

## CHAPTER I

## NATIONALITY AND LANGUAGE

No question in our time has given rise to more unrest in the world than that of nationality. The question abounds in complications, which are often difficult to understand. Yet no question of any importance has had less attention paid to it in this country.

It must first be observed that the word 'nationality' is used in two different senses, which are sometimes mutually exclusive.

In legal and official language a person of British nationality is one who is a British subject by birth or naturalisation, whatever may be his origin or the language which he speaks.

But the word is more generally used in a different sense—a sense which has its affinities in the words 'nationalist' and 'nationalism'. We hear frequently of conflicts of nationality within the territories of a single state; and the persons who represent these different nationalities are all usually natives of the country. Such conflicts often lead to a demand for independence on the part of a section of the population. Or, again, a minority of the population of one country may claim the same nationality as the majority of the population of another country; and such conditions may lead to a demand for the redistribution of territories.

It is not very easy to define what is meant by 'nationality' in this latter sense. Something in the nature of a common origin is perhaps always implied. Sometimes the feeling for nationality is derived from the former existence of an independent state or group of states, which have come to be incorporated—whether by conquest or by some peaceful process—with another state. Such is the case with nationality in Wales and Scotland, as well as in Ireland, which has now again become independent.

But on the Continent, in certain districts where differences of nationality are felt most acutely, e.g. Bohemia and Transylvania, separate nationality is claimed by populations which have lived side by side and under the same government for many centuries—in some cases for a thousand years or more—and which cannot be said to preserve any real memory of times when they were unconnected politically. Here nationality is bound up with language: those who speak different languages claim different origins. And it may be observed that in Wales and Ireland also nationality and language coincided not so very long ago, though now a considerable pro-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-64287-4 - The Nationalities of Europe and the Growth of National Ideologies

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Excerpt

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portion of the Welsh people and the great majority of the Irish have lost their native languages.

It is true that this explanation does not apply to Scotland. Gaelic, as well as English, is still spoken in a considerable part of the country. But English had been the dominant language for some five centuries before the Union of the Scottish and English crowns, in 1603; and it is not at all certain that Gaelic was the language of the majority of the population at any time within the last two thousand years. Indeed, many scholars believe it to have been introduced from Ireland at no very remote date, though this again is very doubtful. At all events the movement for Scottish nationality is not—like the Irish movement—bound up with the movement for the preservation of the Gaelic language.

No certain analogy to the Scottish national movement is to be found in Europe, so far as I am aware. In Norway the movement for the restoration of the native language may be compared with the movement for the preservation of Gaelic, but not with the Scottish nationality movement; it has no separatist aims. A somewhat better parallel may perhaps be found in the Serbo-Croatian dispute.<sup>1</sup> Here we have two neighbouring peoples, speaking the same language, but never connected politically with one another before their union in 1918. The political, ecclesiastical and cultural connections of the one had always been with the south and east, those of the other with the north and west. Such a union, desirable as it doubtless was, could not attain perfection in a day; and the speed with which political unification was effected led, not unnaturally, to opposition from the junior partner—or, to speak more accurately, from the chief of the junior partners—which brought about the weakening of the whole kingdom in the face of external danger. If this opposition is to be ascribed to a feeling for nationality, we must distinguish between 'Croatian nationality' and 'Yugoslav nationality'; for it was the growth of the latter feeling—for more than a century past—which led to the unification of the various Yugoslav peoples. At all events Croatia differs from Scotland in the fact that, by its union with a foreign nation (Hungary), it had lost its independence more than eight hundred years before its union with the other Yugoslavs.

Apart from this rather doubtful case, all nationality movements on the Continent seem to be connected with language. The detailed evidence for this statement will be reviewed in the next chapter.

Sometimes, as we shall see, the feeling for nationality is hardly

<sup>1</sup> I am speaking of the conditions which prevailed before the German invasion in 1941.

more than an antiquarian interest, limited to more or less intellectual elements in the population. In other cases, however, it has come to be the strongest force in the life of the nation. The attainment of such strength would seem to need the stimulus of a powerful antagonistic force, either within the same country or beyond, but not too far beyond, its borders. It is no doubt by the absence of any such stimulus in this country that we are to explain the non-existence of any feeling for English nationality. In Yugoslavia, on the other hand, the feeling for nationality is well developed; but the stimulus is due, not to differences between Serbs and Croats, but to antagonism with external and alien peoples. In Germany a similar stimulus has been provided by antagonism towards the French, and still more the Poles and Czechs; in Poland by antagonism to the Germans and the Russians. In all such cases a difference of language seems to be involved.

It is often difficult or impossible to distinguish the feeling for nationality from patriotism—especially in countries where all, or nearly all, the population is of one nationality or language. Thus in England patriotism takes the place of nationalism; and English people frequently find it difficult to understand the feeling for nationality shown by other peoples. In Switzerland, on the other hand, a man may be a good Swiss patriot, whether his language be French, German or Italian; but his feeling for nationality will probably be governed, at least to some extent, by his language. Similar conditions may be found in Belgium and in Wales, and also in certain parts of Scotland where a linguistic boundary exists, or has existed. But in the last case the feeling for nationality is quite independent of Scottish nationalism; the latter feeling may be cherished equally by persons whose language is Gaelic or English. It would seem, indeed, that Scottish nationalism has more affinity with patriotism than with a feeling for nationality, as understood on the Continent.

Although patriotism and nationalism tend to coalesce, they are apparently of different origins. Both doubtless are natural and primary feelings; but the former seems to spring from love of home and the desire to preserve and protect it, while the latter is inspired by opposition or aversion to persons and things which are strange or unintelligible. Such opposition is not necessarily strong; under favourable conditions it may dwindle into insignificance. But it is liable to be strengthened if the difference of language is accompanied by cultural differences and a difference in religion, and especially if elements of fear or distrust are present, or if a conflict of interests arises.

The conditions of the Middle Ages were in general not very favourable to the growth of nationalism, except where differences of religion were involved. And even in such cases the religious element was usually stronger than the national—indeed, Christian armies fighting against Mohammedans or heathen commonly included contingents from various nationalities. Moreover, the ruling classes often spoke a different language from the mass of the population, while the Church was an international institution and employed an international language.

There were of course ‘national’ wars in which the religious element was absent, or not very obvious. We may instance the struggle of the Welsh against the Normans in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and that of the Scots against Edward I. But these were wars of conquest, involving a large amount of dispossession and spoliation; and the principle which animated the defenders may fairly be regarded as patriotism rather than nationalism.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we hear of some movements which seem to have been of a more truly national character. We may refer to the struggles of the Czechs during the Hussite period, and possibly to the war of independence in the Netherlands. But in both these cases the religious stimulus was probably the dominant force. On the other hand, the Swedish war of independence in the fifteenth century seems to have been due in the first case to misgovernment and spoliation by the Danish viceroys; and the movement for separation began in the industrial districts, among mine-owners and miners. Probably therefore this movement ought to be described as patriotic rather than national. The same is true of the contemporary but unsuccessful movements for separation in Norway; and perhaps the war of independence in the Netherlands should be regarded in the same light.

The reason why one cannot speak more positively is that in the times which we have just been reviewing, and indeed down to the eighteenth century, nationalism can seldom be clearly distinguished from patriotism. The separatist movements and wars of independence of which we hear were almost always due to oppression and spoliation or extortion, which was very frequently combined with religious persecution. Those who strove to liberate their countries from alien oppression must be described as patriots. But a ‘national idea’, as distinct from patriotism, is hardly to be distinguished, except as a reminiscence of loyalty to a native ruler or royal family in the past: for the kingdoms and peoples of the Continent—apart from the Netherlands—were still regarded as the property of their rulers. It

is apparently not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that we find this feeling or tradition of loyalty transferred from the ruler to the people itself—a change presumably connected in some way with the currents of thought which led to the Revolution in France. From this time onwards we may note the appearance of a feeling for nationality which differs somewhat from patriotism, and which does not necessarily require any cruel alien oppression or religious persecution to stimulate its growth.

It was in Austria, the hereditary dominion of the Hapsburgs, that modern nationalism seems first to have shown itself. In the sixteenth, and especially the seventeenth, centuries the Hapsburgs were responsible for more religious persecution than any other Christian dynasty of which we have record. As a result of this the Reformed religion was almost entirely destroyed, except in Hungary, the greater part of which was then under Turkish rule. The rigour of the persecution was somewhat modified after 1705; but it continued until 1781. In this year the traditional policy of the dynasty was completely reversed by the Emperor Joseph II, who was a free-thinker and zealous for reform in all directions, though, like other monarchs of his time, he regarded himself as alone entitled to decide—by decree—what changes were desirable. He abolished serfdom and other forms of oppression, and reformed the administration; he greatly reduced the number of religious establishments, but founded many new schools. In general his reforms were widely appreciated everywhere; but in the non-German parts of his dominions—in Hungary most of all—he aroused a storm of opposition by trying to enforce the use of German universally as the official language and the language of education.

This then was the period and these the conditions which produced modern nationalism. There was no question of religious persecution or of oppression in general. Freedom prevailed to an extent unprecedented in Austrian history—intellectually as well as in other respects. To most of the various peoples included in the Austrian dominions the next few years brought the birth or the revival of their native literatures. But Joseph's policy of enforcing the use of the German language—which has made him a hero to German nationalists—largely vitiated the effect of the benefits which he had conferred upon his dominions in general.<sup>1</sup> More especially was this the case

<sup>1</sup> His policy, however, seems not to have been entirely consistent. Owing to the opposition which he encountered from the Magyars, he is said to have encouraged separatist movements in Hungary. In particular, he founded schools for the Serbians in that country.

in Hungary, which had now recovered from its prostration in the Turkish period, but which he refused to recognise as a separate kingdom. It is true that he realised his mistake before his death in 1790. The obnoxious decrees were revoked; and Hungarian was established as the language of education, and Latin restored as the official language. A few years later, however, a new period of reactionary government began; and most of Joseph's reforms were abolished. For more than half a century the new nationalism had to limit its activities more or less to literature.<sup>1</sup> But the movement had struck roots in all parts of the Austrian empire; and when—from 1848 onwards—opportunities occurred again, it led to political developments everywhere.

The constitutional movement in Poland, followed by the unsuccessful resistance to the Prussian and Russian armies, was contemporary with the reforms of Joseph II. The constitution was proclaimed in 1791. But this was primarily a patriotic, rather than nationalistic, movement. It was designed to save the country from further partitions similar to that of 1772, though in fact it precipitated these disasters. In later times, however, the patriotic movement assumed a nationalistic character, especially in Austria (Galicia), where the situation was complicated by the existence of a Ruthenian minority.

In the Balkans also nationalism was originally an outgrowth from patriotism, which was largely affected by the conflict between Islam and Orthodox Christianity. The Serbian war of independence—from 1804 onwards—was primarily a patriotic movement. Many of the leaders, including Kara-Gjorgje himself, had assisted the Austrians in their abortive invasion of the country in 1788; and now, when they saw that no more help was to be obtained from that quarter, they undertook the work of liberation by themselves. The Greek war of independence, which began in 1821, was likewise due to patriotic feeling. And in principle the same may be said of the contemporary movements in Rumania, though here the conditions were more complicated.

In the period of liberation nationalism, as distinct from patriotism, was more prominent in literature than in actual politics, though outside Greece resentment was felt at the ecclesiastical privileges enjoyed by Greeks, and in Rumania at their appointment as

<sup>1</sup> Great encouragement was given to the national aspirations of the Croats and Slovenians in 1809, when their lands were annexed by Napoleon; for their languages came to be used officially and in schools. These privileges were abolished after Napoleon's fall; but they had an important influence upon subsequent history.

governors and officials. But the feeling for nationality gradually acquired strength, and in the latter part of the century it had become the most potent political force in the whole peninsula. It was believed that the Turkish empire in Europe was about to collapse; and each of the new states cherished claims to the heritage, which were in some areas irreconcilable. Indeed, the national movement had in view the political union of all the territories occupied by each of the nationalities, whether they were independent or subject to Turkey, Austria, Hungary or Russia—an object which was in large measure realised by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

In Italy the national movement followed a course which was in general somewhat similar to what we have noticed in the Balkans. Down to last century the country was divided among a considerable number of independent states, the ruling families of which were mostly of French or Austrian origin; Lombardy and (after 1815) Venetia belonged to Austria. Napoleon's campaigns transformed the country for a time and—though they impoverished it—introduced new ideas. But after his fall the previous conditions were restored, and a period of reaction and despotic government set in. A patriotic movement soon arose, which aimed primarily at the expulsion of the Austrians; but before long this developed into a movement for national unification. At first a federation was thought of; and in 1847 forms of constitutional government were established in most of the states. But this was followed by a series of abortive revolutions; and eventually it was decided to attempt the unification of the whole country under the king of Sardinia, who ruled Piedmont, and whose family was the only dynasty of native Italian origin. In 1859, by means of an alliance with France, the Sardinians expelled the Austrians from Lombardy—though not until 1867 from Venetia—and the rulers of all the other states were dispossessed by revolution. The final step was the occupation of Rome in 1870.

The national movement, however, was not satisfied with the unification of the peninsula. It was continued primarily with the object of liberating the remaining districts in Austria in which Italian was spoken, i.e. the Trentino (in South Tyrol) and certain districts on the Adriatic coast. But in course of time the nationalists began to cherish more ambitious designs and to include in their programme of annexations any region which it might be desirable to possess for strategic reasons or as a field for colonisation, whether it contained any Italian population or not. The first annexations carried out within the Mediterranean area were those of Tripoli with Cyrenaica, and Rhodes and the neighbouring islands, which

were seized from Turkey in 1911–12. In 1915, when Italy entered the war against Germany and Austria, maps were issued, showing claims to large tracts of Austrian territory, in which the population was wholly German or Slovenian or Serbo-Croatian; and a very large proportion of these territories was in fact acquired by Italy at the Treaty of Versailles.

It will be seen then that in the history of Italian nationalism three phases may be distinguished—which we may call the phases of liberation, of unification and of aggression. The two first have been observed also in the Balkans; but in Italy the sequence was more rapid, and they overlapped to a considerable extent. It may be noted that since the beginning of the third phase—which followed the others after some interval—Italy has always been the chief enemy of the Yugoslavs and Greeks. Necessarily so, for their own unification is an obstacle to Italian schemes of annexation.

The national movement in Germany seems to have originated about the same time as that in Italy and under similar conditions. The two movements indeed had much in common, and were probably not unconnected. But the German movement had a more complicated history; and consideration of it must be deferred until a later chapter. The chief dates, however, may be mentioned here. The rise of national feeling took place during the war of liberation, which ended in 1813–14 with the overthrow of Napoleon. The first step towards national unification was the establishment of the German Confederation (with its Diet at Frankfort) in 1815. The next generation saw the growth of the Customs Union; the North German Confederation was established in 1866–7, the German Empire in 1871. The movement towards national aggression seems to have shown itself first in the eighties, unless we apply this term to the annexations of Sleswick-Holstein (1866) and Alsace-Lorraine (1871).<sup>1</sup> The movement acquired considerable strength by the foundation of the Pan-German League in 1894.

The case of Alsace-Lorraine is peculiar; it seems to be the only instance in Europe of national feeling moving in opposition to language. The provinces had belonged to the Empire down to the

<sup>1</sup> In both cases the majority of the population were German. But the former desired separation from Denmark and incorporation in Germany, whereas the latter did not desire separation from France. In both annexations the guiding force was Bismarck's policy for the aggrandisement of Prussia. The northern duchies were annexed to Prussia against their wishes. The western provinces were not annexed to Prussia, but placed under the personal authority of the emperor, who was king of Prussia. The influence of the national movement, however, is no doubt to be traced later, when large numbers of settlers were introduced from beyond the Rhine.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-64287-4 - The Nationalities of Europe and the Growth of National Ideologies

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seventeenth century, when they were conquered by the French, for the most part during the Thirty Years' War (before 1648); and the great majority of the population still speak German. But the feeling has for a long time been French. I am not clear to what extent the annexation was prompted by German national feeling; but it certainly gave rise to a great movement of French national—or rather patriotic—feeling, both in the provinces themselves and in the rest of France. The situation which resulted from it may be described as a festering sore in the body of Europe.

Elsewhere in France there are several minorities with distinct languages of their own. Most, if not all, of these have a national consciousness, which shows itself in literary and antiquarian interests; but there are no separatist tendencies. In this respect the Basque and Provençal districts in the south show a remarkable contrast with the adjacent districts in Spain, as we shall see in the next chapter. In Brittany the Germans attempted to start a separatist (Celtic) movement in 1940; but the attempt seems to have proved a complete failure.

In these islands the history of national movements has been rather complicated. The Scottish National movement arose out of the negotiations for the Act of Union in 1702–7. The Scottish Parliament approved of the Union in principle, but objected to the actual terms, which practically robbed the country of its independence. In general the object of the movement has been to get these terms revised.

In this case, as we have noted, no question of a difference of language is involved. But the presence of a disaffected (Gaelic) element in the Highlands was no doubt a source of weakness to the Scottish cause. On the other hand, this element itself was actuated by dynastic, rather than consciously national, feeling. After 1745, however, the conditions changed. A Gaelic movement began to develop; but it was of the academic type, and limited to educational, literary and antiquarian activities. It seems to have shown no separatist tendencies.

In Ireland the national movement was in its earlier stages more of a patriotic character—due to misgovernment—than national in the strict sense. It is true that there had always been more or less hostility between the Irish and the English. But from the time of the Reformation this had been centred in religion; for the great majority of the Irish remained Catholics, and as such were placed under various disabilities. In 1782 the Irish Parliament, which was Protestant, acquired independence and proceeded to remove these

disabilities; but the Crown intervened. This brought about a rebellion in 1798, which was punished with inexcusable severity. The Act of Union (1800) and the land-laws introduced new troubles, though the Emancipation of Catholics was passed by the British Parliament in 1829. A futile attempt at rebellion in 1848 led to the formation of plans, chiefly among the Irish who had emigrated to America, for the complete independence of Ireland. This movement resulted in the foundation, about 1858, of the 'Fenian Brotherhood', which derived its name from a military organisation of ancient Ireland—an indication that the objective was not the reform of abuses, but the recognition of a separate nationality. The movement, however, did not meet with much success at this time; and for the next half-century the Irish party, though they adopted the term 'Nationalist' about 1880, continued to press by constitutional means for the repeal of the Union and the reform of the land-laws. Then, in 1905, the movement for complete independence was revived by a new party, the Sinn Fein (i.e. 'We ourselves'), which after a time deprived the old Parliamentary party of nearly all its supporters, and eventually obtained the practical independence of the country by treaty in 1921. It was only this last movement which included in its policy the restoration of the Gaelic language, and thus brought the Irish movement into line with the national movements on the Continent. On the other hand, there seems never to have been any attempt to combine with the Gaelic-speaking inhabitants of western Scotland.

The Irish national (Sinn Fein) movement has a special interest attached to it by the fact that the language with which it is bound up is now spoken only by a small minority of the people.<sup>1</sup> It is as the language of Ireland in the past that it forms the backbone of Irish nationality. In this respect it may be compared with Hebrew in relation to the Jews. But the analogy must not be pressed too far; for Gaelic is not the language of the sacred books, whereas Hebrew lost its local connections long ago.

In Wales the national movement has always been bound up with the language, which is much more widely spoken than Gaelic (in either Ireland or Scotland). Its activities have been chiefly literary and educational, and include a number of valuable works. Much has been done for music and poetry by the Eisteddfod, which was

<sup>1</sup> Hence there seems to be a tendency in official circles to stress the geographical unity of Ireland, rather than the language, as the basis of Irish nationality. This is an argument of doubtful value when applied to maritime regions. To north-eastern Ireland connections with Britain would appear to be more vital than those with Ireland as a whole.