

The Growth of the Modern Nation-State: the Case of Germany, 1815-1945¹

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Nach 1803/06 lebte die Reichstradition vor allem in der süddeutschen und katholischen Nationalbewegung fort, wenngleich sie insgesamt politisch verblaßte. Während der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts – im Gegensatz zum späteren imperialistisch gewendeten Reichsnationalismus der wilhelminischen Ära – brachte die Reichsmetaphorik vor allem die fortlebende Idee der deutschen Kulturnation, die nicht auf einen Nationalstaat zielte, und die föderative Vielfalt der deutschen Staatenwelt zum Ausdruck. Erst als seit den 1820er Jahren innerstaatliche Reformen ausblieben, z. T. zurückgenommen wurden, entwickelte sich die „Nation“ zu einem gegen die Einzelstaaten gerichteten Reformziel. Aber noch in der Revolution von 1848/49 setzte die deutsche Nationalbewegung überwiegend auf eine Reformallianz mit den Landesfürsten und auf den Erhalt der bestehenden Länder innerhalb des künftigen Nationalstaats. Der kleindeutsche Nationalstaat, zu dem sich eine knappe Mehrheit der Frankfurter Nationalversammlung 1848 durchrang, wäre die einzige Lösung gewesen, die die europäische Staatenordnung nicht zerstört hätte und sich mit den nationalstaatlichen Ambitionen der anderen Nationalitäten im Deutschen Bund und in der Habsburgermonarchie hätte vereinbaren lassen. Zweifellos wollte die Mehrheit in der Paulskirche, wie in der gesamten Nationalbewegung, aus unterschiedlichen Gründen den großdeutschen Nationalstaat; dieser wäre jedoch nicht durchzusetzen gewesen, denn er hätte die Habsburgermonarchie zweigeteilt. Gleichzeitig geriet durch die Revolution auch auf der Ebene der Monarchen der bis 1848 dominierende föderativ-partikularistische Kulturnationalismus in den Sog des modernen Staatsnationalismus.

Nationswerdung und Staatsbildung liefen mit der Gründung des kleindeutschen Nationalstaats 1866/71 zwar schließlich auf Preußen, nicht auf die andere deutsche Großmacht, Österreich, zu. Aber gerade in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive war dies kein zwangsläufiger Prozeß; die Entscheidung fiel letztlich als Folge des militärischen Sieges Preußens und aufgrund dessen, was Bismarck diplomatisch und nationalpolitisch hieraus zu machen verstand. Auch bei einem anderen Ausgang der preußisch-österreichischen Rivalität um die Vormacht in Deutschland wäre der Prozeß der inneren Nationsbildung nicht notwendigerweise abgebrochen und hätte sich die wirtschaftliche, soziale und kulturelle Integration dennoch fortsetzen können. Ein föderalistisches Deutschland ohne national- oder bundesstaatliche Klammer, aber in Verbindung mit der Habsburgermonarchie, gehörte durchaus zu den Alternativen, um die in den 1860er Jahren gerungen wurde.

Auch das deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 wurde zunächst eher als Staatenbund denn als Bundesstaat regiert. Reichseinheitliche Handlungsmuster sind in der Folgezeit nicht zuletzt durch Bismarcks „bonapartistische“ Sozialpolitik gestärkt worden; dies begünstigte das „Zusammenwachsen“ der Deutschen in einem Nationalstaat mehr als der konstituierende Reichsgründungsakt. Bis 1914 hat allerdings das Reich als tief im Bewußtsein der Bevölkerung verankerte Erfahrung nicht wirklich bestanden; vielmehr hielten sich über Jahrzehnte die überkommenen regionalen, zumeist herrschaftlich gebundenen Identitäten. Gleichzeitig gewann eine gedankliche Alternative zum bundesstaatlich organisierten Föderalismus an Boden: die Gliederung des Einheitsstaates von kulturellen Zentren her. Daß 1919 die Weimarer Republik dann doch nicht als dezentraler Einheitsstaat konstituiert wurde, hing vor allem mit tagespolitischen Zweckmäßigkeiten zusammen. Preußen verlor nun zwar seinen staatsrechtlich abgesi-

cherten hegemonialen Rang, behielt aber faktisch die Vormachtstellung. Insgesamt verstärkten sich während der Weimarer Republik die unitarischen Tendenzen, während das noch im Kaiserreich bestimmende föderative Prinzip keine große Resonanz mehr fand. So bildete der Reichsrat 1933/34 keine Barriere gegen die Gleichschaltung der Länder. Im übrigen weisen die nach 1919 gezeigte Bereitschaft sowohl der Deutsch-Österreicher als auch der Deutschen, sich mit der verordneten staatlichen Trennung abzufinden, und der allmähliche Aufbau einer nationalstaatlichen österreichischen Identität darauf hin, daß die „deutsche Frage“ nicht vorrangig als Streben nach der Einheit aller Deutschen, vielmehr als Problem der staatlichen und politischen Formen der Nationswerdung virulent gewesen ist.

Die anarchische Polykratie institutionell ungesicherter kommissarischer Machtausübung im nationalsozialistischen „Führerstaat“ schließlich war auch ein Ergebnis, das historisch aus dem Reich Bismarcks hervorgegangen ist, wenngleich 1871 die Weichen keineswegs ausschließlich in dieser einen Richtung gestellt worden sind. Immerhin kann der „Polykratismus“ als Strukturelement eines aus föderalistischen, hegemonialen und unitarischen Bestandteilen zusammengefügtens Reichsgebildes interpretiert werden – ungeachtet dessen, daß das „Dritte Reich“, so sehr es sich in den Anfängen auf die Reichstradition berufen mochte, letztlich eine Form der Agonie des Reiches darstellte.

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THE REVOLUTIONARY NATION STATE

In the early 19th century, it was not self-evident at all that a state ought to be organized as a nation state. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, none of the leading statesmen of that time had conceived Italy or Germany as nation states: ‘Italy’ was seen by them as a purely geographical term, and a unified Germany seemed to be a dangerous chimera. In the words of Friedrich von Gentz, Prince Metternich’s closest adviser, only madmen could adhere to the dream of unifying all German ‘tribes’. The fear of revolution haunted both Metternich, Tsar Alexander I, Lord Castlereagh, the British Foreign Minister, and also Talleyrand, his French counterpart, when they heard talk about the principle of nation-states. They agreed that after Napoleon’s fall, no more revolution must overrun Europe, and that the concept of a state justified by the nation instead of monarchical dynasties was the revolutionary principle *par excellence*. The concept of the nation-state, then, was only accepted where it was linked to the legitimate power of princes: in Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and Sweden. In all of these cases, the state had been stabilized and unified, a long time ago, at the politico-administrative and at the cultural level, and the ruling classes there had seen themselves as ‘nations’ for centuries.

In central Europe (at least in Germany and Italy) territorial dismemberment and direct exertion of influence on central European affairs by the powers of the European periphery

had been a logical result inherent in the European order. Only the amorphous condition of this broad median strip, running from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Sea, had for centuries kept the continent in balance. In 1815, the assembly of statesmen at Vienna planned at least the formation of 'national' confederations in Germany and Italy. But then, only in Germany was the German League established – a loose alliance of 39 sovereign states and cities, linked by a permanent congress of ambassadors (*Bundestag*) under the presidency of the Austrian Emperor, with the membership of the kings of Denmark, Britain and the Netherlands, who at that time were the ruling dynasties in regard to Schleswig, Hanover and Luxemburg. Prussia and Austria only adhered to the League in regard to those territories which had belonged to the Holy Roman Empire. In Italy, however, the project (favoured by Metternich) of a league to be called *Lega Italica* failed both because of reservations by Piedmont and the Papal States and also because of the influence of foreign powers (Austria and Spain). So it seemed that in the Italian case the European powers resisted even more strongly the principle of national unification than they did in the German case.

But this apparent solidarity within the 'Holy Alliance' rapidly broke up when it came to decide on the principle of intervention against national and liberal movements in southern and south-eastern Europe. From 1820 onwards, the liberal, non-interventionist western periphery, i.e. Britain and France, stood against an eastern front favouring restoration, i.e. Austria, Prussia and Russia. Needless to say, the anti-interventionist British and French attitude was by no means motivated solely by liberalism and magnanimity. It was also motivated by the pursuit of strategic advantage. In any case, this increasing divergence between two European power blocs made possible just those developments in central Europe which the statesmen at the Congress of Vienna had intended to rule out. The situation culminated in the Crimean War (1853-56), and as a result, there suddenly appeared the historical chance of a lifetime for unification in central Europe.

As late as 1848/49, it had still seemed that the ambitions of German and Italian patriots for a nation-state would remain an unfulfilled dream. In the National Assembly at Frankfurt, a considerable minority of cool-headed, rationalist defenders of a nation-state excluding Austria (*kleindeutsch*) were ranged against a majority which passionately advocated a reanimated Holy Roman Empire, albeit with a new liberal and unified look. During the first half of the 19th century, the imagery of the Empire had mainly expressed the continuing idea of a German nation based on cultural identity (*Kulturnation*), and not necessarily organized as a nation-state. Moreover, this imagery represented the federal pluralism of the German states. Even during the Revolution of 1848/49, the German national movement predominantly backed a policy of reform, in coalition with the territorial rulers, as well as the continued existence of their states within the future nation-state. But all their discussions eventually came to nought, since real power lay elsewhere. London, Paris and St Petersburg denounced pan-German national ambitions as nothing less than a revolt against the sacred principles of European balance. After all, the formula adopted with some reluctance by a narrow majority of the National Assembly at Frankfurt, namely a German nation-state not including Austria, would have been the only solution to leave the European state system intact. On the other hand, as a result of 1848/49 public opinion in Europe saw the nation-state as the only legitimate type of state. And it was also due to the

Revolution that the prevalent cultural nationalism fed by the federal and particularistic organization of political life became fully caught up in the maelstrom of modern state nationalism.

If we look now at the process by which the nation-state in Germany was formed, we first of all have to emphasize that – just as in the case of Italy, which will not be discussed here – the starting point was a war. Moreover, it was precisely the Italian crisis of 1859 (the Austrian defeat by the French-Piedmont alliance) which, fleetingly, fostered the idea of a German confederation led by Prussia and excluding the Habsburg monarchy. But Prussia was not Piedmont at all; and it entered, in the early 1860s, a highly reactionary period with the chief minister, Bismarck, bitterly opposed to the liberal majority in the Prussian parliament. In consequence, the liberal and national movements in the so-called ‘Third Germany’, viz. the non-Prussian and non-Austrian states, turned away from Prussia and seemed ready to abandon their aspirations. Comparing the deep rift created between Bismarck and the German national movement with Cavour’s close cooperation with the national forces in the unification process of Italy, one could think that the foundation of the German nation-state had been hopelessly mismanaged. But the opposite is true. Nothing would have been more damaging to Bismarck’s plans than an alliance with the national movement, whose evidently revolutionary ambitions seemed extremely suspicious to Britain, France and Russia. So Bismarck virtually needed the Liberals’ hostility in order to hide his strength and his intentions behind this scenery of conflict. And these tactics succeeded.

In 1864, Bismarck succeeded in forging a Prussian-Austrian alliance against Denmark and in ‘protecting’ the dukedom of Schleswig by military force from being annexed to the Danish monarchy. Although this had been one of the favourite aims of the German national movement since 1848, the outcome of the so-called second German-Danish War frustrated most of the liberal public, because the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were not constituted as a sovereign state within the German League but became a condominium administered by Prussia and Austria. Nevertheless, the national and liberal movement in non-Prussian Germany once again turned out to be vociferous but powerless. Two years later, when the struggle for predominance in Germany culminated in the Prussian-Austrian War of 1866, the liberal public was totally shocked, paralyzed and unable to act. Finally, the results of that fratricidal war, the Prussian victory at Königgrätz and Sadowa, the Austrian withdrawal from the German League and the constitution of the North German League dominated by the Prussian monarchy and linked to the south German states by pacts of alliance, caused the sudden break-down of the German national movement as an autonomous political force. During the last act of German unification, the German-French War of 1870-71, it was to a large extent the national euphoria of public opinion which virtually imposed the political amalgamation of the south German states and the North German League, although the kings of Bavaria and Württemberg successfully insisted on keeping some discretionary powers within the newly-established confederation.

By the solution of 1866/71, the formation of a nation state in Germany ended up associating the new state with Prussia, not Austria. But in a social historical view, this had not been an inevitable process, the final decision having been brought about on the bat-

tle-field as well as by the diplomatic and political results Bismarck achieved through Prussia's military victory. Even if the Prussian-Austrian rivalry for predominance in Germany had turned out another way, the emergence of national identity would not necessarily have been inhibited, and economic, social and cultural integration would possibly have been continued. A federalist Germany, not organized as a nation-state but linked to the Habsburg monarchy, seemed an alternative, even during the 1860s.

The constitution of the Reich, which came into force in January 1871, basically extended the constitutional regulations of the North German League to the territories south of the river Main. It now introduced the notions of Empire and Emperor, which, in terms of constitutional law, did not mean anything new at all, but by their symbolic force they lent a completely new legitimacy to the recently created nation-state. There was no continuity, in terms of constitutional law, from the last Holy Roman Emperor Franz II, who had retired in 1806, to Wilhelm I, nor had the Great-Prussian Germany of 1871 anything to do with the transnational nature of the Holy Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the liberal middle classes, as the main advocates of the German nation-state, had for generations built up their ideological concept by images and myths of a romantic, retrograde utopia restoring an alleged glory of the medieval Emperor. Furthermore, by emphasizing the federal elements of the ancient Holy Roman Empire, imperial status fitted in well with the ideas of the south German princes, and traditional conservatives as well as liberals and democrats knew how to adjust it to their political ideas. This ambivalence, for a while, made Wilhelm I hold back from imperial status since he believed it would bury the old Prussian kingdom. Not surprisingly, therefore, the German Reich had first been governed in terms of a confederation than on the lines of a federal state. Until 1914, traditional regional identities, mostly linked to the princes, prevailed. Simultaneously, an intellectual alternative to federalism gained ground: a unitary state (*Einheitsstaat*) structured by its cultural centres.

If we try to analyze the considerations which may have motivated the middle-class champions of a German nation-state, it seems that they gave top priority not to consolidating a national economic area (already realized in 1834 through the German Customs Association), but to filling the vacuum of political legitimacy caused by the rapid changes of regime following the French Revolution. So they aimed at a powerful state based on solid institutions in order to protect and promote forever the achievements of liberalism, legitimized by the nation, its history and culture. From this perspective, the nation-state offered a new sense of community, commitment and emotional purpose.

The formation of nation-states in central Europe (Germany and Italy) revolutionized the European state system; but within these new nation-states, revolutionary things had happened, too. Whereas in western Europe, the state had realized the nation, in central Europe, the nation had realized the state. In Germany, the road to the Empire of 1871 may be described as a teamwork – albeit an unintentional teamwork – effected by Bismarck and the national movement: so the phrase of a 'revolution from above' is only partially true. On the surface, Bismarck's policy did indeed smash the national movement; but basically the national movement forced, not the means, but its aims on the Iron Chancellor. Without this amorphous but exclusively legitimizing power of the national movement, no German Empire but only a Great Prussia would have emerged. By keeping the nationalism of the

masses on a short lead, Bismarck played a risky game. But only after his retirement in 1890 did the danger become clearly evident, and Bismarck's successors obviously did not know how to tame the jingoistic beast.

THE IMPERIALIST NATION-STATE

The year 1871 marks a profound historical watershed since the territorial ragbag in central Europe had now been replaced by two extensive nation states, viz. Italy and Germany, which until then had been inconsequential to the balance of power in Europe. The further development of the German Reich in some ways combined elements of the French and the British cases. Whereas the Third French Republic, in terms of national consensus, was deeply divided, the English were in an extraordinary agreement on their concepts of state, nation, Empire and Britishness. In Germany, too, the so-called 'internal formation of the Reich', i.e. the national balance of antagonistic social groups and interests, was the crucial domestic problem. Since the population contained considerable French, Polish and Danish segments, the problem of ethnic minorities was inherent in the new nation-state. Furthermore, the status of the German Jews was passionately controversial. Bismarck's technique of government aimed to solve these problems by excluding large groups, like Catholics and socialists, from the national consensus as defined by the authoritarian state, and by declaring them 'enemies of the Reich'. An important role in national integration was accorded to the army, which claimed to be the only guarantor of the state and the monarchy. In public, the role models of the Prussian army increasingly trumped those of middle-class liberalism. Certainly, outside Prussia, mainly in southern Germany, the bourgeois self-image continued to prevail, but the political emphasis of the Prussian trinity 'imperial court – manor house – parade ground' increasingly characterized German self-confidence. Growing militaristic attitudes affected the political opinions, both of subjects and rulers. An important reason for this was the stagnation of the 'internal formation of the Reich'. Germany continued to be fragmented in terms of territories, religion, socio-economic conditions and political representation. Amongst the interest groups and political parties there survived a deeply-rooted incapacity to balance antagonistic social and political demands. A widespread nationalism focused on the Reich was the only means to bridge these conflicts. But this kind of nationalism soon faded since the establishment of the Reich edged out the utopia which had, for two generations, attracted and guided German patriots, and which now was replaced by economic success. Germany lacked any civic culture of common sense which, in western Europe, characterized political culture, and she lacked any unifying ideas that could have pointed to the future of the nation. So there was only one institution able to defuse the alarming social situation by focusing all efforts to solve problems and to generate basic ideas on society and national identity, i.e. the authoritarian Prussian-German nation state, which claimed not only administration and defence but also many other spheres of responsibility, like education.

Besides the army and the state as principal contributors to national integration, another element of unification arose in the 1890s as a poor imitation of the British model – the dream of Germany's world-wide mission, the temptation of imperialism. Until then, nationalism had aimed at German unification and, subsequently, at the domestic consoli-

datation of the Reich; but since the 1890s, national German politics meant *Weltpolitik*, and the pursuit of superpower status was seen as a mission leading to the perfection of the German nation. This was the decisive break with Bismarck's politics of strict self-restraint in central Europe which only reluctantly had answered the call for colonies and spheres of influence in Africa. This change was managed, not by the upper classes of Prussia, but by the liberal, educated and propertied middle classes, successors of the German national movement. Unlike Britain, France and even Russia, the German sense of mission was limited to *Weltpolitik*, without any intellectual, winning idea behind it. There were two elements of German *Weltpolitik* which proved to be the principal trouble spots in Germany's foreign relations: first, the extension of German influence in south-east Europe into the territories of the Ottoman Empire (Mesopotamia, the famous 'Baghdad railway'), and second, the expansion of the German fleet which substantially undermined relations with Britain and accelerated Britain's rapprochement with France and Russia.

In addition to those important national characteristics, the German case, in some ways, had features common to all imperialist nation-states in Europe. Six points may be mentioned here. The first was the predominance of a so-called 'integral [i.e. comprehensive, all-embracing] nationalism' (a term created by the French writer Charles Maurras), enshrining the nation as an absolute entity. Second, there was the growing fear of both domestic and international clashes and decline, provoked by social disintegration as well as by the disintegration of the European state system. Third, there was a mania of menace and inferiority combined with an equally irrational sense of superiority and mission, which constituted a very strange mixture that had not only an effect on crowd psychology but increasingly influenced governmental actions, too, and helped to foment international rivalries. Fourth was the part played, on the internal level, by the alleged enemies of the nation state, like socialists, catholics, ethnic minorities, and Jews. The more a state felt menaced, the more important loomed domestic enemies in the role of a scapegoat. In this way, domestic and international conflicts interacted with each other. Fifth, the idea of the nation which had been, at the end of the 18th and during the early 19th centuries, the all-party utopia of a unified entity embracing the people, its civilization (*Kultur*) and its state, had turned, by the last third of the century, into an issue of domestic struggle which no longer integrated the society but divided it. Sixth, at the same time, an increasing disposition to war and militarism arose amongst the masses. In that respect, Germany whose search for national consensus had been under a heavy neurotic strain, was not an atypical, but actually a conspicuously typical case.

By 1914, the ideal nation-state had not yet been realized. There was still a gap between state machineries, orientated towards rational administration and a readiness for compromise in foreign policy, and the nationalism of the masses, which increasingly showed more and more aggressive features. For the time being, nationalism was a social, not a governmental phenomenon, but the leading statesmen of late 19th and early 20th centuries had already succumbed to the temptation to use the widespread patriotism for their domestic and foreign purposes. And those bonapartist manoeuvres were to take their toll ...

THE UNIVERSAL (AND EVEN TOTALITARIAN) NATION-STATE

The outbreak of the First World War heightened the national consensus amongst the pop-

ulations of all the belligerent powers in such a way that, for the first time in the history of industrialized societies, a far-reaching concentration of power through the state met with almost unanimous approval. Even the socialists in most of the warring countries joined the united national front, despite the stirring appeals of the Socialist International in Brussels. Mainly in Germany, there was an incredible enthusiasm for war, and the so-called 'spirit of 1914' was to be the reference point for two generations whenever, during a crisis situation, unconditional national uniformity was supposed to supersede particularism and individual criticism. And it was also Germany where the spontaneous self-restraint of the parliament was pursued in the most radical way. Very soon the imperial government obtained almost dictatorial powers: during the war, about 80% of German laws and decrees were enacted or issued by means of enabling acts. Socialism, the losing ideology against the nationalist 'spirit of 1914', reappeared victoriously in the form of war socialism advocated by generals and bureaucrats. By the end of the First World War, it seemed already that total war might have generated a totalitarian state. At any rate, the ancient liberal state of *laissez-faire* which had, at least as an ideal, marked the 19th century, was not revived. For reasons of political expediency, the Weimar Republic, in 1919, was not set up as a decentralized unitary state. Prussia certainly lost its former hegemony guaranteed by the constitution, but kept its supremacy amongst the states (*Länder*).

The extension of governmental actions was also supposed to remedy a problem common to most European states after the First World War, the increasing lack of legitimacy imputed to democracy, which seemed unable to resolve the social conflicts caused by the war. In this respect, too, the German case is revealing. The Weimar democracy, a weak state without real popular authority, tried to avoid civil war and to win the support of the electorate by taking over the functions of subsidization and redistribution. After the Stock Market crash of October 1929, the Weimar Republic gradually collapsed under the pressure of different interest group aspirations. Since the loyalty of the people to the constitution depended on the ability of this constitution and its executive bodies to solve the social conflicts surrounding redistribution, the failure of the distributive (welfare) state jeopardized the very foundations of the constitution. So the parliamentary democracy in Germany, in an endeavour to act as a powerful state, at last pulled the rug out from under itself and handed over all the levers of power to the Nazis. They, in their turn, could then begin to build the universal state of which General Ludendorff had dreamed during the First World War. Like most of the European post-war democracies, the Weimar Republic was encircled by the radicals of the right and of the left, while at the same time social and economic problems escalated. Moreover, the democrats seemed to lose confidence in their legitimacy and refused to fight, by revolutionary means, against the revolution.

All in all, unitary tendencies intensified during the Weimar Republic, whereas the principle of federalism, prevailing during the Empire up to 1914, no longer met with a lively response. So, in 1933/34, the Federal Council (*Reichsrat*) failed to act as a bulwark against the forcing into line (*Gleichschaltung*) of the *Länder* by the Nazi regime.

At the international level, too, the situation was characterized by the latent menace of a European civil war. For this, only one solution seemed appropriate, the powerful all-embracing nation-state as outlined by the advocates of 'integral nationalism' at the end of the 19th century. By the end of the 1920s, the age of the universal, or even totalitarian,

state had come, and not only the losers of the First World War but also some of the victorious nations went over to the camp of dictatorships. For the Fascist leaders, the myth of nation and race played an important role, and chiefly for Hitler's National-Socialist and Mussolini's Fascist movements, the goal consisted of transforming the nation into socially subdivided but politically homogeneous masses, strictly following the Führer's will and celebrating the nation as the one and only moral value.

Even more strongly than in Fascist Italy, the Nazi regime tried to merge the state, the party and the people. This transformation of the German nation into a homogeneous unity, according to the standards of the Nazi party, intensified under the pressures leading to the Second World War. On a political level however, the anarchic polycracy of the National-Socialist system, disregarding any institutionally-settled government, never totally disappeared. It was one of the historical outcomes of 1871, although the course, then, had not been set for a one-way street at all. Anyhow, the Nazi *polycracy* may be seen as a structural element of the Reich, composed of federalist, hegemonial and unitarian components. In Hitler's thought, the idea of the nation turned into a murderous ideology of race, claiming that only peoples whose racial structure was of 'high quality' and homogeneous, were able to dominate in the long run. Consequently, the Third Reich represents the most horrifying version of the totalitarian nation-state designed for the utmost potentialities. But basically, this was a consistent phenomenon, since the idea of the nation implied, right from the start, the definition, confirmation and legitimation of nations in opposition to their enemies. Making the nation an absolute, as practiced first of all by the 'integral nationalists', later on by the Fascists, and especially by the Nazis, meant making its enemies an absolute, too, and with it, the war which now overrode all conventions hitherto established by European civilization.

NOTES

- ¹ The present outline is not based on personal research but owes its arguments to the erudition of others: mainly Dieter Langewiesche, Hagen Schulze, Arnold Sywottek and Theodor Schieder (cf. bibliography). Due to the conception of the Intensive Programme and this anthology, the original lecture style has been retained and no footnotes have been added.



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1. In 1847, the liberal Bavarian Prince Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst defended the motives of the German national movement:

Wohin wir sehen, regt sich die Teilnahme des Volkes an den öffentlichen Angelegenheiten, wie noch zu keiner Zeit. Aber die Regierungen verkennen diese Bewegung. Sie sehen oder wollen in dieser Bewegung nur das Treiben einer propagandistischen radikalen Clique finden und erfüllen sich mit Misstrauen. Ein Grund der Unzufriedenheit ist in Deutschland allgemein verbreitet, jeder denkende deutsche Mann empfindet ihn tief und schmerzlich. Es ist die Nullität Deutschlands gegenüber den anderen Staaten. Man sage uns nicht, dass Österreich und Preußen als Großmächte die Macht Deutschlands nach außen vertreten. Einesteils vertritt Österreich nach außen gar wenig, weil ihm die innere Kraft fehlt, andernteils hat Preußen [...] doch nur eine geduldete Stellung unter den Großmächten und wird auch diese Stellung, wenn die politische Bewegung im Innern fortgeht, wie sie begonnen hat, nicht lange mehr halten. Endlich aber sind das doch nur Preußen und Österreich, und der übrige Teil von Deutschland spielt immer die Nebenrolle und den kannegießernden Zuschauer. Niemand wird leugnen, dass es für einen denkenden, tatkräftigen Mann ein trauriges Los ist, in der Fremde nicht sagen zu können: ich bin ein Deutscher, nicht mit Stolz die deutsche Flagge auf seinem Schiffe zu sehen, in Bedrängnissen keinen deutschen Konsul zu finden, sondern sich sagen zu müssen: ich bin ein Kurhesse, ein Darmstädter, ein Bückeburger, mein Vaterland war einmal ein großes, mächtiges Land, jetzt ist es zersplittert in 38 Lappen. Und wenn wir die Karte betrachten und sehen, wie Ostsee, Nordsee und Mittelmeer an unsre Küsten schlagen und kein deutsches Schiff, keine deutsche Flagge auf der See den stolzen Engländern und Franzosen den üblichen Gruß abzwingt, muss uns da nicht die Farbe der Scham von dem schwarzrotgoldenen Bande allein übrigbleiben und in die Wange steigen? Und muss das elende Gerede über Einheit Deutschlands und deutsche Nation nicht so lange lächerlich und betrübt bleiben, bis das Wort kein leerer Schall, keine Phantasmagorie unseres gutmütigen Optimismus mehr ist, sondern wir wirklich ein großes einiges Deutschland haben?

Quoted from his *Denkwürdigkeiten*, F. Curtius (ed.), vol. 1, Stuttgart - Leipzig 1907, pp. 40 ff.

Wherever we look, the participation of the people in public affairs is stirring as never before. But the rulers misjudge this movement. They see or want to find in this movement only the doings of a propagandist radical clique and to fill themselves with suspicion. One reason for dissatisfaction has spread generally in Germany, and this every thinking German man feels deeply and painfully: it is Germany's non-significance compared with the other states. Do not tell us that the great powers Austria and Prussia represent Germany's power in foreign affairs!

On the one hand, Austria's external representation is rather modest, due to her lack of internal strength; Prussia, on the other hand, is only on sufferance among the great powers, and will not hold her position for much longer if the political movement internally continues as it has begun. Finally, it is only Prussia and Austria, whereas the rest of Germany always plays the supporting role and walk-on part. Nobody will deny that for a thinking, active man it is a sorry fate to be unable to say, abroad, I am a German, not to be able to see with pride the German flag on his ship, nor to find a German consul when he is in distress, but to be forced to say I am a Hessian, a Darmstadter or a Bückeburger, my fatherland was once a great and powerful country but now it is ripped into 38 miserable shreds. And if we look at the map and see how the Baltic, the North Sea and the Mediterranean beat against our shores, and yet no German ship, no German flag at sea compels the usual salutation from the proud Englishmen and Frenchmen, should not the colour of shame in the black-red-and-gold ribbon alone remain and make us blush? And must the miserable chatter about the unity of Germany and the German nation not remain laughable and ridiculous for so long until those words are no more than idle talk and the pure fantasy of our good-natured optimism, and until we really have a one great unified Germany?

2. In a very shrewd newspaper article, the Bavarian daily *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Augsburg) analyzed the situation on 26 August 1866 immediately after the Prussian-Austrian War, commented on the formation of the North German League (dominated by Prussia), and accurately forecast the impending realisation of German unification:

Die deutsche Nation strebt nach politischer Einheit, der Partikularismus will die besonders fort-dauernde Herrschaft der Einzelstaaten. Beides sind Gegensätze. Der Deutsche Bund gewährte für solche partikuläre Selbständigkeit einen schützenden Rückhalt und versuchte vergeblich eine Ausgleichung. Der letzte Krieg hat durch die Auflösung des Bundes, durch die Ausscheidung Österreichs und durch den Sieg der großpreußischen Politik dem kleinstaatlichen Leben ein baldiges Ende bereitet. Mit diesem Ende kann sich der Freund des Vaterlands dann für befriedigt erklären, wenn der Sieg als der Anfang einer neuen Ära nationaler Entwicklung erscheint, wenn der gewaltsamen Eroberung die moralische folgt [...]. [...] Das Ende dieses Bundes und der Ausschluss Österreichs von der doppelten neuen Bundeseinrichtung bezeichnet eine der wichtigsten historischen Entwicklungsperioden des Vaterlandes; denn fortan und nach den Siegen über den mittel- und kleinstaatlichen Partikularismus steht Preußen fast an dem Ziele seiner Hegemoniebestrebungen. Der letzte Schritt für reale Einheit Deutschlands hat noch über den Dualismus der neuesten Föderation hinwegzuschreiten, welcher dadurch, dass er ganz im französischen Sinn die Nation trennt und schwächt, den Tod so gewiss in sich trägt, als der Dualismus Österreichs und Preußens im Bund diesem den Untergang bereitete. Die nächste der europäischen Krisen, welche mit Sicherheit in nicht ferner Zukunft zu erwarten ist, wird dieses Ergebnis herbeiführen. Nach allem und durch die neuesten militärischen und politischen Erfolge hat der großdeutsche Partikularismus zwar die deutsche Suprematie erlangt, allein der weltgeschichtliche Beruf Preußens ruht [...] nicht in diesem Großpreußentum, sondern darin, dass der gegenwärtige Zustand nur als Übergang dazu dient, mit Verzichtleistung auf ein spezifisch preußisches Staatswesen die deutsch-nationale Zentralgewalt mit Nationalparlament in sich zu vereinigen und in solcher Art diejenige Stellung einzunehmen, zu welcher Österreichs Kaiser mit gleicher geistiger Spannkraft und Energie seine Aufgabe für Deutschland erfüllt hätte.

Quoted from: W. Lautemann, M. Schlenke (eds.), *Geschichte in Quellen*, v, Munich 1980, p. 340.

The German nation strives for political unity, but particularism demands the government of individual states. The two are opposites. The German League provided a protective support for this particularist autonomy and fruitlessly sought a reconciliation. The last war soon put an end

to particularism by dissolving the League, by expelling Austria and by the victory of pan-Prussian policy. The patriot may declare his satisfaction with this ending, provided that victory appears as the start of a new era of national development, if a moral conquest follows violent conquest [...]. [...] The end of the League and Austria's exclusion from the new dual federal institution mark one of the most important development stages in the history of the Fatherland, since henceforth, after the triumph over middling- and small-state particularism, Prussia almost reaches the target of her quest for hegemony. The final step towards actual German unity is to stride over the dualism of the most recent federation for, just as the French notion of the nation divides and weakens the nation and is certainly doomed to fail, so too the dualism of Austria and Prussia had caused the downfall of the League. The next of the European crises, which is assuredly to be expected in the not too distant future, will bring about this result. In the end and through the most recent military and political successes, pan-German particularism has certainly established German supremacy. Yet Prussia's world historical mission does not consist of this Greater Prussia but that the present situation should serve only as a transition with the aim of uniting therein the central power of the German nation, with a national parliament, through the renunciation of a specifically Prussian state and so in this way to assume that position by which Austria's Emperor would, by the same intellectual vigour and energy, have fulfilled his mission for Germany.

3. On 24 February 1919, the first minister of the interior of the Weimar Republic, the Liberal Hugo Preuß, submitted a draft constitution to the National Assembly and, on this occasion, commented on the issue of federal state versus confederation:

[...] Nicht ein, Bund der Fürsten' selbstverständlich, aber auch nicht ein, Bund der Gliedstaaten' ist der Ausgangspunkt für die neue Verfassung, sondern die Selbstorganisation des deutschen Volkes in seiner Gesamtheit. Schon daraus [...] ergibt sich die Unmöglichkeit, [...] einem Wunsche nachzugeben, der vielfach in der Öffentlichkeit geäußert worden ist, dem neuen Staate oder dem umgewandelten Staatswesen den Namen der, Vereinigten Staaten von Deutschland' zu geben. Nach den besonderen Ereignissen und Entwicklungsbedingungen unserer Geschichte würde dies gegenüber dem im Reich schon Erreichten einen Rückschritt darstellen. Man mag mancherlei Gründe dafür anführen, die diesem Namen zugute kommen würden, aber er würde zweifellos in seiner ganzen Bedeutung einen partikularistischen Rückschritt gegenüber dem Bestehenden darstellen. Man könnte ja nun [...] überall die Bezeichnung, Reich' ausmerzen und an ihre Stelle, Deutsche Republik' setzen [...]. Wenn der Verfassungsentwurf das nicht tut, so tut er das nicht etwa aus Scheu, sich zur Republik zu bekennen; wenn an die Spitze gesetzt ist, Freistaatliche Verfassung', so sagt das dasselbe. Aber [...] das Wort, der Gedanke, das Prinzip des Reichs hat für unser deutsches Volk einen so tiefwurzelnden Gefühlswert, dass wir es, glaube ich, nicht verantworten könnten, diesen Namen aufzugeben. Es hängen Traditionen von Jahrhunderten, es hängt die ganze Sehnsucht des zersplitterten deutschen Volkes nach nationaler Einigung an dem Namen, Reich', und wir würden in weitesten Kreisen tiefwurzelnde Gefühle ohne Grund und Zweck verletzen, wenn wir von diesem Worte, das eine schwer errungene, nach langen Enttäuschungen verwirklichte Einheit darstellt, abgehen wollten. [...]

Quoted from W. Lautemann, M. Schlenke (eds.), *Geschichte in Quellen*, vi, 3rd edn., Munich 1979, p. 159.

The starting point of the new constitution is, of course, not a 'League of Princes', nor even a 'League of member states', but the self-organization of the German people in their entirety. For that very reason [...] it is impossible [...] to accede to a desire, which is frequently expressed in public, to name the new or remodelled state the 'United States of Germany'. Given the peculiar events and conditions of development of our history, this would represent a step backwards as against what has already been achieved in the *Reich*. Various reasons may be alleged

which would favour this name; but undoubtedly, in its full meaning it would represent a particularist step backwards as against the status quo. The designation *Reich* could now [...] everywhere be removed and in its place 'German Republic' inserted [...]. If the draft constitution does not do so, it is not from a reluctance to profess its loyalty to the Republic; if it is headed 'free-state constitution', that says as much. But [...] the term, the idea, the principle of the *Reich* has such a deep-rooted sense of value for our German people that, I believe, we could not justify abandoning this name. On the name *Reich* centuries-old traditions and the whole yearning of the fragmented German people for national unification depend, and we would in all spectrums of society offend against deep-rooted feelings, for no reason or purpose, were we to abandon this term which represents a hard-won unity realised after prolonged disap-