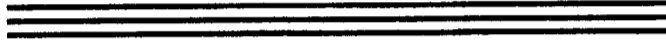




ERNEST
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NATIONALISM

The crucial fact about this area is that the couple were living together in a kind of customary marriage for ages, long before the Age of Nationalism, and long before the internal logic of modern society decreed that the couple were meant for each other. Some other factors, whatever they may have been, brought the couple together, in a union, or a series of such unions, which when they began were barely noticed and not formally hallowed by the sacred nationalist doctrine. To put the point non-metaphorically: the strong dynastic states based on Lisbon, Madrid, Paris and London more or less corresponded to cultural-linguistic zones anyway, even before the logic of the situation, or nationalist theory, decreed that such a correlation should obtain. The fit was far from perfect, and there was, of course, a considerable amount of dialectal differentiation within the territory of each state. All the same, these differences were not excessive, and the important cultural differences were to be found more between social strata than between regions. So, when the Age of Nationalism arrived, no great changes were required in this zone. To understand the political map of western Europe, it is still more important to know about the dynastic conflicts of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to know something of Louis XIV's campaigns, than to be familiar with the ethnographic map of Europe. In this zone, only one major change has occurred on the map as a result of nationalism: the creation of the Republic of Ireland.

This does not mean, of course, that nationalism was absent from the hearts and minds of the members of these cultures which had their roof-state given by history before they ever needed to claim it and Joan of Arc is often presented, perhaps anachronistically, as an early modern nationalist. But during the post-medieval centuries, these cultures did not need to strive for the creation of their political carapace, they already had it. There were, of course, some smaller cultures located inside their territory which did need to struggle, but the main cultures did not. The political and cultural centralisation inherent in modernity meant that the peasants or the working class needed to be educated, to be taught to talk

SEVEN

The marriage of state and culture

The above five-stage scenario presented one possible sequence, but the world is more varied than that. Even within Europe alone, ignoring the complexities of other cultures, the patterns are more diversified. In fact, in Europe, one can discern three or four time zones, rather like the world maps at airports indicating time differences in various areas. In this case, what concerns us are belts of territory running from north to south, within which the pattern is roughly similar, but which differ from one zone to another.

Zone 1

Let us present the differences in terms of this *marriage of state and culture*. The form this union has taken differs from zone to zone. Proceeding from west to east, against the sun, we have first of all Europe's Atlantic coast and the societies spread out along it.

and also in eastern Europe, this European zone was marked by political fragmentation. This is not the place to speculate why this should have been so: early commercial development strengthening independent cities, the conflict of Pope and Emperor, the terms of settlement at the end of the wars of religion — these may be candidates for the explanation. But whatever the reason, come the Age of Nationalism, there was a well-developed national culture, but no state-protector. So, of course, Italian and German nationalism had to be concerned with *unification*.

In each case, a suitable groom was found: Piedmont and Prussia respectively. The groom was not necessarily over-enthusiastic — it was said that the Kaiser preferred to be King of Prussia. But the fact that it was primarily unification that was at stake, rather than 'liberation', that no cultural manipulation was required, and that the compactness of the territories to be united dispensed with the need for ethnic cleansing — all this meant that at least nineteenth-century unificatory nationalism could be relatively benign and liberal, and could act in alliance with liberalism. No doubt it was also ruthless in its own way, and Cavour did make the comment that the means employed would make him a scoundrel, were they used in private life for personal ends. All the same, the amount of diplomatic chicanery and actual warfare required for the attainment of unification was not much larger, if larger at all, than that involved in the purely dynastic, ethnically irrelevant wars of the eighteenth century. (Why these nationalisms became virulent in the subsequent century is another question, to be discussed later.) Here was a kind of nationalism which only wished to confer a worthy political roof on a nation which already existed (or existed as much as those of the westernmost zone, where peasants also had to be taught to 'talk proper' and be informed of what their nation was and what it was called). The ethnographic map on the whole was not so complex as to make this aim attainable only through cleansing. A nation wanted its own state in addition to its own main poet, main opera and so on, and to satisfy this ambition, it was not obvious that it had

proper; but their membership of a state-culture was seldom seriously in doubt, nor was the identity of the state which was to provide the required protection. These people were seldom subjected to a tug-of-war between rival nationalists, claiming them to be 'really' members of A rather than B. In the main, they knew already what their identity was, and which state was charged with protecting that identity.

Zone 2

Immediately to the east of the coastal area, there is another region which deviates from the simplest path from nation-free to nationalist-prone society. This is the area corresponding roughly to the territory of the erstwhile Holy Roman Empire. Whereas, in the westernmost zone, the couple had been cohabiting for centuries before being called to do so by nationalism, here the situation was odd in a different kind of way: the bride had been ready, all tared up at the altar, for a long long time, but, but ... no groom! Unmetaphorically: a high, *saatstäbig* culture (the bride) had long been available among both Italians and Germans. In Italy since Dante and the early Renaissance, in Germany since Luther, or perhaps even since crusaders from different Teutonic language areas had to forge a standard speech when they were pushing East, a normative idiom endowed with writing and capable of providing the base for a national, culturally homogeneous state was to hand. The German literary revival at the end of the eighteenth century may have had to standardise orthography a bit, but basically a normative high culture was already there. Moreover, the peasant catchment area for these cultures was reasonably clear, continuous, identifiable and compact, except for the numerous pockets of Germans in eastern Europe — but this did not alter the fact that no cultural engineering, no culture-creation, was required.

But, and this was a big *but*: no state, no groom. Whereas strong dynastic states had crystallised on the Atlantic coast,

to do down anyone else. A blessed condition, but not one necessarily repeated elsewhere, or destined to last.

Zone 3

It is when we move further east that the trouble really starts. In the second zone, nationalism *could* be benign and liberal; it had no inherent *need* to go nasty (even if in the end it did). In the third zone, on the other hand, violence and brutality seem to have been inscribed into the nature of the situation. The horror was not optional, it was predestined.

In eastern Europe, all in all, there were *neither* national states *nor* national cultures. In terms of our metaphor, neither room nor bride was available. If the nationalist imperative — one state, one culture — was to be satisfied, and the passion for it in fact became very strong in the course of the nineteenth century, then both state and culture had to be created. Both political and cultural engineering were required. And the material on which the engineers were to work was such as to call for some rather brutal earth-shifting. It is the simultaneous creation of a national state and a national culture, in a social world lacking both, and endowed with an appallingly complex patchwork of linguistic and cultural differences, interspersed both on the map and in the social structure: it is this combination which is a recipe for catastrophe. The ingredients of this recipe were only too conspicuously present in eastern Europe.

It may be a slight exaggeration to say that eastern Europe had *no* national high cultures. The Poles, for instance, had one, and its glamour was sufficient that when a Lithuanian dynasty took over Poland, it was Polish culture which absorbed the Lithuanian gentry, and not the other way round. There are other nations which can make some kind of claim to cultural and/or political continuity. But the general point holds: there was a patchwork of cultures and languages, the folk languages were ill-defined and, for instance, in the case of Slavonic languages, it was exceedingly hard, or impossible,

to say where one dialect ended and another one began, or what was a language and what was a dialect. For as liberal a man as Anton Chekhov, for instance, the Ukrainians were invisible: the *Cherry Orchard* is clearly intended to be a parable on *Russia*. But if you read the play with care, you find that it is all taking place in the Ukraine: the cherries are taken to be sold in Khar'kov...

The states which did exist were only loosely connected with their own dominant ethnic group. In the Tsarist aristocracy, families of Tartar, Baltic or Georgian origin were prominent, no doubt over-represented in relation to the size of their ethnicity of origin, and certainly not discriminated against in the military and civil service. The Russian commander in the Crimean war rejoiced in the splendid name of Todleben — a fine name for a soldier, but it is hardly Slavonic. In the Ottoman Empire, the Anatolian Turkish peasantry were exploited and oppressed, rather than being beneficiaries of their connection with the dominant *ethnic*. As for the cultures, in the main they had to be *created* in the nineteenth century, and the standardised, normative form had to be diffused, by methods which could be benign or brutal.

It was this situation, and the contrast between it and that which prevailed in the west of Europe, which led to the remarkable essay on nationalism by John Plamenatz (1973). John Plamenatz was a Montenegrin Wykehamist, not a territorialist. His father was a notable back in Montenegro and, it is said, one of the signatories of the peace at the end of the Balkan wars, and sufficiently well off to send his son to Winchester. Plamenatz was a very nice man who became Professor of Government in Oxford and, truth to tell, author of, on the whole, somewhat dull works on politics, with one outstanding exception, his remarkable essay on nationalism, which should have been called 'The sad reflections of a Montenegrin in Oxford'.

The main point of his essay, put simply, was that west of Trieste, nationalism could be benign, but east of Trieste it

restored, fairly quickly, under a new management and under a new ideology. This new faith was upheld and implemented with great conviction, vigour and ruthlessness. The regime was in complete and unscrupulous and murderous than the *ancient régimes* which had, all in all, held nationalism in check between 1815 and 1918. Not surprisingly, this system had no very great difficulty in suppressing and containing nationalism during the period of its existence. Contrary to some predictions and analyses, it was not nationalism which brought it down: it was defeat in the economic Cold War, the first major war to be fought by economic not violent means, and one which proved astonishingly conclusive in its outcome. Nationalism had not contributed much to this outcome, but benefited from it, and decisively contributed to the break-up of empire after economic defeat had, with astonishing candour, been conceded. Incidentally, the Soviet successor empire to the Tsars was also curiously non-national: as Russian nationalists complained and complain with some justice, Russians were not specially favoured in it. Some backward parts of the Russian Republic were probably the most disadvantaged parts of the empire, and other nationalities — initially Jews, but later Georgians and Ukrainians — were prominent in the leadership of the Soviet Union. The nature of the Communist regime and the causes of its demise are an enormous subject. From the viewpoint of following the differing trajectories of nationalism in various parts of Europe, this can be said: having passed through the first two stages, this part of Europe was spared the remaining three — for the time being. There were massive and brutal transfers of populations, but they did not, on the whole, simplify the ethnic map. (This does not apply to Poland and the Czech Republic.) They merely made it complex in a new way.

The crucial question is: now that the intervening force of Communism has disappeared, will the 'natural' development resume, and will it slot itself in at stage 3, 4 or 5? Shall we see the proliferation of small, weak, inexperienced and minority-haunted states, or ethnic cleansing, or a diminution of the

was likely to be horrible. This, on the surface, was a strange thing to say not very long after the demise of Hitler and Mussolini, who proved that nationalism west of Trieste could be as horrible as any. Nevertheless Plamenatz was making a profound point. The horror of Nazism and Fascism is optional. (Why it arose remains to be discussed.) The horror of nationalism to the east is inherent in the situation. Plamenatz could have predicted, though he did not formulate it in that way, the tragedy of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The basic point is simple: in conditions such as those which prevail in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Volga bend, much of central Asia and many other parts of the world, culturally homogeneous nation-states, such as are held to be normative and prescribed by history in nationalist theory, can be produced only by ethnic cleansing. In such areas, either people must be persuaded to forgo the implementation of the nationalist ideal, or ethnic cleansing must take place. There is no third way.

Zone 4

Within eastern Europe, one can distinguish two zones: 3 and 4. The former has already been discussed. Zone 4 can be defined as the area which has passed through the period of Bolshevism. Just to complicate matters, this area expanded in 1945, with the westward advance of the Red Army and the imposition of Communist regimes in a large number of countries. Within zone 4, there are countries which were under Communism for roughly seventy years, and others for forty.

Zone 4 is, from the viewpoint of the development of nationalism, characterised by the fact that it passed more or less 'normally' through the first two stages, the Viennese and the Irredentist, but then something strange happened. At the end of the First World War, all three of the empires which had carved up eastern Europe between themselves in Vienna went on to the dustheap of history. But one of them was

Nations and nationalism
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E. J. HOBBSBAWM

intensity of the ethnic intrusion in politics? For much of ex-Yugoslavia, the answer is, alas, clear: it is ethnic cleansing, and indeed this is where the term was coined. Elsewhere, the answer is not yet clear. No doubt it will not be the same answer in all places. There is some evidence for each of the three options, and we do not yet know which one will predominate, and where.