusive sur le monde?’ [‘What does the twentieth century hold in stock for us? Will Europe be able to maintain her exclusive hegemony over the world?'] In times of ‘dismemberment of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and other empires’, these questions worried even those who had been critical of previous imperial excesses.²⁶ In fact, things had been falling apart in Europe’s other empires, too.²⁷ Calls for national self-determination and home rule reached as far as the telegraph cables and the imperial liners, from the Atlantic to the Indian Oceans, across the Mediterranean, the Irish, and the Baltic Seas.²⁸ Increasingly, imperial governments were perceived as holders of an oppressive, alien type of rule that went against the interests of the majority of their subjects – metropolitan, peripheral, and colonial.²⁹ For a short while, the Ottoman and German empires and Austria-Hungary survived; but by 1922, these powers also unravelled. In the period between 1916 and 1922, new national republics like Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the three

²⁶ Mehemed Emin Effendi, *Civilisation et humanité*, Introduction G. Ficker (Paris: G. Fickler, 1920), i–iv.

²⁷ This phrase was first used in comparative perspective by W.B. Yeats in ‘Second Coming’, first published in W.B. Yeats, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1920). According to the manuscripts, Yeats’s original draft of the poem included references to the French and the Russian revolutions, but in the final version, only the Irish one remains. For details, see Thomas Parkinson and Anne Brannen (eds.), ‘*Michael Robartes and the Dancer*’ *Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Significantly for the literature on decolonization, the line ‘things fall apart’ only became appropriated in the anticolonial literary movement associated with Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart* (London: William Heinemann, 1958).

²⁸ On the key sites where self-determination and home rule were discussed, see Mahatma Gandhi, ‘Hind Swaraj’, *Indian Opinion*, 11 and 18 December 1909; Woodrow Wilson, speech of 11 February 1918; the Bolshevik peace plan, 29 December 1918; for more context, see Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule. An Irish History, 1800–2000* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2003). For the Wilsonian conception of self-determination and its global effects, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁹ The classic critique of imperialism deceiving the imperialists is John Hobson, *Imperialism*. On the concept of alien rule, see John Plamenatz, *On Alien Rule and Self-Government* (London: Longmans, 1960), and Hechter, *Alien Rule*. On decolonization in comparative perspective, see especially Martin Thomas, Bob Moore, and L.J. Butler (eds.), *Crises of Empire. Decolonization and Europe’s Imperial States, 1918–1975* (London: Hodder, 2008); Frederick Cooper, ‘Decolonizing Situations: The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Colonial Studies, 1951–2001’, in *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 20:2, Special Issue: Regards Croisés: Transatlantic Perspectives on the Colonial Situation (Summer 2002), 47–76. See also Ronald Robinson, ‘Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration’, in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds.), *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1972), 117–140.

Baltic states, emerged, alongside new federations like the Kingdom of Yugoslavia or the League of Nations. Particularly in the lands formerly belonging to the defeated empires of continental Europe, the old land-owning, military, and political elites seemed discredited.

In Russia, dismantling the old elites went further than anywhere else in Europe. The Bolshevik party began its rise to power by calling into question the very basic hierarchies of rank inside the imperial army. A ‘Decree on the destruction of estates and civil honours’ followed, which proclaimed the abolition of all status of privilege alongside deprived statuses like that of a peasant. What remained were the ‘free peoples of Russia’.³⁰ The Romanoffs, whose Russian-sounding name obscured their relation to the German houses of Schleswig and of Hessen-Darmstadt, had already been exposed as ‘inner Germans’ and enemies of their former subjects under the Kerenski administration. Under the Bolsheviks, they were executed without trial along with their valet, their cook, and their butler, away from the public eye, in the heart of the Urals, where many Russian socialists and anarchists had been spending their prison sentences since the 1880s.³¹ Some among the Bolsheviks thought that such actions were necessary in order to achieve the kind of self-determination they were seeking for the former imperial subjects. Former inner peripheries like the ‘Pale of Settlement’, a large rural ghetto created by Catherine II of Russia, to which the Jews of Russia had been confined, were decolonized.³² Their demand for self-determination also extended to the subject peoples of other empires, such as the Armenians, as well as the Baltic territories now claimed by the German Empire.³³ But to say that in tearing down the old regimes, the Bolsheviks became universal spokesmen for the

³⁰ ‘Deklaratsia prav narodov Rossii’ (2/15 November 1915) and ‘Dekret ob unichtozhenii soslovii i grazhdanskikh chinov’ (11/24 November 1917), in *Dekrety sovetskoj vlasti* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957), 39–40 and 72.

³¹ On the changing image of the Romanoffs during the war, see Boris Kolonitskii, *Tragicheskaya erotika. Obrazy imperatorskoj sem’i v gody Pervoi mirovoj voiny* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2010).

³² On the concept of internal colonization, cf. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (1975, new edition, New Brunswick: Transaction, 1999). As applied to the Russian Empire, see Alexander Etkind, Ilya Kukulkin, and Dirk Uffelmann (eds.), *Tam, vnutri. Praktiki vnutrennei kolonizatsii v kul’turnoi istorii Rossii* (Moscow: NLO, 2012), and Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

³³ Concerning the decree 13 ‘On Turkish Armenia’, *Pravda* (29 December 1917), see Serif Mardin, ‘The Ottoman Empire’, in *After Empire. Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building. The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 115–128, and Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires. The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 179.

world's subalterns would be misleading.³⁴ They were dismissive of the Ukrainian constitutional democrats, for instance, who were their closest rivals in imperial succession. Internally, they also unleashed a brutal civil war, now known as the Red Terror.³⁵ The 'Lenin' moment supported those post-imperial emancipation movements that helped secure the power of the party.³⁶

Elsewhere in Europe, the most visible representatives of the old elites, that is, Europe's ruling dynasties, the officers of the imperial armies and other civil and diplomatic servants, also had to go. Most of the aristocratic families of Europe were of German background, but more recently, had closer ties to Britain. Their genealogies dated back to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, dissolved by Napoleon in 1806. Three of the monarchs whose empires were involved in the First World War called Queen Victoria 'grandma', and English was spoken at home not only in the households of the British royal family but also in that of the Romanoffs and among the Baltic nobility. A popular desire to discredit these elites was the most visible effect of the war on post-war Europe. In Germany and Austria, members of the Hohenzollerns, the Wittelsbachs, and the Habsburgs, went into exile in 1918. In Austria, the Habsburgs were not only forced to abdicate but became a kind of *familia non grata*. In Britain, the ruling Saxe-Coburg Gothas had changed their name to Windsor, which was more rooted in national geography.³⁷ But even at a lower level of power, aristocratic families in the Baltic states and in Czechoslovakia were stigmatized and partially expropriated. For instance, family crests of the Baltic Barons were removed from Tallinn's cathedral in

³⁴ On shattered hopes in the Bolshevik party as a vanguard of emancipation, particularly as expressed among the European left in the 1920s, see especially Pyotr Kropotkin, 'The Russian Revolution and the Soviet Government. Letter to the Workers of the Western World', in *Labour Leader* (22 July 1920), reprinted in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger Baldwin (1927) (New York: Dover, 1970), 252–256; see also *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 50 (1923), referring back to Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1911). On betrayals of the party from within in the crisis of the First World War, Grigory Zinoviev, *Der Krieg und die Krise des Sozialismus* (Vienna: Verlag für Literatur und Politik, 1924).

³⁵ On the changing concept of terror in the course of the revolution, see Oleg Budnitsky, *Terrorizm v rossijskom osvoboditel'nom dvizhenii* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2000).

³⁶ Manela, *Wilsonian Moment*.

³⁷ See National Archives, HO 342,469/13, Letter from Lloyd George to the Secretary of State of 29 August 1915, in 'Titles, Styles and Precedence of Members of the Royal Family: Relinquishment of German Titles in Favour of British Titles; Adoption of Surnames Mountbatten and Windsor; Principles of Entitlement to the Style "Royal Highness" and the Case of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (1917–48)', www.heraldica.org/topics/britain/TNA/HO_144_22945.htm, accessed 5 July 2015. On the wider British context, see Alan G.V. Simmonds, *Britain and World War One* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).