

HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF EUROPEAN UNITY

(Summary)

The book gives a survey of the political and ideological history of the idea of European unity from the beginning of the 14th century until the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957. It also describes how these ideas influenced such concepts as a democratic constitutional state, human rights and duties, or international law. The book also portrays the emergence of centralized nation states, nationalism, racism and authoritarian socialism, the reasons why totalitarian state organizations (fascism, national socialism, autocratic communism, etc) developed in opposition to democratic, federative state organizations. The differences and the mutual influences of various European state organizational ideas and experiments are also discussed within the framework of an international, comparative research based on a large number of historical documents: projects and essays on European unity, peace plans aimed at a further, peaceful cooperation among people and states, peace treaties, essays criticizing power policies, colonization, exploitation, nationalism, racism and totalitarian states. Descriptions of the most important federal/confederal treaties and constitutions, declarations of human rights and documents of international law are also included in the book.

Concentrating on the history of the idea of European unity the book presents a double-faced cultural heritage which was thriving for power, was expansive and violent but was also lawful and peaceful. The antagonism of these two opposing facets contributed to the complex nature of European social history. Supporters of a European unity were usually part of the tradition of a law abiding and peaceful federal state organization. They represented an opposition to authoritarian, absolutist and totalitarian tendencies of state organization in every period of European social history. While Europe was also characterized by the emergence of nation states, pursuing policies of territorial conquests both on the continent and beyond, the struggle for federalism in Europe demanded a conscious fight for the improvement of the legal principles of the state organization and of international policy. The combat for a European unity played also an important role in a more general struggle toward a peaceful World unity. This long, conscious strive for harmony, peace and social improvement motivated humanist thinkers to modernize their ideas on the principles of a lawful, constitutional federate state organizations, in opposition to the unitary, authoritarian and centralizing tendencies of nation states. Thus developed the principles of a democratic, legal state organization.

The book contains of twelve chapters that, from the beginning of the 14th century till the establishment of the European Economic Community, discuss various European state organizational experiences both from an ideological and from a practical point of view. The reader can follow the stages of this process, which resulted in the collapse of the feudal society and the emergence of a civil society based on equal civil and human rights and duties.

The introductory, first chapter sketches the antic and medieval roots of the principles of European state organization, touching upon both the positive and the negative aspects of a Christian religious state organization and of the idea of Christian unity.

The second chapter concentrates on the period between the 14th and the 18th centuries. This analysis tries give an answer to the question: why couldn't a European federal union develop in this period? The chapter describes the failure of a European defensive federation against the Ottoman Empire. It also explains why Europe finally disintegrated into a collection of feudal, monarchical nation states and national empires as a result of a feudal rivalry among princes, of territorial conquests, of the emergence of a colonization both inside and outside the continent. The subchapters discuss various projects, essays and treaties, which were written in opposition to these forces; the most important ones were contributed by Grotius, Cruce, Sully, Comenius, Penn, Saint-Pierre, Rousseau and Montesquieu. The chapter also describes how these ideas, which were often opposing one another, influenced the state organizations in Europe and in America. As examples for the fight for independence and for defensive unions the confederation of the Swiss cantons, the constitution of the Dutch federation (Union of Utrecht) and the Constitution of the United States of America are also examined. Finally, the chapter also discusses the French Revolution, which was the most important and also the most controversial event at the end of this period. Indeed, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens in 1789 was created as the new organizational principle of a democratic civil European society. This Declaration was at the basis of the democratic legality in Europe till the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The democratic effects of the French Revolution on social organization is undeniable. However, the Jacobins idea of a democratic, centralized, unitary nation state, in which the French people embodied the sovereign, also started a long, controversial discussion on nation, state and federation in Europe.

The third chapter examines projects which were aimed at the practical implementation of the principles of the American constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens all over Europe. One of the most interesting example was Kant's plan on the "eternal peace". Kant was under the influence of Montesquieu's concept on establishing a federal republic in Europe. The plan of Saint Simon on a European federal union, based on parliamentary democracy, is also analysed. Furthermore, the chapter deals with the influence of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens on Central-Europe and with the problems of the Central-European, reform minded politicians who tried to give their own definitions to the terms "nation", "state" and "federation". The reason why this particular area of Europe was especially problematic was that it was dominated by states with a mixed population. Herder, for example, developed the notion of a "cultural nation" while Fichte tried to interpret a nation as an "imagined community".

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters discuss the federalist and anti-federalist ideas and the practices of state organization in the age of nation states. Because the French Revolution did not succeed in creating a European United States, the European states remained uncoordinated in their fights for modernization and against the conservative forces that wanted to restore the old world. Only Switzerland succeeded in establishing a federal constitution based on a Swiss law, following the example of the USA. Elsewhere, the enthusiastic modernization policy often ended, eventually, in the impasse of nationalism and communism. These phenomena resulted in the emergence of centralized states. Nationalism became an obstacle of social reforms and of the democratisation of states. These chapters show how European thinkers began to analyse the phenomenon of nationalism and the reasons of the failure of federalism. Tocqueville, for example, compared the American and the European histories of state organization and concluded his work with a fierce defence of European federalism. Mazzini's New Europe Movement concentrated on the democratisation of single nation states and it also started a discussion on the role of democratic unitary nation states in a European integration process. Bakunin, Proudhon and Lord Acton opposed Mazzini as a nationalist; they insisted on the free and federal principles of state organization.

Transplanting the idea of a Western nation state into the multinational Habsburg Empire was a problem for the democratic, reformist politicians in the area. The challenge was to interpret the phenomenon of a national state in the case of a multinational state with a mixed population. Supporters of federalism, like for example List, Palacky, Eötvös, Renner and Naumann, wanted to reconstruct the multinational Habsburg Empire in harmony with the ideas of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens, but they had to face this challenge. As a solution Eötvös, and later Renner, put forward the "personal principle" (the civil and human rights and duties belong to the citizens) and a federalism based on the principle of local autonomy (federalism from below). The Hungarian Nationality Law of 1868 also enlarged the Western concept of human rights with minority rights. Unfortunately, with the lack of a real democratic environment, these remedies were not effective enough and nationalism could eventually prevail. Policy became the servant of the interests of the dominating groups while people were misled by a nationalist propaganda. Thus, fight against nationalism became the precondition for a democratic development in Central-Europe.

The seventh chapter deals with the importance of the ideological and diplomatic revolution, which developed as a result of the trauma of the First World War. It presents the competition between Wilson and Lenin for the support of people worldwide. Both of them proposed to reconstruct the world by means of new diplomatic organizational principles: national self-determination and popular sovereignty. Wilson outlined the framework of a world organization (the League of Nations) as an international coordinator of state policies. The European federation should have become a regional organization within the League of Nations. In contrast, Lenin, and later Stalin, proposed the internationalism of authoritarian communist states. Finally, the chapter also treats the reasons and the consequences of the failure of the Wilsonian diplomacy as well as the merits and the failures of the League of Nations. The Covenant of the League was, indeed, the first constitution of an international legal order. However, the survival of the feudal-monarchical diplomatic principles, the vague character of the idea of national self-determination, which lacked the precise definition of a nation, the lack of democratic states, etc, all contributed to the catastrophic evolution which followed the collapse of the three authoritarian empires.

The eighth chapter of the book presents the ideas of a number of European federalist thinkers who, in the aftermath of the First World War and under the influence of the new peace system, developed new ideas on a European federation. The chapter concentrates on the program of the Pan-European Movement and on the ideas of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, who became the ideological leader of the European democratic federalists. The supporters of the Pan-European movement, with its centre in Vienna, continued the work of the federalist thinkers of the former Habsburg Empire. They adopted the personal principle, the regionalist way of economic and cultural organization. They wanted to rescue Europe from the catastrophic political effects of the new European system of nation states. Hodza, the Hungarian Auer and Hantos, or the representatives of the Central-European federalist emigrants' circles who lived in emigration after the First World War and fought for a Danubian federation, all belonged to the follow-

ers of this movement. The Pan-European Movement could also count on the support of important politicians like, for example, Stresemann, Sforza, Renner, Herriott, Briand, Adenauer or Tardieu. The most important achievement of the European federalists was Briand's movement for the establishment of the European United States. This chapter also presents Briand's ideas and his fight for a European federation and examines the reasons of his failure.

The ninth chapter tries to find an explanation for the unsuccessfulness of the Movement of European federalists. Why couldn't people support European federalism between the two wars? Why did they choose for the support of authoritarian nationalist and communist leaders and, often, for totalitarian regimes? This chapter examines the differences among various state organizational principles of the time, among fascist and national socialist regimes and of totalitarian communist systems. It also deals with the falsification of the idea of democratic federalism by fascism, by national socialism and by bolshevism. The personalities and the ideas of Coudenhove-Kalergi and Ortega y Gasset play a central role here; they were among the most important representatives of European federalism. The ideas of the socialist representatives of the antifascist resistance movements are also discussed. During the Second World War the idea of European unity revived; many democratic federalist projects were presented in antifascist circles and movements, aiming at the reconstruction of Europe after the war. Thinkers and activists of the resistance movements were, in most cases, in favour of the emergence of a democratic European Federation once the war was over.

The tenth chapter deals with the history of the democratic European movement after the Second World War. With a continent in ruins, it was again the idea of European unity that showed the way out of the destructions of nationalism. But, after a short period of enthusiasm for federalism, the former nation states' system revived. The continent became divided into a Western Block under American influence and a Communist Block under the leadership of the Soviet Union. However, the democratic federalists, among them Coudenhove-Kalergi, Adenauer, Monnet, Schuman, or Spaak continued their combat for a European federation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the establishment of the United Nations contributed to the success of their fight for the European Council. The establishment of this European Council was the first step on the way of a democratic association policy in Europe. Due to political circumstances it was the idea of functional federalism that finally helped to start the European economic integration process. Six Western nation states could continue the traditions of the economic cooperation that developed within the framework of the International Steel Cartel and they accepted federalist institutions for the economic organization. With the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 the European integration process could start. In 1957 the six Western states succeeded in the creation of the European Economic Community. Centuries old ideas on a peaceful cooperation among the European states began to become reality due to the gradual emergence of a European law, the basic principles which were laid down in the treaties of the European integration. The presence of the autocratic Communist Block in the East and the Cold War deformed the dreams of European federalists for the profit of the inter-governmentalists. However, after the collapse of the Communist Block in 1989 the problem of the ideological and economic unification of the continent became a new challenge for state organization and international policy.

The eleventh chapter presents how three Hungarian democratic and federalist thinkers interpreted the Western ideas and practices on the organization of states and on European federation. These thinkers were József Eötvös (1813-1871), Oszkár Jászi (1875-1957) and István Bibó (1911-1979). They represented three different periods of history. Eötvös was one of the most important thinkers of the Reform period and the so-called Compromise-period in Austria-Hungary, Jászi was active primarily in the first half of the 20th century, while Bibó played an analogous role after the Second World War period and during the Soviet supremacy. Their ideas on nation, state and federation in Central-Europe, and in Europe in general, are presented and compared with their major Western and Central-European counterparts.

The twelfth chapter concludes the book with a large bibliography.

In conclusion, the goal of this book is to get the reader acquainted with the long European tradition of ideas on the creation of peaceful, free and lawful state organizations and international policies, in contrast to the autocratic and totalitarian tendencies. This fight for the humanization of power in Europe, and all over the World, succeeded in the development and the reinforcement of democratic rules in constitutional state organizations. It also resulted in the development of human rights and of international law, and it can be hoped that the emergence of a European law will have a positive influence on the state organizations in other areas of the World, too. New generations have to continue their fights for the establishment of a democratic international community of states if they want to avoid the tragic impasses of nationalist nation states. I hope this book can be of help.

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