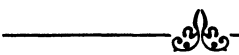
Nations and nationalism since 1780

Programme, myth, reality

SECOND EDITION



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CHAPTER 1

The nation as novelty: from revolution to liberalism

The basic characteristic of the modern nation and everything connected with it is its modernity. This is now well understood, but the opposite assumption, that national identification is somehow so natural, primary and permanent as to precede history, is so widely held that it may be useful to illustrate the modernity of the vocabulary of the subject itself. The Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy, whose various editions have been scrutinized for this purpose[1] does not use the terminology of state, nation and language in the modern manner before its edition of 1884. Here, for the first time, we learn that the *lengua nacional* is 'the official and literary language of a country, and the one generally spoken in that country, as distinct from dialects and the languages of other nations'. The entry under 'dialect' establishes the same relation between it and the national language. Before 1884 the word *nación* simply meant 'the aggregate of the inhabitants of a province, a country or a kingdom' and also 'a foreigner'. But now it was given as 'a State or political body which recognizes a supreme centre of common government' and also 'the territory constituted by that state and its individual inhabitants, considered as a whole', and henceforth the element of a common and supreme state is central to such definitions, at least in the Iberian world. The *nación* is the 'conjunto de los habitantes de un país *regido por un mismo gobierno*' (emphasis added).[2] The *nação* of the (recent) *Enciclopé-*

[1] Lluis Garcia i Sevilla, 'Llengua, nació i estat al diccionario de la real academia espanyola' (*L'Avenç*, 16 May 1979, pp. 50–5).

[2] *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Barcelona 1907–34), vol. 37, pp. 854–67: 'nación'.

dia Brasileira Mérito[3] is 'the community of the citizens of a state, living under the same regime or government and having a communion of interests; the collectivity of the inhabitants of a territory with common traditions, aspirations and interests, *and subordinated to a central power which takes charge of maintaining the unity of the group* (emphasis added); the people of a state, excluding the governing power'. Moreover, in the Dictionary of the Spanish Academy the final version of 'the nation' is not found until 1925 when it is described as 'the collectivity of persons who have the same ethnic origin and, in general, speak the same language and possess a common tradition'.

Gobierno, the government, is not therefore specifically linked with the concept of *nación* until 1884. For indeed, as philology would suggest, the first meaning of the word 'nation' indicates origin or descent: 'naissance, extraction, rang' to quote a dictionary of ancient French, which cites Froissart's 'je fus retourné au pays de ma nation en la conté de Haynnau' (I was returned to the land of my birth/origin in the county of Hainault).[4] And, insofar as origin or descent are attached to a body of men, it could hardly be those who formed a state (unless in the case of rulers or their kin). Insofar as it was attached to a territory, it was only fortuitously a political unit, and never a very large one. For the Spanish dictionary of 1726 (its first edition) the word *patria* or, in the more popular usage, *tierra*, 'the homeland' meant only 'the place, township or land where one is born', or 'any region, province or district of any lordship or state'. This narrow sense of *patria* as what modern Spanish usage has had to distinguish from the broad sense as *patria chica*, 'the little fatherland', is pretty universal before the nineteenth century, except among the classically educated, with a knowledge of ancient Rome. Not until 1884 did *tierra* come to be attached to a state; and not until 1925 do we hear the emotional note of modern patriotism, which defines *patria* as 'our own nation, with the sum total of material and immaterial things, past, present and future that enjoy the loving loyalty of patriots'.

[3] (São Paulo–Rio–Porto Alegre 1958–64), vol. 13, p. 581.

[4] L. Curne de Sainte Pelaye, *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien langage françois* (Niort n.d.), 8 vols.; 'nation'.

Admittedly, nineteenth-century Spain was not exactly in the vanguard of ideological progress, but Castile – and we are talking about the Castilian language – was one of the earliest European kingdoms to which it is not totally unrealistic to attach the label 'nation-state'. At any rate it may be doubted whether eighteenth-century Britain and France were 'nation-states' in a very different sense. The development of its relevant vocabulary may therefore have a general interest.

In Romance languages the word 'nation' is indigenous. Elsewhere, insofar as it is used, it is a foreign loan. This allows us to trace distinctions in the usage more clearly. Thus in High and Low German the word *Volk* (people) clearly has some of the same associations today as the words derived from 'natio', but the interaction is complex. It is clear that in medieval Low German the term (*natie*), insofar as it is used – and one would guess from its Latin origin it would hardly be used except among the literate or those of royal, noble or gentle birth – does not yet have the connotation *Volk*, which it only begins to acquire in the sixteenth century. It means, as in medieval French, birth and descent group (*Geschlecht*)[5]

As elsewhere, it develops in the direction of describing larger self-contained groups such as guilds or other corporations which require to be distinguished from others with whom they coexist: hence the 'nations' as a synonym for foreigner, as in Spanish, the 'nations' of foreign merchants ('foreign communities, especially of traders, living in a city and enjoying privileges there'),[6] the familiar 'nations' of students in ancient universities. Hence also the less familiar 'a regiment from the nation of Luxemburg'.[7] However, it seems clear that the evolution could tend to stress the place or territory of origin – the *pays natal* of one old French definition which readily becomes, at least in the minds of later lexicographers the equivalent of 'province',[8] while others stress rather the common descent group, and thus move into the direction of ethnicity, as in

[5] Dr E. Verwijs and Dr J. Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek*, vol. 4 (The Hague 1899), col. 2078.

[6] *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, vol. 9 (The Hague 1913), cols. 1586–90.

[7] Verwijs and Verdam, *Middelenderlandsch Woordenboek*, vol. 4.

[8] L. Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du 16e siècle*, vol. 5 (Paris 1961), p. 400.

the Dutch insistence on the primary meaning of *natie* as 'the totality of men reckoned to belong to the same "stam"'.

Either way, the problem of the relation of even such an extended but indigenous 'nation' to the state remained puzzling, for it seemed evident that in ethnic, linguistic or any other terms, most states of any size were not homogeneous, and could therefore not simply be equated with nations. The Dutch dictionary specifically singles out as a peculiarity of the French and English that they use the word 'nation' to mean the people belonging to a state even when not speaking the same language.[9] A most instructive discussion of this puzzle comes from eighteenth-century Germany.[10] For the encyclopedist Johann Heinrich Zedler in 1740 the nation, in its real and original meaning meant a united number of *Bürger* (it is best, in mid-eighteenth-century Germany, to leave this word its notorious ambiguity) who share a body of customs, mores and laws. From this it follows that it can have no territorial meaning, since members of different nations (divided by 'differences in ways of life – *Lebensarten* – and customs') can live together in the same province, even quite a small one. If nations had an intrinsic connection with territory, the Wends in Germany would have to be called Germans, which they patently are not. The illustration naturally comes to the mind of a Saxon scholar, familiar with the last – and still surviving – Slav population within linguistic Germany, which it does not yet occur to him to label with the question-begging term 'national minority'. For Zedler the word to describe the totality of the people of all 'nations' living within the same province or state is *Volck*. But, alas for terminological tidiness, in practice the term 'Nation' is often used in he same sense as 'Volck'; and sometimes as a synonym for 'estate' of society (*Stand, ordo*) and sometimes for any other association or society (*Gesellschaft, societas*).

Whatever the 'proper and original' or any other meaning of 'nation', the term is clearly still quite different from its modern meaning. We may thus, without entering further into the matter,

[9] *Woordenboek* (1913), col. 1588.

[10] John. Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*..., vol. 23 (Leipzig–Halle 1740, repr. Graz 1961), cols. 901–3.

accept that in its modern and basically political sense the concept *nation* is historically very young. Indeed, this is underlined by another linguistic monument, the *New English Dictionary* which pointed out in 1908, that the old meaning of the word envisaged mainly the ethnic unit, but recent usage rather stressed 'the notion of political unity and independence'.[11]

Given the historical novelty of the modern concept of 'the nation', the best way to understand its nature, I suggest, is to follow those who began systematically to operate with this concept in their political and social discourse during the Age of Revolution, and especially, under the name of 'the principle of nationality' from about 1830 onwards. This excursus into *Begriffsgeschichte* is not easy, partly because, as we shall see, contemporaries were too unselfconscious about their use of such words, and partly because the same word simultaneously meant, or could mean, very different things.

The primary meaning of 'nation', and the one most frequently ventilated in the literature, was political. It equated 'the people' and the state in the manner of the American and French Revolutions, an equation which is familiar in such phrases as 'the nation-state', the 'United Nations', or the rhetoric of late-twentieth-century presidents. Early political discourse in the USA preferred to speak of 'the people', 'the union', 'the confederation, 'our common land', 'the public', 'public welfare' or 'the community' in order to avoid the centralizing and unitary implications of the term 'nation' against the rights of the federated states.[12] For it was, or certainly soon became, part of the concept of the nation in the era of the Revolutions that it should be, in the French phrase, 'one and indivisible'.[13] The 'nation' so considered, was the body of citizens

[11] *Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VII (Oxford 1933), p. 30.

[12] John J. Lalor (ed.), *Cyclopedia of Political Science* (New York 1889), vol. II, p. 932: 'Nation'. The relevant entries are largely reprinted, or rather translated, from earlier French works.

[13] 'It would follow from this definition that a nation is destined to form only one state and that it constitutes one indivisible whole' (*ibid.* p. 923). The definition from which this 'would follow' is that a nation is 'an aggregate of men speaking the same language, having the same customs, and endowed with certain moral qualities which distinguish them from other groups of a like nature'. This is one of the numerous exercises in the art of begging questions to which nationalist argument has so often been prone.

whose collective sovereignty constituted them a state which was their political expression. For, whatever else a nation was, the element of citizenship and mass participation or choice was never absent from it. John Stuart Mill did not merely define the nation by its possession of national sentiment. He also added that the members of a nationality 'desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively'.[14] We observe without surprise that Mill discusses the idea of nationality not in a separate publication as such, but, characteristically – and briefly – in the context of his little treatise on Representative Government, or democracy.

The equation nation = state = people, and especially sovereign people, undoubtedly linked nation to territory, since structure and definition of states were now essentially territorial. It also implied a multiplicity of nation-states so constituted, and this was indeed a necessary consequence of popular self-determination. As the French Declaration of Rights of 1795 put it:

> Each people is independent and sovereign, whatever the number of individuals who compose it and the extent of the territory it occupies. This sovereignty is inalienable.[15]

But it said little about what constituted a 'people'. In particular there was no logical connection between the body of citizens of a territorial state on one hand, and the identification of a 'nation' on ethnic, linguistic or other grounds or of other characteristics which allowed collective recognition of group membership. Indeed, it has been argued that the French Revolution 'was completely foreign to the principle or feeling of nationality; it was even hostile to it' for this reason.[16] As the Dutch lexicographer noted perceptively, language had nothing to do *in principle* with being English or French, and indeed, as we shall see, French experts were to fight

[14] J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (Everyman edition, London 1910), pp. 359–66.

[15] It may be observed that there is no reference to the right of peoples to sovereignty and independence in the Declarations of Rights of 1789 or 1793. See Lucien Jaume, *Le Discours jacobin et la démocratie* (Paris 1989), Appendices 1–3, pp. 407–14. However, O. Dann and J. Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London 1988), p. 34, for the same view in 1793.

[16] Maurice Block, 'Nationalities, principle of' in J. Lalor (ed.), *Cyclopedia of Political Science*, vol. II, p. 939.

stubbornly against any attempt to make the spoken language a criterion of nationality which, they argued, was determined purely by French citizenship. The language Alsatians or Gascons spoke remained irrelevant to their status as members of the French people.

Indeed, if 'the nation' had anything in common from the popular-revolutionary point of view, it was not, in any fundamental sense, ethnicity, language and the like, though these could be indications of collective belonging also. As Pierre Vilar has pointed out,[17] what characterized the nation–people as seen from below was precisely that it represented the common interest against particular interests, the common good against privilege, as indeed is suggested by the term Americans used before 1800 to indicate nationhood while avoiding the word itself. Ethnic group differences were from this revolutionary-democratic point of view as secondary as they later seemed to socialists. Patently what distinguished the American colonists from King George and his supporters was neither language nor ethnicity, and conversely, the French Republic saw no difficulty in electing the Anglo-American Thomas Paine to its National Convention.

We cannot therefore read into the revolutionary 'nation' anything like the later nationalist programme of establishing nation-states for bodies defined in terms of the criteria so hotly debated by the nineteenth-century theorists, such as ethnicity, common language, religion, territory and common historical memories (to cite John Stuart Mill yet again).[18] As we have seen, except for a territory whose extent was undefined (and perhaps skin colour) none of these united the new American nation. Moreover, as the 'grande nation' of the French extended its frontiers in the course of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars to areas which were French by none of the later criteria of national belonging, it was clear that none of them were the basis of its constitution.

Nevertheless, the various elements later used to discover definitions of non-state nationality, were undoubtedly present, either

[17] P. Vilar, 'Sobre los fundamentos de las estructuras nacionales' (*Historia*, 16/Extra v (Madrid, April 1978), p. 11.

[18] John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government*, pp. 359–66.

associated with the revolutionary nation or creating problems for it; and the more one and indivisible it claimed to be, the more heterogeneity within it created problems. There is little doubt that for most Jacobins a Frenchman who did not speak French was suspect, and that in practice the ethno-linguistic criterion of nationality was often accepted. As Barère put it in his report on languages to the Committee of Public Safety:

> Who, in the Departments of Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin, has joined with the traitors to call the Prussian and the Austrian on our invaded frontiers? It is the inhabitant of the [Alsatian] countryside, who speaks the same language as our enemies, and who consequently considers himself their brother and fellow-citizen rather than the brother and fellow-citizen of Frenchmen who address him in another language and have other customs.[19]

The French insistence on linguistic uniformity since the Revolution has indeed been marked, and at the time it was quite exceptional. We shall return to it below. But the point to note is, that in theory it was not the native use of the French language that made a person French – how could it when the Revolution itself spent so much of its time proving how few people in France actually used it?[20] – but the willingness to acquire this, among the other liberties, laws and common characteristics of the free people of France. In a sense acquiring French was one of the conditions of full French citizenship (and therefore nationality) as acquiring English became for American citizenship. To illustrate the difference between a basically linguistic definition of nationality and the French, even in its extreme form, let us recall the German philologist whom we shall encounter below convincing the International Statistical Congress of the need to insert a question on language into state censuses (see below pp. 98–9). Richard Böckh, whose influential publications in the 1860s argued that language was the only adequate

[19] Cited in M. de Certeau, D. Julia, and J. Revel, *Une Politique de la langue. La Révolution Française et les patois: L'enquête de l'Abbé Grégoire* (Paris 1975), p. 293. For the general problem of the French Revolution and the national language, see also Renée Balibar and Dominique Laporte, *Le Français national. Politique et pratique de la langue nationale sous la Révolution* (Paris 1974). For the specific problem of Alsace, see E. Philipps, *Les Luttes linguistiques en Alsace jusqu'en 1945* (Strasbourg 1975) and P. Lévy, *Histoire linguistique d'Alsace et de Lorraine* (2 vols., Strasbourg 1929).

[20] De Certeau, Julia and Revel, *Une Politique de la langue*, *passim*.

indicator of nationality, an argument well-suited to German nationalism, since Germans were so widely distributed over central and eastern Europe, found himself obliged to classify the Ashkenazic Jews as Germans, since Yiddish was unquestionably a German dialect derived from medieval German. This conclusion as he was well aware, was not likely to be shared by German anti-Semites. But French revolutionaries, arguing for the integration of Jews into the French nation, would neither have needed nor understood this argument. From their point of view Sephardic Jews speaking medieval Spanish and Ashkenazic ones speaking Yiddish – and France contained both – were equally French, once they accepted the conditions of French citizenship, which naturally included speaking French. Conversely, the argument that Dreyfus could not 'really' be French because he was of Jewish descent, was rightly understood as challenging the very nature of the French Revolution and its definition of the French nation.

Nevertheless, it is at the point of Barère's report that two quite different concepts of the nation meet: the revolutionary-democratic and the nationalist. The equation state = nation = people applied to both, but for nationalists the creation of the political entities which would contain it derived from the prior existence of some community distinguishing itself from foreigners, while from the revolutionary-democratic point of view the central concept was the sovereign citizen-people = state which, in relation to the remainder of the human race, constituted a 'nation'.[21] Nor should we forget that henceforth states, however constituted, would also have to take account of their subjects, for in the Age of Revolution it had become more difficult to rule them. As the Greek liberator Kolokotrones put it, it was no longer true that 'the people thought that kings were gods upon earth and that they were bound to say that what they did was well done'.[22] Divinity no longer hedged them. When Charles X of France revived the ancient ceremony of coronation at Rheims in 1825 and (reluctantly) the

[21] 'In relation to the state, the *citizens* constitute the *people*; in relation to the human race, they constitute the *nation*', J. Hélie, 'Nation, definition of,' in Lalor, *Cyclopedia of Political Science*, vol. II, p. 923.

[22] Quoted in E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789–1848* (London 1962), pp. 91–2.

ceremony of magical healing, a mere 120 people turned up to be cured of scrofula by the royal touch. At the last coronation before him, in 1774, there had been 2,400.[23] As we shall see, after 1870 democratization would make this problem of legitimacy and the mobilization of citizens both urgent and acute. For governments the central item in the equation state = nation = people was plainly the state.

But what was the locus of the nation, or for that matter the equation state = nation = people in whatever order of terms, in the theoretical discourse of those who, after all, impressed their character most firmly on the European nineteenth century, and especially on the period when the 'principle of nationality' changed its map in the most dramatic way, namely the period from 1830 to 1880: the liberal bourgeoisies and their intellectuals? Even had they wanted to, they could not have avoided reflecting on the problem during the fifty years when the European balance of power was transformed by the emergence of two great powers based on the national principle (Germany and Italy), the effective partition of a third on the same grounds (Austria–Hungary after the Compromise of 1867), not to mention the recognition of a number of lesser political entities as independent states claiming the new status as nationally based peoples, from Belgium in the west to the Ottoman successor states in southeast Europe (Greece, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria), and two national revolts of the Poles demanding their reconstitution as what they thought of as a nation-state. Nor did they wish to avoid it. For Walter Bagehot 'nation-making' was the essential content of nineteenth-century evolution.[24]

However, since the number of nation-states in the early nineteenth century was small, the obvious question for enquiring minds was which of the numerous European populations classifiable as a 'nationality' on some ground or another, would acquire a state (or some lesser form of separate political or administrative recognition), and which of the numerous existing states would be imbued with the character of 'nation'. The drawing up of lists of the criteria of potential or actual nationhood essentially served this purpose. It

[23] Marc Bloch, *Les Rois thaumaturges* (Paris 1924), pp. 402–4.

[24] Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* (London 1887), ch.III, IV on 'Nation-making'.

seemed obvious that not all states would coincide with nations, nor the other way round. On the one hand, Renan's famous question 'why is Holland a nation, while Hanover and the Grand Duchy of Parma are not?'[25] raised one set of analytical issues. On the other hand John Stuart Mill's observation that the establishment of a national state had to be (a) feasible and (b) desired by the nationality itself, raised another. This was so even for mid-Victorian nationalists who had no doubt at all about the answer to both kinds of question as they concerned their own nationality or the state in which it found itself. For even they found themselves looking at the claims of other nationalities and states with a colder eye.

However, when we get beyond this point we encounter, in nineteenth-century liberal discourse, a surprising degree of intellectual vagueness. This is due not so much to a failure to think the problem of the nation through, as to the assumption that it did not require to be spelled out, since it was already obvious. Hence much of the liberal theory of nations emerges only, as it were, on the margins of the discourse of liberal writers. Moreover, as we shall see, one central area of liberal theoretical discourse made it difficult to consider the 'nation' intellectually at all. Our task in the remainder of this chapter is to reconstruct a coherent liberal bourgeois theory of the 'nation', rather in the manner in which archaeologists reconstruct trade routes from deposits of coins.

The best way may be to begin with the least satisfactory notion of the 'nation', namely the sense in which Adam Smith uses the word in the title of his great work. For in his context it plainly means no more than a territorial state, or, in the words of John Rae, a sharp Scottish mind wandering through early nineteenth-century North America criticizing Smith, 'every separate community, society, nation, state or people (terms which, as far as our subject is concerned, may be considered synonymous)'.[26] Yet the thought of the great liberal political economist must surely be relevant to liberal middle-class thinkers considering the 'nation' from other

[25] Ernest Renan, 'What is a nation?' in Alfred Zimmern (ed.), *Modern Political Doctrines* (Oxford 1939), p. 192.

[26] John Rae, *The Sociological Theory of Capital, being a complete reprint of The New Principles of Political Economy by John Rae* (1834) (ed.) C. W. Mixter (New York 1905), p. 26.

points of view, even if they were not, like John Stuart Mill, economists themselves, or like Walter Bagehot, editors of *The Economist*. Was it, we may ask, historically fortuitous that the classic era of free trade liberalism coincided with that 'nation-making' which Bagehot saw as so central to his century? In other words, did the nation-state have a specific function as such in the process of capitalist development? Or rather: how did contemporary liberal analysts see this function?

For it is evident to the historian that the role of economies defined by state frontiers was large. The nineteenth-century world economy was *international* rather than cosmopolitan. World system theorists have tried to show that capitalism was bred as a global system in one continent and not elsewhere, precisely because of the political pluralism of Europe, which neither constituted nor formed part of a single 'world empire'. Economic development in the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries proceeded on the basis of territorial states, each of which tended to pursue mercantilist policies as a unified whole. Even more obviously, when we speak of world capitalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries we do so in terms of its component national units in the developed world – of British industry, the American economy, German as distinct from French capitalism and so on. During the lengthy period from the eighteenth century to the years following World War II, there seemed to be little space and scope in the global economy for those genuinely extra-territorial, transnational or interstitial units which had played so large a part in the genesis of a capitalist world economy and which are today once again so prominent: for instance, independent mini-states whose economic significance is out of proportion to their size and resources – Lübeck and Ghent in the fourteenth century, Singapore and Hongkong once again today. In fact, looking back over the development of the modern world economy we are inclined to see the phase during which economic development was integrally linked to the 'national economies' of a number of developed territorial states as situated between two essentially transnational eras.

The difficulty for nineteenth-century liberal economists, or liberals who, as might have been expected, accepted the arguments

of classical political economy, was that they could only recognize the economic significance of nations in practice, but not in theory. Classical political economy, and notably Adam Smith's, had been formulated as a critique of the 'mercantile system', i.e. of precisely the system in which governments treated national economies as ensembles to be developed by state effort and policy. Free trade and the free market were directed precisely against this concept of national economic development, which Smith thought he had demonstrated to be counter-productive. Economic theory was thus elaborated uniquely on the basis of individual units of enterprise – persons or firms – rationally maximizing their gains and minimizing their losses in a market which had no specific spatial extension. At the limit it was, and could not but be, the world market. While Smith was far from opposed to certain functions of government which were relevant to the economy, so far as the general theory of economic growth was concerned, it had no place for the nation, or any collectivity larger than the firm, which, incidentally, it did not bother to investigate much.

Thus J. E. Cairnes, at the peak of the liberal era, even spent ten pages seriously considering the proposition that a theory of international trade was unnecessary, as distinct from any other trade between individuals.[27] He concluded that, while international transactions were undoubtedly becoming steadily easier, there were still enough frictions left to justify separate consideration of the problem of trade between states. The German liberal economist Schönberg doubted whether the concept of 'national income' had any meaning. Those not content with superficial ideas might be tempted to believe this, but they were probably going too far even though estimates of 'national wealth' in monetary terms were mistaken.[28] Edwin Cannan[29] thought Adam Smith's 'nation' consisted only of the collection of individuals living on the territory of a state and considered whether the fact that in a hundred years' time

[27] J. E. Cairnes, *Some Leading Principles of Political Economy Newly Expounded* (London 1874), pp. 355–65.

[28] Dr Gustav Schönberg (ed.), *Handbuch der politischen Oekonomie*, vol. 1 (Tübingen 1882), pp. 158ff.

[29] Edwin Cannan, *History of the Theories of Production and Distribution in English Political Economy from 1776 to 1848* (London 1894), pp. 10ff.

all these people would be dead, made it impossible to speak of the 'nation' as a continuously existing entity. In policy terms this meant the belief that only the allocation of resources through the market was optimal, and that by means of its operation the interests of individuals would automatically produce the interests of the whole – insofar as there was room in theory for such a concept as the interests of the whole community. Conversely, John Rae wrote his 1834 book specifically to demonstrate against Smith that individual and national interests were not identical, i.e. that the principles that guided the individual's pursuit of self-interest did not necessarily maximize the wealth of the nation.[30] As we shall see, those who refused to take to Smith unconditionally were not to be neglected, but their economic theories could not compete with the classical school. The term 'national economy' only appears in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy* in connection with German economic theory. The term 'nation' itself had disappeared from the equivalent French work of the 1890s.[31]

And yet, even the purest of classical economists were obliged to operate with the concept of a national economy. As the Saint-Simonian Michel Chevalier announced apologetically or tongue-in-cheek in his inaugural lesson as Professor of Political Economy at the Collège de France:

> We are commanded to concern ourselves with the general interests of human societies, and we are not prohibited from considering the particular situation in the society within which we are living.[32]

Or, as Lord Robbins was to put it, once again in relation to classical political economists, 'there is little evidence that they often went beyond the test of national advantage as a criterion of policy, still less that they were prepared to contemplate the dissolution of national bonds'.[33] In short, they neither could nor wanted to get

[30] Rae, *The Sociological Theory of Capital.*

[31] *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Economie Politique* (ed.), Léon Say and Joseph Chailley (Paris 1892).

[32] Michel Chevalier, *Cours d'economie politique fait au Collège de France*, vol. I (Paris 1855), p. 43. The lecture was originally given in 1841.

[33] L. Robbins, *The Theory of Economic Policy in English Classical Political Economy* (2nd edn, London 1977), pp. 9–10. An exception should, however, be made for the genuinely global Bentham.

away from 'the nation', whose progress Porter monitored with self-satisfaction from 1835 onwards because, he thought, one wished 'to ascertain the means by which any community has attained the eminence among nations'. By 'any community' he meant, one need hardly add, 'one's own community'.[34]

How indeed could the economic functions and even benefits of the nation-state be denied? The existence of states with a monopoly of currency and with public finances and therefore fiscal policies and activities was a fact. These economic activities could not be abolished, even by those who wished to eliminate their harmful interventions into the economy. Moreover, even extreme libertarians could accept, with Molinari, that 'the division of humanity into autonomous nations is essentially economic'.[35] For the state – in the post-revolutionary era the nation-state – after all guaranteed the security of property and contracts, and as J. B. Say put it – notoriously no friend to public enterprise – 'no nation has ever attained a level of wealth without being under a regular government'.[36] Government functions could even be rationalized by liberal economics in terms of free competition. Thus Molinari argued that 'the fragmentation of humanity into nations is useful, inasmuch as it develops an extremely powerful principle of economic emulation'.[37] He cited the Great Exhibition of 1851 in support. But even without such justifications, the function of government in economic development was assumed. J. B. Say, who could see no more difference between a nation and its neighbours than between two neighbouring provinces, nevertheless accused France – i.e. the French state and government – of neglecting to develop the country's domestic resources and indulging in foreign conquest instead. In short, no economist of even the most extreme liberal persuasion could overlook or fail to take account of the national economy. Only liberal economists did not like to, or quite know how to, talk about it.

[34] George Richardson Porter, *The progress of the Nation, in its various social and economic relations, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present time*, 2 pts (London 1836), Preface.

[35] Molinari in *Dictionnaire d'economie politique* (Paris 1854) repr. in Lalor, *Cyclopedia of Political Science*, vol. II, p. 957: 'Nations in political economy'.

[36] *Ibid.* pp. 958–9. [37] *Ibid.* p. 957.

But in countries pursuing national economic development against the superior economy of Britain, Smithian free trade seemed less attractive. There we find no shortage of men who were anxious to talk about the national economy as a whole. The neglected Scottish-Canadian Rae has already been mentioned. He propounded theories which appear to anticipate the import-substituting and technology-importing doctrines of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America in the 1950s. More obviously the great Federalist Alexander Hamilton in the USA linked nation, state and economy, using this link to justify the strong national government he favoured against less centralizing politicians. The list of his 'great national measures' drawn up by the author of the article 'nation' in a later American work of reference is exclusively economic: the foundation of a national bank, national responsibility for state debts, the creation of a national debt, the protection of national manufactures by high tariffs, and compulsory excise.[38] It may be that, as the admiring author suggests, all these measures 'were intended to develop the germ of nationality', or it may be that, as in the case of other Federalists who talked little of the nation and much in economic argument, he felt that the nation would take care of itself if the Federal government took care of economic development: in any case nation implied national economy and its systematic fostering by the state, which in the nineteenth century meant protectionism.

Nineteenth-century American development economists were, in general, too mediocre to make much of a theoretical case for Hamiltonianism, as the miserable Carey and others attempted to do.[39] However, that case was made both lucidly and eloquently by German economists, headed by Friedrich List, who had acquired his ideas, which were frankly inspired by Hamilton, during his stay in the USA in the 1820s, when he had actually taken part in the national economic debates of that period.[40] For List the task of

[38] *Ibid.* p. 933.

[39] Cf. J. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (Oxford 1954), pp. 515–16.

[40] He wrote an *Outline of American Political Economy* (Philadelphia 1827), which anticipates his later views. For List in America see W. Notz 'Friedrich List in Amerika' (*Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, 29, 1925, pp. 199–265 and vol. 22, 1925, pp. 154–82 and 'Frederick List in America' (American Economic Review, 16, 1926, pp. 249–65).

economics, which Germans henceforth tended to call 'national economy' (Nationaloekonomie) or 'people's economy' (Volkswirthschaft) rather than 'political economy', was to 'accomplish the economic development of the nation and to prepare its entry into the universal society of the future'.[41] One need hardly add that this development would take the form of capitalist industrialization pressed forward by a vigorous bourgeoisie.

However, what is interesting from our point of view about List, and the later 'historical school' of German economists who took him as their inspiration – as did economic nationalists of other countries like Arthur Griffith of Ireland[42] – is that he clearly formulated a characteristic of the 'liberal' concept of the nation which was usually taken for granted. It had to be of sufficient size to form a viable unit of development. If it fell below this threshold, it had no historic justification. This seemed too obvious to require argument, and was rarely argued out. The *Dictionnaire politique* of Garnier-Pagès in 1843 thought it 'ridiculous' that Belgium and Portugal should be independent nations, because they were patently too small.[43] John Stuart Mill justified the quite undeniable nationalism of the Irish on the ground that they were after all, all things considered, 'sufficiently numerous to be capable of constituting a respectable nationality'.[44] Others, among them Mazzini and Cavour, apostles though they were of the principle of nationality, disagreed. Indeed, the *New English Dictionary* itself defined the word 'nation' not just in the usual manner familiarized in Britain by J. S. Mill, but as 'an *extensive* aggregate of persons' with the required characteristics (emphasis added).[45]

Now List stated clearly that

> a large population and an extensive territory endowed with manifold national resources, are essential requirements of the normal nationality ... A nation restricted in the number of its population and in

[41] Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy* (London 1885), p. 174.

[42] For a good summary of his views, E. Strauss, *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* (London 1951), pp. 218–20.

[43] 'Nation' by Elias Regnault, *Dictionnaire politique*, with an introduction by Garnier-Pagès (Paris 1842), pp. 623–5. 'N'y-a-t-il pas quelque chose de dérisoire d'appeler la Belgique une nation?'

[44] *Considerations on Representative Government* in *Utilitarianism*, p. 365.

[45] *Oxford English Dictionary*, VII, p. 30.

> territory, especially if it has a separate language, can only possess a crippled literature, crippled institutions for promoting art and science. A small state can never bring to complete perfection within its territory the various branches of production.[46]

The economic benefits of large-scale states (*Grossstaaten*), thought Professor Gustav Cohn, were demonstrated by the history of Britain and France. They were no doubt less than those of a single global economy, but world unity, unfortunately, was not attainable as yet. In the mean time 'everything to which humanity aspires for the entire human race ... is at this point already (*zunächst einmal*) achieved for a significant fraction of humanity, i.e. for 30–60 millions'. And so 'it follows that the future of the civilized world will, for a long time to come, take the form of the creation of large states (*Grossstaatenbildung*)'.[47] We note, incidentally, the constant assumption, to which we shall return below, of 'nations' as a second-best to world unity.

Two consequences followed from this thesis, which was almost universally accepted by serious thinkers on the subject, even when they did not formulate it as explicitly as did the Germans who had some historical reasons for doing so.

First, it followed that the 'principle of nationality' applied in practice only to nationalities of a certain size. Hence the otherwise startling fact that Mazzini, the apostle of this principle, did not envisage independence for Ireland. As for even smaller nationalities or potential nationalities – Sicilians, Bretons, Welsh – their claims need be taken even less seriously. In fact, the word *Kleinstaaterei* (the system of mini-states) was deliberately derogatory. It was what German nationalists were against. The word 'Balkanization', derived from the division of the territories formerly in the Turkish empire into various small independent states, still retains its negative connotation. Both terms belonged to the vocabulary of political insults. This 'threshold principle' is excellently illustrated by the map of the future Europe of nations which Mazzini himself drew up in 1857: it comprised a bare dozen states and federations, only one of which (needless to say Italy) would not be obviously

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 175–6.

[47] Gustav Cohn, *Grundlegung der Nationaloekonomie*, vol. I (Stuttgart 1885), pp. 447–9.

classified as multi-national by later criteria.[48] The 'principle of nationality' in the Wilsonian formulation which dominated the peace treaties after World War I, produced a Europe of twenty-six states – twenty-seven if we add the Irish Free State which was shortly to be established. I merely add that a recent study of regionalist movements in western Europe alone counts forty-two of them,[49] thus demonstrating what can happen once the 'threshold principle' is abandoned.

The point to note, however, is that in the classical period of liberal nationalism nobody would have dreamed of abandoning it. Self-determination for nations applied only to what were considered to be viable nations: culturally, and certainly economically (whatever exactly viability meant). To this extent Mazzini's and Mill's idea of national self-determination was fundamentally different from President Wilson's. We shall consider the reasons for the change from one to the other below. However, it may be worth noting *en passant* even here that the 'threshold principle' was not entirely abandoned even in the Wilsonian era. Between the wars the existence of Luxemburg and Liechtenstein remained a slight embarrassment, however welcome these polities were to philatelists. Nobody felt happy about the existence of the Free City of Danzig, not only in the two neighbouring states each of which wanted it within its territory, but more generally among those who felt that no city-state could be viable in the twentieth century as it had been in Hanseatic days. The inhabitants of rump Austria almost unanimously desired integration into Germany, because they simply could not believe that a small state such as theirs was independently viable as an economy ('lebensfähig'). It is only since 1945, and even more since decolonization, that we have made way in the community of nations for entities like Dominica or the Maldives or Andorra.

The second consequence is that the building of nations was seen inevitably as a process of expansion. This was another reason for the anomaly of the Irish case or of any other purely separatist

[48] See Denis Mack Smith (ed.), *Il Risorgimento* (Bari 1968), p. 422.

[49] Jochen Blaschke (ed.), *Handbuch der westeuropäischen Regionalbewegungen* (Frankfurt 1980).

nationalism. As we have seen, it was accepted in theory that social evolution expanded the scale of human social units from family and tribe to county and canton, from the local to the regional, the national and eventually the global. Nations were therefore, as it were, in tune with historical evolution only insofar as they extended the scale of human society, other things being equal.

> If our doctrine were to be summed up in the form of a proposition, we should perhaps say that, generally, the principle of nationalities is legitimate when it tends to unite, in a compact whole, scattered groups of population, and illegitimate when it tends to divide a state.[50]

In practice this meant that national movements were expected to be movements for national *unification* or expansion. All Germans and Italians thus hoped to come together in one state, as did all Greeks. Serbs would merge with Croats into a single Yugoslavia (for which there was no historical precedent whatever), and beyond this the dream of a Balkan Federation haunted the seekers after a yet larger unity. It remained a commitment of the communist movements until after World War II. Czechs would merge with Slovaks, Poles would combine with Lithuanians and Ruthenes – in fact, they had already formed a single large state in pre-partition Poland – Romanians of Moldavia would fuse with those of Wallachia and Transylvania, and so on. This was evidently incompatible with definitions of nations as based on ethnicity, language or common history, but, as we have seen, these were not the decisive criteria of liberal nation-making. In any case, nobody ever denied the actual multinationality or multilinguality or multiethnicity of the oldest and most unquestioned nation-states, e.g. Britain, France and Spain.

That 'nation-states' would be nationally heterogeneous in this way was accepted all the more readily, as there were many parts of Europe and much of the rest of the world where nationalities were so obviously mixed up on the same territory, that a purely spatial unscrambling of them seemed to be quite unrealistic. This was to be the basis of interpretations of nationality such as the later Austro-Marxist one, which attached it not to territory but to people. Nor

[50] Maurice Block in Lalor, *Cyclopedia of Political Science*, vol. II, p. 941.

was it an accident that the initiative in this matter within the Austrian social democratic party came largely from the Slovenes, who lived in an area where Slovene and German settlements, often existing as enclaves within enclaves or border zones of uncertain and shifting identification, were particularly hard to disentangle.[51] However, the national heterogeneity of nation-states was accepted, above all, because it seemed clear that small, and especially small and backward, nationalities had everything to gain by merging into greater nations, and making their contributions to humanity through these. 'Experience', said Mill, articulating the consensus of sensible observers, 'proves that it is possible for one nationality to merge and be absorbed into another.' For the backward and inferior this would be so much gain:

> Nobody can suppose that it is not more beneficial for a Breton or a Basque of French Navarre to be ... a member of the French nationality, admitted on equal terms to all the privileges of French citizenship ... than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish highlander as members of the British nation.[52]

Once it was accepted that an independent or 'real' nation also had to be a viable nation by the criteria then accepted, it also followed that some of the smaller nationalities and languages were doomed to disappear as such. Frederick Engels has been bitterly assailed as a great-German chauvinist for predicting the disappearance of the Czechs as a people and making uncomplimentary remarks about the future of a good few other peoples.[53] He was indeed proudly German, and inclined to compare his people favourably with others except in respect of its revolutionary tradition. He was also, without the slightest doubt, totally wrong about the Czechs, and about some other peoples. However, it is

[51] For the contribution of Etbin Kristan to the Brünn (Brno) Congress of the party, which elaborated its national programme, see Georges Haupt, Michel Lowy and Claudie Weill, *Les Marxistes et la question nationale 1848–1914* (Paris 1937), pp. 204–7.

[52] Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government*, pp. 363–4.

[53] Cf. Roman Rosdolsky, 'Friedrich Engels und das Problem der "geschichtslosen Völker"' (*Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 4/1964, pp. 87–282).

sheer anachronism to criticize him for his essential stance, which was shared by every impartial mid-nineteenth-century observer. *Some* small nationalities and languages had no independent future. So much was generally accepted, even by people far from hostile to national liberation in principle, or practice.

There was nothing chauvinist in such a general attitude. It did not imply any hostility to the languages and culture of such collective victims to the laws of progress (as they would certainly have been called then). On the contrary, where the supremacy of the state-nationality and the state-language were not an issue, the major nation could cherish and foster the dialects and lesser languages within it, the historic and folkloric traditions of the lesser communities it contained, if only as proof of the range of colours on its macro-national palette. Moreover, small nationalities or even nation-states which accepted their integration into the larger nation as something positive – or, if one prefers, which accepted the laws of progress – did not recognize any irreconcilable differences between micro-culture and macro-culture either, or were even reconciled to the loss of what could not be adapted to the modern age. It was the Scots and not the English who invented the concept of the 'North Briton' after the Union of 1707.[54] It was the speakers and champions of Welsh in nineteenth-century Wales who doubted whether their own language, so powerful a medium for religion and poetry, could serve as an all-purpose language of culture in the nineteenth-century world – i.e. who assumed the necessity and advantages of bilingualism.[55] Doubtless they were not unaware of the possibilities of all-British careers for the English-speaking Welshman, but this did not diminish their emotional bond with ancient tradition. This is evident even among those who reconciled themselves to the eventual disappearance of the idiom, like the Rev. Griffiths of the Dissenting College, Brecknock, who merely asked for natural evolution to be left to take its course:

[54] See Linda Colley, 'Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain 1750–1830' (*Past and Present*, 113, 1986), pp. 96–117.

[55] Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, 'Language and community in nineteenth-century Wales' in David Smith (ed.), *A People and a Proletariat: Essays in the History of Wales 1780–1980* (London 1980), pp. 41–71, esp. pp. 59–63.

> Let it [the Welsh language] die fairly, peacefully and reputably. Attached to it as we are, few would wish to postpone its euthanasy. But no sacrifice would be deemed too great to prevent its being murdered.[56]

Forty years later, another member of a small nationality, the socialist theoretician Karl Kautsky – by origin a Czech – talked in similarly resigned, but not dispassionate, terms:

> National languages will be increasingly confined to domestic use, and even there they will tend to be treated like an old piece of inherited family furniture, something that we treat with veneration even though it has not much practical use.[57]

But these were problems of the smaller nationalities whose independent future seemed problematic. The English hardly gave a thought to the preoccupations of the Scots and the Welsh, as they gloried in the home-grown exoticisms of the British Isles. Indeed, as the stage-Irish soon discovered, who welcomed lesser nationalities which did not challenge the greater, all the more, the more unlike the English they behaved: the thicker the Irishness or Scottishness were laid on with the trowel. Similarly Pangerman nationalists actually encouraged the production of literature in Low German or Frisian, since these were safely reduced to appendages rather than competitors with High German, nationalist Italians prided themselves on Belli, Goldoni and songs in Neapolitan. For that matter Francophone Belgium did not object to Belgians who talked and wrote Flemish. It was the *Flamingants* who resisted French. There were indeed cases where the leading nation or *Staatsvolk* tried actively to suppress minor languages and cultures, but until the late nineteenth century this was rare outside France.

Some people or nationalities were thus destined never to become full nations. Others had attained, or would attain, full nationhood. But which had a future and which did not? The debates on what constituted the characteristics of a nationality – territorial, linguistic, ethnical, etc. – did not help much. The 'threshold principle' was naturally more useful, since it eliminated a number of small

[56] Inquiry on Education in Wales, *Parliamentary Paper*, 1847, XXVII, part II (Report on the Counties of Brecknock, Cardigan and Radnor), p. 67.

[57] Haupt, Lowy and Weill, *Les Marxistes*, p. 122.

peoples, but, as we have seen, it was not decisive either, since there existed unquestioned 'nations' of quite modest size, not to mention national movements like the Irish, about whose capacity to form viable nation-states there were divided opinions. The immediate point of Renan's question about Hanover and the Grand Duchy of Parma was, after all, to contrast them not with *any* nations but with other nation-states of the same modest order of magnitude, with the Netherlands or Switzerland. As we shall see, the emergence of national movements with mass support, demanding attention, would call for substantial revisions of judgment, but in the classic era of liberalism few of them, outside the Ottoman empire, actually as yet seemed to demand recognition as independent sovereign states, as distinct from demanding various kinds of autonomy. The Irish case was, as usual, anomalous in this respect also – at any rate it became so with the appearance of the Fenians who demanded an Irish Republic which could not but be independent from Britain.

In practice there were only three criteria which allowed a people to be firmly classed as a nation, always provided it was sufficiently large to pass the threshold. The first was its historic association with a current state or one with a fairly lengthy and recent past. Hence there was little dispute about the existence of an English or French nation-people, a (Great) Russian people or the Poles, and little dispute outside Spain about a Spanish nation with well-understood national characteristics.[58] For given the identification of nation with state, it was natural for foreigners to assume that the only people in a country were those belonging to the state-people, a habit which still irritates the Scots.

The second criterion was the existence of a long-established cultural elite, possessing a written national literary and administrative vernacular. This was the basis of the Italian and German claims to nationhood, although the respective 'peoples' had no single state with which they could identify. In both cases national identification was in consequence strongly linguistic, even though in neither case was the national language spoken for everyday purposes by more

[58] Within Spain the cultural, linguistic and institutional differences between the peoples of the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile were evident. In the Spanish empire, from which Aragon was excluded, even more so.

than a small minority – for Italy it has been estimated at 2½% at the moment of unification[59] – while the rest spoke various and often mutually incomprehensible idioms.[60]

The third criterion, it must unfortunately be said, was a proven capacity for conquest. There is nothing like being an imperial people to make a population conscious of its collective existence as such, as Friedrich List well knew. Besides, for the nineteenth century conquest provided the Darwinian proof of evolutionary success as a social species.

Other candidates for nationhood were plainly not excluded *a priori*, but neither was there any *a priori* presumption in their favour. Their safest course was probably to belong to some political entity which was, by the standards of nineteenth-century liberalism, anomalous, obsolete, and doomed by history and progress. The Ottoman empire was the most obvious evolutionary fossil of this kind, but so, it was increasingly evident, was the Habsburg empire.

Such, then, were the conceptions of nation and nation-state as seen by the ideologists of the era of triumphant bourgeois liberalism: say from 1830 to 1880. They were part of liberal ideology in two ways. First, because the development of nations was unquestionably a phase in human evolution or progress from the small group to the larger, from family to tribe to region, to nation and, in the last instance, to the unified world of the future in which, to quote the superficial and therefore typical G. Lowes Dickinson, 'the barriers of nationality which belong to the infancy of the race will melt and dissolve in the sunshine of science and art'.[61]

That world would be unified even linguistically. A single world language, no doubt coexisting with national languages reduced to the domestic and sentimental role of dialects, was in the minds of

[59] Tullio de Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Bari 1963), p. 41.

[60] 'Obwohl sie alle in einem Reich "Deutscher Nation" nebeneinander lebten, darf nichts darüber hinwegtäuschen, dasz ihnen sogar die gemeinsame Umgangssprache fehlte.' Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 1 (Munich 1987), p. 50.

[61] B. Porter, *Critics of Empire. British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895–1914* (London 1968), p. 331, citing G. Lowes Dickinson's *A Modern Symposium* (1908).

both President Ulysses S. Grant and Karl Kautsky.[62] Such predictions, as we now know, were not entirely beside the mark. The attempts to construct artificial world languages which were made from the 1880s, following the international telegraphic and signalling codes of the 1870s, were indeed unsuccessful, even though one of them, Esperanto, still survives among small groups of enthusiasts, and under the protection of some regimes deriving from the socialist internationalism of the period. On the other hand Kautsky's sensible scepticism of such efforts and his prediction that one of the major state languages would be transformed into a *de facto* world language, has indeed been proved correct. English has become that global language, even though it supplements rather than replaces national languages.

Thus in the perspective of liberal ideology, the nation (i.e. the viable large nation) was the stage of evolution reached in the mid-nineteenth century. As we have seen, the other face of the coin 'nation as progress' was therefore, logically, the assimilation of smaller communities and peoples to larger ones. This did not necessarily imply the abandonment of old loyalties and sentiments, though of course it could. The geographically and socially mobile, who had nothing very desirable to look back upon in their past, might be quite ready to do so. This was notably the case with many middle-class Jews in the countries which offered total equality through assimilation – Paris was worth a mass to more than King Henry IV – until they discovered from the end of the century on, that an unlimited readiness to assimilate was not enough, if the receiving nation was not prepared to accept the assimilee fully. On the other hand it must not be forgotten that the USA was by no means the only state freely offering membership of a 'nation' to anybody who wanted to join it, and 'nations' accepted open entry more readily than classes. The generations before 1914 are full of great-nation chauvinists whose fathers, let alone mothers, did not speak the language of their sons' chosen people, and whose names, Slav or Magyarized German or Slav testified to their choice. The rewards of assimilation could be substantial.

[62] For a relevant quotation from President Grant's Inaugural, see E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848–1875* (London 1975), epigraphs to ch. 3.

But the modern nation was part of liberal ideology in another way. It was linked to the remainder of the great liberal slogans by long association rather than by logical necessity: as liberty and equality are to fraternity. To put it another way, because the nation itself was historically novel, it was opposed by conservatives and traditionalists, and therefore attracted their opponents. The association between the two lines of thought may be illustrated by the example of a typical pan-German from Austria, born in that area of acute national conflict, Moravia. Arnold Pichler,[63] who served the Vienna police with a devotion unbroken by political transformations from 1901 to 1938, was, and to some extent remained, all his life a passionate nationalist German, anti-Czech and anti-Semitic – though he drew the line at putting all Jews into concentration camps, as fellow anti-Semites suggested.[64] At the same time he was a passionate anticlerical and even a liberal in politics; at all events he contributed to the most liberal of Vienna's daily papers in the first republic. In his writings nationalism and eugenical reasoning go together with an enthusiasm for the industrial revolution and, more surprisingly, for its creation of a body of 'citizens of the world' (Weltbürger) ... which ... remote from small-town provincialism and horizons bounded by the church steeple' opened up the entire globe to those previously imprisoned in their regional corners.[65]

Such, then, was the concept of 'nation' and 'nationalism' as seen by liberal thinkers in the heyday of bourgeois liberalism, which was also the era when the 'principle of nationality' first became a major issue in international politics, As we shall see, it differed in one fundamental respect from the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination, which is also, in theory, the Leninist one, and which dominated the debate on these matters from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, and still does. It was not unconditional. In this respect it also differed from the radical-democratic view, as put in the French Revolution's Declaration of Rights cited above, which specifically rejected the 'threshold principle'.

[63] Franz Pichler, *Polizeihofrat P. Ein treuer Diener seienes ungetreuen Staates. Wiener Polizeidienst 1901–1938* (Vienna 1984). I thank Clemens Heller for this reference.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 19. [65] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

However, in practice the mini-peoples whose right to sovereignty and self-determination were thus guaranteed were not generally permitted by their larger and more rapacious neighbours to exercise either, nor did most of them contain many sympathizers with the principles of 1795. One thinks of the (conservative) free mountain cantons of Switzerland, which could hardly be far from the minds of the readers of Rousseau who drafted Declarations of the Rights of Man in that era. The days of left-wing autonomist or independence movements in such communities had not yet come.

From the point of view of liberalism, and – as the example of Marx and Engels demonstrates, not only of liberalism – the case for 'the nation' was that it represented a stage in the historical development of human society, and the case for the establishment of any particular nation-state, irrespective of the subjective feelings of the members of the nationality concerned, or the personal sympathies of the observer, depended on whether it could be shown to fit in with or to advance historical evolution and progress.[66] The universal bourgeois admiration for Scots highlanders did not, so far as I know, lead a single writer to demand nationhood for them – not even the sentimentalists who mourned the failure of the Stuart restoration under Bonnie Prince Charlie, whose main supporters had been highland clansmen.

But if the only historically justifiable nationalism was that which fitted in with progress, i.e. which enlarged rather than restricted the scale on which human economies, societies and culture operated, what could the defence of small peoples, small languages, small traditions be, in the overwhelming majority of cases, but an expression of conservative resistance to the inevitable advance of history? The small people, language or culture fitted into progress only insofar as it accepted subordinate status to some larger unit or retired from battle to become a repository of nostalgia and other sentiments – in short, accepted the status of old family furniture

[66] Cf. Frederick Engels' letter to Bernstein, 22–5 February 1882 (*Werke*, vol. 35, pp. 278ff.) on the Balkan Slavs: 'And even if these chaps were as admirable as the Scots Highlanders celebrated by Walter Scott – another bunch of terrible cattle-thieves – the most we can do is to condemn the *ways* in which society today treats them. If we were in power *we also* would have to deal with the banditry of these fellows, which is part of their heritage.'

which Kautsky assigned to it. And which, of course, so many of the small communities and cultures of the world looked like accepting. Why, so the educated liberal observer might reason, should the speakers of Gaelic behave differently from the speakers of the Northumberland dialect? Nothing prevented them from being bilingual. English dialect writers chose their idiom not *against* the standard national language, but with the consciousness that both had their value and their place. And if, in the course of time, the local idiom would retreat before the national, or even fade away, as had already happened to some marginal Celtic languages (Cornish and Manx ceased to be spoken in the eighteenth century), then, surely, this was regrettable but perhaps inevitable. They would not die unmourned, but a generation that invented the concept and term of 'folklore' could tell the difference between living present and survivals from the past.

To understand the 'nation' of the classical liberal era it is thus essential to bear in mind that 'nation-building', however central to nineteenth-century history, applied only to some nations. And indeed the demand to apply the 'principle of nationality' was not universal either. Both as an international problem and as a domestic political problem it affected only a limited number of peoples or regions, even within multilingual and multiethnic states such as the Habsburg empire, where it clearly dominated politics already. It would not be too much to say that, after 1871 – always excepting the slowly disintegrating Ottoman empire – few people expected any further substantial changes in the map of Europe, and recognized few national problems likely to bring them about, other than the perennial Polish question. And, indeed, outside the Balkans, the only change in the European map between the creation of the German empire and World War I was the separation of Norway from Sweden. What is more, after the national alarums and excursions of the years from 1848 to 1867, it was not too much to suppose that even in Austria–Hungary tempers would cool. That, at all events, is what the officials of the Habsburg empire expected when (rather reluctantly) they decided to accept a resolution of the International Statistical Congress at St Petersburg in 1873 to include a question about language in

future censuses, but proposed to postpone its application until after 1880 to allow time for opinion to grow less agitated.[67] They could not have been more spectacularly mistaken in their prognosis.

It also follows that, by and large, in this period nations and nationalism were not major domestic problems for political entities which had reached the status of 'nation-states', however nationally heterogeneous they were by modern standards, though they were acutely troublesome to non-national empires which were not (anachronistically) classifiable as 'multinational'. None of the European states west of the Rhine as yet faced serious complications on this score, except Britain from that permanent anomaly, the Irish. This is not to suggest that politicians were unaware of Catalans or Basques, Bretons or Flemings, Scots and Welsh, but they were mainly seen as adding to or subtracting from the strength of some statewide political force. The Scots and the Welsh functioned as reinforcements to liberalism, the Bretons and Flemings to traditionalist Catholicism. Of course the political systems of nation-states still benefited from the absence of electoral democracy, which was to undermine the liberal theory and practice of the nation, as it was to undermine so much else in nineteenth-century liberalism.

That is perhaps why the serious theoretical literature about nationalism in the liberal era is small and has a somewhat casual air. Observers like Mill and Renan were relaxed enough about the elements which made up 'national sentiment' – ethnicity – in spite of the Victorians' passionate preoccupation with 'race' – language, religion, territory, history, culture and the rest – because politically it did not much matter, as yet, whether one or the other among these was regarded as more important than the rest. But from the 1880s on the debate about 'the national question' becomes serious and intensive, especially among the socialists, because the political appeal of national slogans to masses of potential or actual voters or supporters of mass political movements was now a matter of real

[67] Emil Brix, *Die Umgangsprachen in Altösterreich zwischen Agitation und Assimilation. Die Sprachenstatistik in den zisleithanischen Volkszählungen 1880–1910* (Vienna–Cologne–Graz 1982).

practical concern. And the debate on such questions as the theoretical criteria of nationhood became passionate, because any particular answer was now believed to imply a particular form of political strategy, struggle and programme. This was a matter of importance not only for governments confronted with various kinds of national agitation or demand, but for political parties seeking to mobilize constituencies on the basis of national, non-national or alternative national appeals. For socialists in central and eastern Europe it made a great deal of difference on what theoretical basis the nation and its future were defined. Marx and Engels, like Mill and Renan, had regarded such questions as marginal. In the Second International such debates were central, and a constellation of eminent figures, or figures with an eminent future, contributed important writings to them: Kautsky, Luxemburg, Bauer, Lenin and Stalin. But if such questions concerned Marxist theorists, it was also a matter of acute practical importance to, say, Croats and Serbs, Macedonians and Bulgarians, whether the nationality of Southern Slavs was defined in one way or another.[68]

The 'principle of nationality' which diplomats debated and which changed the map of Europe in the period from 1830 to 1878 was thus different from the political phenomenon of nationalism which became increasingly central in the era of European democratization and mass politics. In the days of Mazzini it did not matter that, for the great bulk of Italians, the Risorgimento did not exist so that, as Massimo d'Azeglio admitted in the famous phrase: 'We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians.'[69] It did not even matter to those who considered 'the Polish Question' that probably most Polish-speaking peasants (not to mention the third of the population of the old pre-1772 Rzecspopolita who spoke other idioms) did not yet feel themselves to be nationalist Poles; as the eventual liberator of Poland, Colonal Pilsudski recognized in *his* phrase: 'It is the state which makes the nation and

[68] Cf. Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca and London 1984), pp. 76–86.

[69] Said at the first meeting of the parliament of the newly united Italian kingdom (E. Latham, *Famous Sayings and Their Authors*, Detroit, 1970).

not the nation the state.'[70] But after 1880 it increasingly did matter how ordinary common men and women felt about nationality. It is therefore important to consider the feelings and attitudes among pre-industrial people of this kind, on which the novel appeal of political nationalism could build. The next chapter will do this.

[70] H. Roos, *A History of Modern Poland* (London 1966), p. 48.