ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR ONE

The concept of the divine right of kings was not exclusive to St. Augustine. Centuries later Martin Luther (1483-1546) asserted the divine right of the German princes and kings (Laski 1919, 295).

King James I of England (1566-1625) writes in Works: And the state of the monarchy is the supreme thing upon earth; for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself are called gods (James I 1609).

French Bishop Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627-1704) in his 1679 Politics Taken from the very Words of Scripture writes: And it appears from all of this that the person of the king is sacred, and to attack him in any way is sacrilege, the service of God and the respect accorded for kings are bound together (Bossuet, 1). Further French thought continued the idea of the divine right to rule. And in France as in colonial America, the doctrine of higher law was used for several political purposes, among which was the promulgation of rational principles of legitimacy (Brown 1969, 372).

All of this tradition of the divine right of kings comes from western Christian writers. However, even Russia had it beliefs: The state of the monarchy is the supreme thing upon earth; for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself are called gods (James I 1609).

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Austria

Austria had begun the nineteenth century as one of the great European powers. By 1914, a little over one hundred years later, it was a second rate European power. While other countries were expanding their empire throughout the world, Austria's influence and power was confined to affairs within its borders and the Southern Slavic areas. Austria's downfall began in 1806 after a series of military defeats stripped Austria of much of its territory and created the Confederation of the Rhine. Francis II, Holy Roman Emperor and Emperor of the Austrian Empire was forced to become only Francis I, Emperor of Austria. This loss of prestige and title continued through the century under the next emperor, Francis Joseph (1835-1916), with the eventual loss of the monarchy in 1918, with Charles I renouncing his imperial powers.

Frans Joseph was declared emperor on December 2, 1848, with the abdication of his father, Ferdinand. On June 8, 1867, he was coroneted king of Hungary (the dual empire of Austria-Hungary) at Saint Matthew's Cathedral in Budapest. Charles I was coroneted at Holy Trinity Column outside Matthias Church, 30 December 1916.

During the nineteenth century other forms of government, not based on a monarchy, were established in Europe. By 1803 there were other forms of legitimacy emerging which were pushing aside the sort of dynastic and religious claims to authority on which the Franciscan version of the Habsburg state rested. Austria had stagnated and kept looking to the past for its glory, but the world had changed. In 1849 Francis Joseph was forced to accept a constitutional monarchy form of government. But Francis Joseph accepted the Habsburg Court came to be known for its strict ritual, its pomp, its exclusivity, and increasingly for its anachronistic nature. This was the result of the emperor's intentional effort to restore to his court the ritual of the past. In contrast, the coronation of the monarch just received his commission to rule from God. Pageantry confirmed by the church reassured the citizenry of the appearance of a monarch who just received his commission to rule from God. Pageantry confirmed by the church reassured the citizenry of the monarch's legitimacy. Prince Milan Obrenovic.

But internal peace was not to last. In 1868 Prince Michael was assassinated and his son Prince Milan Obrenovic assumed the throne. Prince Milan was finally able to make a treaty with Turkey and Serbia and become an independent nation. In 1882 Prince Milan became King Milan I. He was finally able to defeat Turkey in the Balkans in the 1877 Russo-Turkish War. In 1898 and his son, King Alexander I came into power. By 1903 King Alexander I had been assassinated (he was shot over 30 times) and Prince Peter Karageorgievic was elected as the national Assembly and became king. King Peter I had been assassinated on July 28, 1830, in the assassination of his cousin, Prince Milos Obrenovic.

Serbia struggled throughout the last half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century for existence and to provide a stable relationship with Austria. Assassination was an accepted way to change monarchs. Instead of one ruler like Austria it had several. Its relationship with Austria fluctuated from close ally to bitter enemy.

Russia

Russia entered the nineteenth century as a large empire. It suffered a series of defeats by Napoleon of France with Napoleon ultimately capturing Moscow. Russia suffered another defeat against a combined Anglo, French, and Turkish expedition in the Crimean War of 1854-1856. Russia is finally able to defeat Turkey in the Balkans in the 1877 Russo-Turkish War. In 1900 the army assisted in the liberation of the foreign embassies in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion. But in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 the army and the navy were badly defeated by the Japanese. Later it was unable to come to the aid of Serbia because of threats of Austrian armed confrontation. It was not until 1914 that Russia felt its army and navy was sufficiently strong enough to risk combat.

Czar Alexander II (1855-1881) was credited with liberating the serfs and creating a more liberal and progressive form of government. Six attempts were made on Alexander II's life. The seventh attempt proved fatal. Alexander III tried to appease the landed nobility and further government reforms were few. Instead he established a police state using the army to put down strikes and other uprisings. Alexander III, suffering from kidney disease, died on October 20, 1894 and his son Nicholas II became Czar. Nicholas II coroneted at the Assumption Cathedral in Moscow on May 13, 1896. Rapid Industrialization and disruption of industry by strikes was beginning to paralyze the nation. Nicholas II believed in his divine right to rule. The czar loved the spectacle of parades and participated in many. Czar in Russia these ceremonies served to perpetuate the communion of the Tsar with his people, defense of the Tsar, and native soil constituting, together with anointment by the church, the twofold consecration of his legitimacy.

On the eve of World War One, these four countries needed to protect their prestige at home, throughout Europe, and the world. They could not afford to
The COLOR BOOKS

After the war began each of the belligerents issued a document explaining their version of the events leading up to their declaration of war. These documents are as follows:

The Serbian Blue Book
The Austro-Hungary Red Book
The Russian Orange Book
The German White Book

These books were all published within weeks of each other, shortly after the beginning of the war, and are similar in length and style as if they copied each other. They were written as a propagandist tool to justify to their citizenry, the righteousness of their actions, and that they had no other choice except to declare war to protect the nation. They built on the past traditions of the special relationship between the monarch and God and on the pageantry that was used to reinforce this relationship. These books were published after the start of hostilities; the contents could be edited with documents added or deleted to make their case for the assumption of hostilities.

Protection of the Monarchy

A major topic common to each of these books is the need to protect the monarchy, its prestige, the national borders, and the empire. Anything that threatened any of these points was a reason to mobilize the army and to go to war. Protection of the dignity and prestige of the monarchy and the country are stressed in these books. The dignity due to the monarch and to his realm comes directly from the monarch’s special relation with God. Such disrespect cannot go unchallenged.

Austria-Hungary complained that Serbia å€œstruggles against the Monarchyå€œ (Austro-Hungary Red Book, 1). The Austro-Hungarian monarchå€œMonarchå€œ was determined if necessary to go to the utmost limit in order to maintain her prestige and the integrity of her territorieså€œAustria-Hungary only wanted to protect their å€œdynasty from outrage and the territory of the Monarchy from criminal intrigueså€œ (Austro-Hungary Red Book, 2).

Serbia also felt threatened. Austria-Hungary was trying å€œto destroy that high moral reputation which Serbia now enjoys in Européd (Serbian Blue Book, 3). Serbia believed that Austria-Hungary may å€œtreat the Sarajevo outrage as a Pan-Serbian, South-Slav and Pan-Slav conspiracyå€œ it is therefore advisable to be ready for defenseå€œ (Serbian Blue Book, 9). Serbia fears that Austria-Hungary must take action to preserve their prestige (Serbian Blue Book, 13). After receiving a list of demands, Serbia responds: å€œbut we can never comply with demands which may be directed against the dignity of Serbia, and which would be unacceptable to any country which respects and maintains its independencå€œ (Serbian Blue Book, 17).

Russia as a supporter of Serbia had been intervening on Serbiaå€™s behalf with Austria-Hungary. After Great Britain had asked for a mediation of the great powers, Russia in support of this mediation told Austria å€œto uphold a great power such as Austria could give way without impairing its prestigeå€œ (Russian Orange Book, 4). Russia in further talks with Austria-Hungary felt that the Serbian reply å€œexceeds all our expectations in moderation, and in its desire to afford the fullest satisfaction to Austria. We do not see what further demands could be made by Austria, unless the Vienna Cabinet is seeking for a pretext for war with Serviaå€œ (Serbian Blue Book, 9). Serbia fears that Austria-Hungary must take action to preserve their prestige (Serbian Blue Book, 13). After receiving a list of demands, Serbia responds: å€œbut we can never comply with demands which may be directed against the dignity of Serbia, and which would be unacceptable to any country which respects and maintains its independencå€œ (Serbian Blue Book, 17).

Each side accused the other of fomenting the war and endangering the peace in the region.

The Color Books are the written documentation that shows these monarchs were following the belief in the Divine Right of Kings. Combined with historical data, pageantry, the coronation ceremony in the cathedrals, the uniforms, and court ritual, these monarchs believed that they were ordained by God to rule.

THE END OF THE WAR

Each of the four original belligerents had much to lose if they did not go to war and much to gain if they were victorious. They were each appointed by God and had to obey his rules. They had to declare a Just War or else face the prospects of being replaced. Unfortunately, it was not a Just War lasting only 90 days, and at the end of it each monarchy was affected.

Austria

Austriaå€™s Francis Joseph died on November 21, 1916, at the age of 86 from pneumonia. He was succeeded by his grand-nephew Charles I. But two years later, after Austriaå€™s defeat in World War I, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was dissolved. On April 1, 1922, Charles I died of respiratory failure.

Russia

With the war going badly for the Russian army and with turmoil and fighting in the streets, Czar Nicholas II abdicated on March 15, 1917. In August 1917, the government evacuated the former Czar and his family to Tobolsk. On April 30, 1918, they were transferred to Yekaterinburg where they were imprisoned, and in the early hours on July 17, 1918, Nicholas and his family were executed.

Germany

As the war continued with no end in sight, the German people revolted against the government. The beginning of the end started when dockworkers in Kiel revolted. Many sailors and other military units join them. In addition, many of the senior generals had lost confidence in the Kaiser. On November 9, 1918, the Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed a Republic. On November 28, 1918 Wilhelm issued a statement abdicating his monarchy, Kaiser Wilhelm II became a private citizen and was exiled in the Netherlands. Wilhelm died of a pulmonary embolus on June 3, 1941, at the age of 82.

Serbia

King Peter I lived several more years until 1921 dying at the age of 77 from severe congestion of the lungs. His son, Alexander I, succeeded him. Alexander inherited the throne of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was also known by the rest of Europe as Yugoslavia. On October 9, 1934, as he was arriving in Marseilles to start a state, he was assassinated by the Bulgarian, Vlado ÂŽernozemski, a member of the Bulgarian Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization which strived to separate Vardar Macedonia from Yugoslavia and make it part of the Bulgarian Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia struggled on for several more years under Peter II. On November 2, 1944, Peter II was forced by the British to recognize the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia as the legitimate government of Yugoslavia.

So ended four monarchies.

Was World War One a å€œJust Warå€œ? Four monarchies had much to gain or loose with this war. Did they believe their appointment to rule came from God? Perhaps, when they were coroneted. But warfare had now gone beyond the original concept of the just war. It was no longer two countries in battle but many nations fighting at one time. The 1900 Boxer rebellion in China demonstrated how several nations had banded together to do battle with the imperial powers. War was no longer confined to a small region but could easily involve combatants from around the world.
EPILLOG
Was it nationalism, greed or religious belief. It was not a splendid little war. It was not a just war. Religious beliefs may have been one of the reasons the war started but it ended there. It was a major conflict with 37 million dead and 20 million wounded - a total of 57 million casualities. The numbers tell the story.

NOTES
*This contrasts sharply with the second paragraph of Americaâ€™s Declaration of Independence: â€œWe hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. â€” That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, â€” That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. â€” Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.â€” Government oâ€™tain their authority to rule from the people and that the people have the right to change their governments â€”
** In addition to these Color Books, France Issued the French Yellow Book, Belgium issued the Belgium Gray Book and the British issued the Bryce Report. In addition France issued another Yellow Book at the start of World War Two.
** In an inquiry was made as to why the color of the books. Only Austria replied stating that all of their diplomatic books were Red Books.
*** The number of French soldiers missing legs and needing an artificial one was so great that table legs were used to fill the shortage.

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Written by Edward J. Langer. If you have questions or comments on this article, please contact Edward Langer at: edward@live.com

About the author:
Mr. Langer is an historian, researcher, and analyst. He holds a B.A. in History from California State University â€” Fullerton and an M.A. in History from California State University â€” Los Angeles. He is a member of the International Naval Research Organization and the California Writers Club, Inland Empire Branch. His articles have been published in Military History Magazine, Colloquy and Fresh Ink.

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* Views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily represent those of MHO.
During the war, socialist opponents of the war were convicted of Sedition and imprisoned. In 1920 the federal government rounded up 6,000 Aliens who it considered to be politically subversive. These "Palmer Raids," named after Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, violated basic civil liberties. World War I and the Origin of Civil Liberties in the United States. New York: Norton. Cross-references.