EUROPE *in the* TWENTIETH CENTURY

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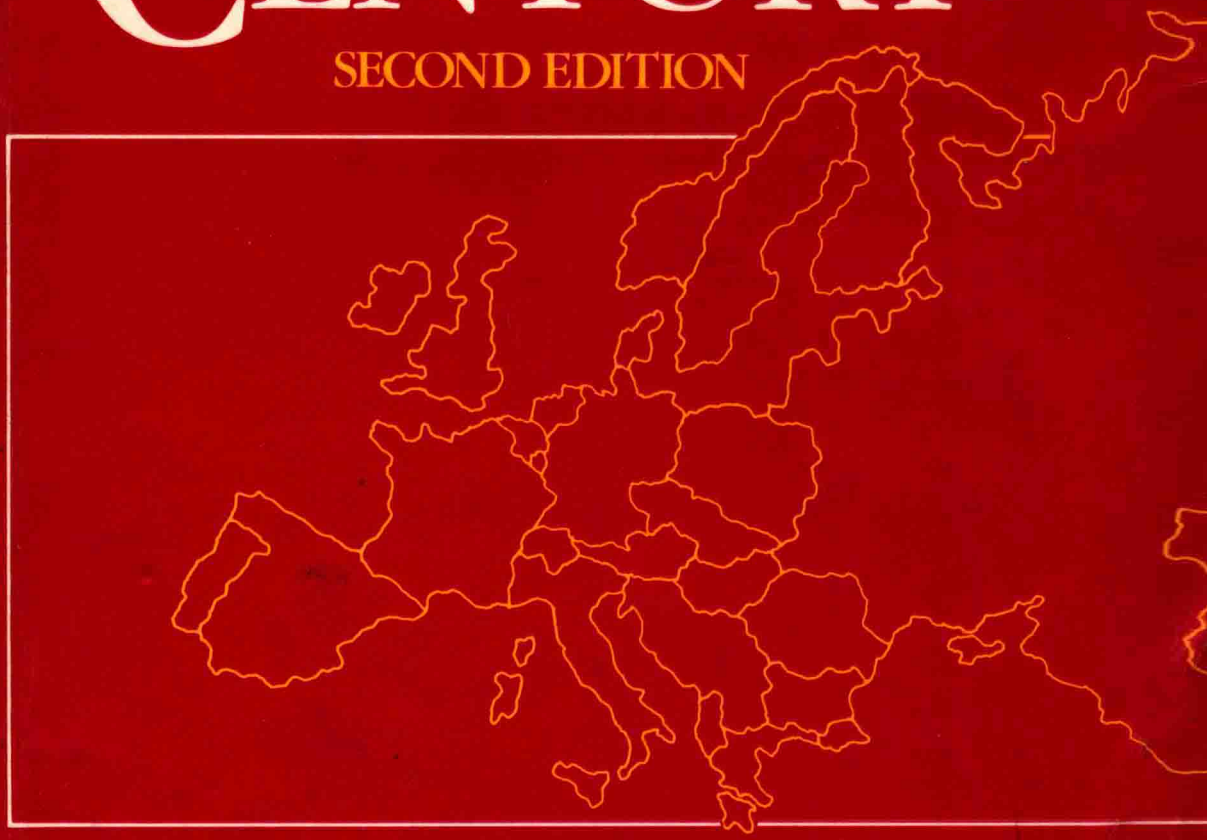

ROLAND N. STROMBERG

Second Edition

EUROPE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Preface

For this second edition of a book originally published in 1980, I have tried not only to bring it up to date, but to incorporate a number of suggestions for improvement kindly offered by friendly critics. Some of these were in small matters, one or two in larger questions of organization, occasionally of interpretation. I want to thank all of these people. They include Geoffrey J. Giles, *University of Florida,* Kim Munholland, *University of Minnesota,* and Taylor Stults, *Muskingum College* who read the book for Prentice Hall and offered comments and criticisms. Among my professional colleagues, Dr. Ann Healy of the *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee* was especially helpful. Naturally, I have made revisions in a number of places based on recent research, which is constantly at work providing us with new and better information; scores of industrious and skillful historians perform this service, as fresh sources become available and historical events are reevaluated accordingly. The Bibliography, located at the end of the book, has been wholly redone; it is considerably more extensive than the one in the first edition, as well as updated.

Nevertheless, in general the book remains much as it was save for the inclusion of material covering recent years. We live in a fast-moving world, needless to say. The first edition ended without any mention of Afghanistan resistance fighters, Lech Walesa, Margaret Thatcher, the Alliance, Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, or Star Wars, to name only a few. In more ways

than the names of political leaders and issues, there have been changes in Europe and in the world of which it is increasingly an interdependent part.

The last few chapters take reckoning of this, I hope successfully. As the first edition preface noted, Walter Ralegh warned long ago that "Whosoever in writing modern history shall follow truth near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth." Anyone rash enough to venture judgments on what is likely to come next in the affairs of mankind stands to suffer more than a few dental casualties. Yet the historian who must finish his narrative at an arbitrary moment, between which and publication there is always a certain lapse of time, has to take this risk. Students may want to keep their own notebooks updating events; by the time the last pages of this book reach their eyes, the whirligig of time will probably have blown them into the wastebasket of history. But that is part of what makes it all so interesting.

I would like further to acknowledge the assistance of Grace Ellen Ehr and Beth Scothon-Copits of Milwaukee, in secretarial, proofreading and indexing chores, and to thank Barbara DeVries of Prentice Hall for her skill and patience as Production Editor. Faults that remain despite all this help must, of course, be blamed on me alone.

R.N.S.

Introduction

People read history for enjoyment, instruction, orientation, stimulation, inspiration, even therapy; they study the record of past events to broaden their horizons, sharpen their critical sense, find their roots, strengthen their pride, criticize their society, discover other societies; they turn to history out of boredom, curiosity, discontent, piety. Some seek to discover the causes or the origins of success, progress, and power or failure, decay, and dissolution. The uses of the past are thus manifold and even contradictory. So is the past itself, encompassing as it does not only the record of public events but also the deeper, often silent processes of social change. It includes scientific, technological, and economic development; artistic and literary achievement; labor and leisure—all the varied activities of all kinds of people. "History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their own ends," Karl Marx once wrote. Such a subject is obviously immense, there being many men and women.

The nitpicker will add that history is the sum of human activities that are both recorded in some way (the overwhelming majority are not) and significant enough to deserve being remembered and studied. The latter qualification is troublesome, for it must be somewhat subjective. A people with a high level of cultural unity, sharing the same traditions and experiences—a small, isolated society, say—might substantially agree on what is important and on the symbolic terms used to describe it. The more diverse, complex, and dynamic a society becomes, the less agreement there will be.

We may be sure that the books of two historians on the same subject will differ markedly. All historians writing about the twentieth century will doubtless discuss some of the same things. It is hard to imagine any textbook leaving out the two world wars, the Great Depression, the Russian Revolution, Stalin, or Hitler. But one scholar will omit some matters found in another's book and include matters omitted in other histories. Each will vary in the space he or she devotes to issues, and each will interpret them differently, i.e., will select particulars, assign causation, and judge the wisdom or virtue of decisions in varying terms.

This is no place to embark on a discussion of such issues; we wish only to warn the reader that there is no one history in the sense that there is one accepted electrical engineering. There are as many histories as there are historians, and the interests of historians change not only from person to person but from generation to generation. Thus the writing of history is an argument without end. The study of history as a profession, itself a chapter of the fairly recent past, has generated some common standards of research and a large body of valuable data, but it has provided little consensus on interpretation or even the methods of interpretation. If it did, this consensus would still be suspect on the grounds of a situational bias.

Selection is a special problem for anyone seeking to cover the entirety of the multitudinous twentieth century in a fairly short volume. Our century has certainly not been lacking either in action or in dynamic development in all phases of human activity. Change has become more rapid, and the total of human knowledge has increased explosively. We can easily argue that there has been more "history" in this century than in all previous ones combined, just as there have been more books published, more knowledge engendered, more wealth produced, more movements of people. More and more of humanity participates in social processes and is aware of an historical perspective. "The whole immense multitude of men enter finally into the light," that optimistic pre-1914 socialist Jean Jaurès declared. When at about the same time H. G. Wells announced that "history will have to tell more about clerks and less about conquerors," he was noting the fact that clerks, peasants, and workers were ceasing to be merely the inert and passive materials of history and were beginning to play an active, conscious part in human affairs. Certainly a part of the ever accelerating dynamism of Western society is this movement of once almost silent populations into the "light" of consciousness and change—for better or for worse. Perhaps that was what James Joyce meant in the century's most amazing work of literature, *Finnegans Wake,* in which "history is a nightmare from which we are awakening"; awakening from a long dream of the human race comparable to the night's sleep of a single person.

The student will do well, then, to take this exercise in historical writing as only one man's opinion and to supplement it with others. Much historical research is being done today, shedding light on numerous neighbor-

hoods in the huge city of modern humanity. To begin to read this rich literature is to enter an exciting world.

Nevertheless, I have sought not to be startlingly novel in selecting and interpreting material but rather to include those actions and processes that we should all understand because they have so deeply influenced our lives. In the last analysis, history's chief justification is its grasp of the cultural whole. We may, after all, learn about literature, economics, sociology, military science, and so forth in the departments or schools dedicated to these special subjects. Only the historian looks at the movement of whole societies. He or she alone relates the particulars to the big picture. History discusses common experiences affecting the greatest number of people.

Awareness of these shared experiences binds us together in a society; knowledge of the continuity of historical change orients us to our cultural surroundings and makes us more human. Such is the historian's credo. "History is the only true way to attain a knowledge of our condition," Savigny declared. And Lord Acton added, "Understanding the present is the prize of all history."

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The Peoples and States of Europe on the Eve of 1914

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

For the sake of an initial perspective, we might make a brief comparison between Europe as it stood at the beginning of the twentieth century and as it stands today. In terms of absolute wealth and power, the peoples and the states of Europe were then much less well off than they are today, for wealth and power have grown enormously through this century, even with all its troubles. The average citizen of England or France, Germany or Italy, Russia, or Hungary has many more material goods today than he did in 1900 or 1914; and governments dispose of far greater resources. But in relative terms, Europe as a whole was then much more dominant in the world. She had fewer rivals, and she was farther ahead of Asia, Africa, and even the Americas in economic, political, and military development.

Prior to 1914 Europe was the undeniable center of world civilization and power. No other region could compare with Europe in military power and political influence; only the United States was comparable in wealth and productivity. The United States had yet to enter the arena of world politics, and though she was rising rapidly, she was not yet the technological colossus she later became. The same holds true for that half-European or doubtfully European giant that links Asia to Europe; Mother Russia was still a giant with feet of clay, extremely backward by European standards in her social structure and economic level of efficiency.

No one else could match Europe, either, in scientific research and discovery, in the brilliance of philosophic thought, and in literature. At least, her material superiority gave her cultural products great prestige, so that other peoples, looking at the power that had subdued them, were inclined to assume that the culture, the ideas, the life style of these Europeans must be superior, too. For at this time, non-European peoples stood in considerable awe of a force that had recently reduced most of them to the position of subjects or satellites. In the 1880s and 1890s, nearly every part of Asia and Africa had been made subservient to the aggressive and competent Europeans. Some territories were annexed and governed directly, others made into protectorates or spheres of interest that, though maintaining a nominal independence, had to grant various kinds of special economic and political privileges to the white foreigners.

This subjugation had not happened without resistance. The almost innumerable tribal revolts in Africa testify to this, as do uprisings on the frontier of India; the Boxer Rebellion in China at the turn of the century; and the 1881 riots in Egypt, which brought British troops into the Suez Canal area, not to leave for seventy-three years. Wars with the Afghans, the Zulus, and the Dervishes of Sudan added a touch of glamor to English schoolboy reading. But the British always won, or, if they did not, they returned to gain the final victory, as they did at Khartoum in 1898. Native resistance was futile. Sabers could not defeat carbines:

Whatever happens, we have got
A gatling gun and you have not.

Great Britain led in this wave of imperialism, followed at no great distance by France and, later, by Germany and the United States. Meanwhile, Russia pushed her own borders into the Far Eastern periphery. With a big appetite but small teeth, Italy tried to take part; of the greater powers of Europe, only Austria-Hungary forebore, from lack of naval power. In compensation, little Belgium and the Netherlands acquired very considerable empires, Belgium in Africa and the Netherlands in Southeast Asia. Long ensconced as traders in the East Indies, today Indonesia, the Dutch pushed into the interior of the islands at this time.

Sometimes the European powers stumbled over each other in their haste to seize, exploit, destroy, develop, or civilize the "lesser breeds," and they became involved in conflict or the threat of it. This happened in 1885 between Russia and Britain, in 1898 between France and Britain, in 1905 between France and Germany, and on other occasions as well; but these encounters seldom led to war. It was easy enough to divide up someone else's property. The one great exception occurred in 1904 between Russia and the Westernizing Asian country of Japan, a major, straight-out imperialist war for domination of Manchuria and Korea. It was, however, not between two Eu-

ropean powers. And it gave notice, among other things, that the European monopoly of military power might soon end as non-Europeans learned to master the arts and sciences of the West. The effect of Japan's defeat of Russia both on land and sea in 1904–1905 was in fact enormous, leading to movements of anti-European nationalism in India, China, Iran, and Turkey destined to transform the world beyond all recognition. But this came later.

That monopoly was not yet under serious threat prior to 1914. As the century turned, the British were engaged in a colonial war that badly shook the country; "we have had no end of a lesson," Rudyard Kipling observed. But this was a fight with another people of European origin, the Dutch settlers on the frontier of British South Africa, who had been aroused to resistance by the aggressive extension of British rule outward from the Cape. French and German opinion, and in fact world opinion generally, cheered for the Boers and chided the British bully in this David-and-Goliath encounter, which the British won only after early setbacks. When newly crowned King Edward VII visited Paris in 1903, he met boos and cries of "Vive les Boers!"; only later did he win the hearts of the French.

But this antipathy did not stop the French and Germans from joining with the British and Russians in organizing an expedition to punish the Chinese for having the insolence to dispute European control of the Celestial Empire. In revenge for antiforeign riots mounted against the White Devils by the "Boxer" societies, much of Peking was burnt and looted in a disgraceful orgy that scarred a proud people too deeply for Europe's future comfort. At the time, it seemed a mere incident in the relentless march toward world hegemony of Europeans, who, their reigning scientific doctrines assured them, had a right to take over from the yellow and brown and black peoples because Europeans were indeed the "fittest." Although some European liberals and socialists protested against inhumane methods of imperial rule, not even they questioned the mission of Europe, by virtue of its higher civilization, to impose its economic and social system on the more "backward" peoples.

For all that, imperialism was not an essential component of Europe's strength. The theory developed by a few socialists, and later exploited by Lenin, that colonies were vital to the capitalistic economy, supplying essential outlets for capital investment at high rates of profit, cannot stand criticism. In general, markets and investments in their colonies or protectorates were neither very extensive nor very profitable to European countries. Empire flattered the pride of Europe more than it sustained her economy. It was more often pushed by politicians than by businessmen, by military or naval leaders than by capitalists.

The French acquired a huge area of African land that looked impressive on the map but was largely worthless desert. The Russians were building the longest railroad in the world across Siberia in 1900, but it was a government prestige and military project, not an investor's dream. Finding

African natives uninterested in the work ethic, Belgians practiced such inhumane treatment that the Congo became an international scandal (it was exposed by British journalists in 1906), but forced labor did not make for great profits except in a few areas. Exposure of the seamy side of imperialism generally led to the need to supply more services to the "natives." Ill-conceived though her plans might have been, Europe spent more money on the colonies than she received in profits, favorable prices on raw materials, or other benefits.

Making acquaintance with alien cultures more thoroughly than at any time in the past, some European artists, poets, and philosophers responded to them. In the 1900s, both Japanese and African styles in sculpture and painting influenced avant-garde art in such centers as Paris and Munich. Oriental philosophy, vaguely influential since the middle of the nineteenth century, continued to find a few disciples; the Pacific islands, to which French painter Paul Gauguin had fled, functioned as a symbol of some unspoiled spiritual realm to which one might turn for relief from a disgustingly materialistic, philistine, bourgeois Europe. India in Herman Hesse's 1914 novel, *Rosshalde,* and the exotic settings in Joseph Conrad's pre-1914 tales, *Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim,* and *Nostromo,* were fascinating to their readers. "Europe bores me," André Gide declared; boredom with a commercialized culture affected a tiny but talented minority of alienated artists and intellectuals in these restlessly innovative *fin de siècle* years. Annie Besant, one-time English rationalist, socialist, feminist—friend of George Bernard Shaw and Eleanor Marx, Karl's daughter—had now gone to India to launch another of her numerous lives, this time as Theosophist and founder of the Indian Nationalist movement. The Bengalese sage Tagore was about to make a triumphal European tour; the leading European one, Tolstoy, in his last years was deeply influenced by Indian mysticism.

But the vast majority of Europeans, complacent about their great success, had no interest in cultures other than their own except an occasional amused curiosity. French ex-president Jules Grévy, an enthusiastic imperialist, grumbled, as he watched certain exotic creatures at the 1889 Paris international fair, that belly-dancers were all the people knew of imperialism. Except, of course, the adventure stories of exploration, intrigue, warfare in the Dark Continent or Kipling's India, exciting reading for the urban masses.

Non-Europeans, by contrast, had to take seriously these Europeans who impinged so forcefully on them. They might react with hatred, anger, and what resistance they could manage; but they might also decide that so formidable a power was worth imitating. "Resistance to the flood-tide of Western civilization is vain," Kemal Atatürk of of Turkey decided; marvelling at these people who "pierce the mountains, soar in the skies, see and illuminate all things from the invisible atoms to the stars," he determined to turn his country completely around and Westernize it, a strategy Japan had already practiced with much success. India's Jawaharlal Nehru, who thought

that "the very thing India lacked, the modern West possessed and possessed to excess," hoped to inject some but not too much of this dynamic outlook into the somnolent body of Mother India. What historian Arnold J. Toynbee characterized as the "zealot" and the "herodian" reactions to foreign rule (resistance and adaptation), as well as all shadings in between, thus could be found in the attitudes of Asian, African, and Latin American victims of imperialism.

Even the proud Chinese admitted they had much to learn about ships and guns from those they considered barbarians. At the very least, Western technology had to be acquired. But political ideas of democracy, liberalism, socialism, and nationalism seeped into non-Western places, often carried by those educated in the West. In the early years of the century a young Indian named Mohandas Gandhi was studying law in London; a Chinese, Hu Shih, imbibed American political and philosophical ideas at Cornell and Columbia Universities; and Nguyen That Thanh, better known later as Ho Chi Minh, left his native Indochina for France, there to encounter Marxian socialism. All would return to lead movements that rebelled against Western rule in the name of Western ideas. Gandhi's famous philosophy of the simple life, handicraft industries, and militant pacifism absorbed elements of the Hindu tradition, but it also owed a great deal to such nineteenth-century Europeans as John Ruskin of England and Leo Tolstoy of Russia.

In 1900 there were some 400 million people in Europe, about double the number there had been in 1800; counting Russia as far as the Urals, there would be 700 million in 1980. But Europe's percentage of the world total was higher in 1900, amounting to about one-fourth of the world total then, as compared to one-seventh today. This despite the fact that over thirty million people emigrated from Europe between 1880 and 1914, the great majority of them to the Western Hemisphere. In 1890 a list of the most populous twenty cities in the world contained ten European ones, eleven if Constantinople is counted, including the first, third, fourth, and sixth largest. By 1983 only three European cities were in the top twenty, and the eight largest cities of the world were outside Europe. These included four in the Western Hemisphere and four in Asia. London, which had been first in the world in 1900, is evidently no longer in the top ten. (It is hard to determine the exact population of cities because of uncertainty about what constitutes a metropolitan area.) Vienna and Berlin, the great German capitals, have both fallen far from the top rank in population they once occupied. Europe's share of the world's population has declined in this century and is still declining; at the start of this century it was higher than it had ever been or would be in the foreseeable future.

This was true also of her wealth. In 1900 Europe as a whole produced some 60 percent of the world's manufactured goods. The three leading industrial countries, Great Britain, Germany, and France, alone accounted for