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Visions of a United Europe

Novalis, Eméric Crucé, Victor Hugo, and Rudolf von Habsburg

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While Napoleon was ravaging the European continent, Novalis expressed his chiliastic vision of a united Europe in his fragment, “Die Christenheit oder Europa” (1799), in which he poeticizes the unifying function of Catholicism and the supreme power embodied by the figure of the Pope. He saw the Old Europe, the feudal system, and the hierarchy of the Church as a system of reciprocally supportive and protective relationships. The unity of the one and universal Church in his view was disrupted by Luther and the Reformation, responsible for the fragmentation of religious belief and the imposition of religious affiliation by the ruling princes (Johnston 13: “cuius regio, eius religio”). He saw Luther as a philologist introducing rationalism into matters of faith, an event compounded by the philosophy of the Encyclopédistes, the French rationalists and the proponents of Deism: “. . . the unifying religious faith was undermined by skepticism, materialism, and atheism . . .” (Stribakos 2091). Control and dissemination of knowledge, formerly the domain of the Church, became increasingly secularized, and science supplanted miracles. The princes took advantage of the split in the church to increase their territories and power, undermining the cosmopolitan interests of Catholicism, engaging in wars of religion, like the Thirty-Years War. Novalis is highly critical of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which perpetuated Protestantism: “Der Religionsfriede ward nach ganz fehlerhaften und religionswidrigen Grundsätzen abgeschlossen, und durch die Fortsetzung des sogenannten Protestantismus etwas durchaus Widersprechendes -- eine Revolutionsregierung permanent erklärt” (Novalis

167). In the conclusion of his essay, he proposes a revolution that would reverse the historical process and bring about a renewal of faith and the establishment of a religious state. The new Christianity about to be born, he believed, would engender a moral and spiritual renewal of Europe (Stribakos 2091).

Though a “hagiographic treatment of the Middle Ages” (Steinhäuser-Carvill 73) and a metaphoric interpretation of history as “divine revelation” (73), the essay by Novalis points beyond itself not only in terms of a utopian future, but also to historic fact.¹ It is an erudite presentation of intellectual and cultural history that operates on allusion and conjures up a political reality of both past and present that remains unstated. It evokes the memory of the grandeur of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (which some believe to have been neither Holy nor Roman nor German) under Charlemagne, who derived his power from the Pope, as did the Emperors who succeeded him. The history of the Carolingian Empire, however, is one of disintegration almost from its inception. While Charlemagne succeeded in unifying and Christianizing the Germanic tribes, his Empire was partitioned at the death of his successor, Louis the Pious,² whose sons rebelled against their father and undermined the authority of the central power. With the Strasbourg Oaths in 842, the cultural division between the eastern and the western part of the Empire became apparent. From the division of the Empire among the grandsons of Charlemagne emerged Germany, France, and Alsace-Lorraine. Because of disputes, wars, and dissension between Ludwig and his brother Karl, their power was fragmented, resulting in territorialism of the margraves and tribal dukes (Kelling 49-50). By the time the Saxon Emperors succeeded the Carolingians in 919, the territories east of the Rhine and west of the Rhine had become independent of each other. Under the Frankish Saliers (1024-1125), the mutually supportive relationship of the

Emperors and the Pope was undermined by the quarrels over investiture in the wake of the Cluny Reform Movement, which tried to separate the powers of Church and State. While the Merovingians and Carolingians had appointed priests and bishops as administrators and princes, in order to be assured of their loyalty to the Crown, Gregor VII decreed (in 1075) that bishops and abbots were to be appointed only by the Church. Because the Pope dethroned the bishops appointed by the Emperor Henry IV (1056-1106), war and strife resulted, which lasted for decades. In the end, the alliance between the Emperor and the Pope was destroyed, particularism triumphed, and the Emperor became a mere symbol (Kelling 50-51).

Eméric Crucé, a Parisian monk, who wrote during the Thirty-Years War (1618-1648) comments on the decline of the Holy Roman Empire from the French perspective: “. . . Charlemagne’s race degenerated and France was divided up by ambitious governors. Taking advantage of the simple-mindedness of their masters, they seized control of their provinces. At the same time, some of the Italian lords . . . formed cantons and appropriated the territories where they had been in command. In later years others followed their example and did the same thing in defiance of the emperors, to their great loss” (*The New Cineas* 67). In Goethe’s *Faust*, written between 1773/75 and 1831, the students drinking and carousing in Auerbach’s Keller in Leipzig satirize the disintegration of the Empire: “Das liebe Heil’ge Röm’sche Reich, / Wie hält’s nur noch zusammen?” (*Faust* 60) With mock disgust at this political song, one of the students suggests to elect a ruler: “Doch muß auch uns ein Oberhaupt nicht fehlen; / Wir müssen einen Papst erwählen: / Ihr wißt, welche Qualität / Den Ausschlag gibt, den Mann erhöht” (61). Goethe experienced the Napoleonic Wars and saw the end of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806. There had been no strong central power since the Interregnum, a time of

internal wars and outside interference in German affairs, especially by the kings of France (Kelling 52). The Treaty of Westphalia, which in 1648 had ended the Thirty-Years War further contributed to the dissolution of the Empire by legalizing its demise: Germany was divided into 350 independent states entitled to make treaties and form domestic and foreign alliances. Germany lost large areas of Alsace and Lorraine to France, and French culture and politics became dominant in Europe. Louis XIV became the model for absolutism, emulated by the German princes, who usurped all power for themselves (Kelling 91).

When Eméric Crucé wrote *The New Cineas* in 1623, he feared that France might enter the religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants. He correctly saw that religious differences, however, served only as a pretext for war and factionalism (Farrell vii). France entered the war in 1635 on the side of the Protestants, because it wanted to contain the power of Spain and the German Empire. At a time when Gustavus Adolphus had fallen, Wallenstein had been murdered and the Emperor had granted Lutherans freedom of religion, the war could have been ended, but France declared war on Spain, occupied the Alsace and other regions on the Rhine, and joined the Swedes in devastating Bavaria. This prolonged the war in Southern Germany and Bohemia for another 13 years. War-like conditions continued while peace negotiations dragged on for five years and tens of thousands died of hunger, epidemics, or battle injuries (Kelling 89). Crucé lived to see France enter the war and died in the year the Westphalian Treaty was signed (1648). His book, which proposes a comprehensive plan for peace, is originally titled, *Le Nouveau Cynéé ou Discours d'Estat. Représantant les occasions et moyens d'establir une paix général, et la liberté du commerce par tout le monde*. It is dedicated to the monarchs and sovereign princes of his time, but could be addressed to the leaders of modern nations and is as relevant today as it was in his time.

After 200 years of relative obscurity, Crucé's work, which concerns major political, social, and economic issues of his time, was rediscovered by an anonymous writer for the *Magasin pittoresque* in 1839. In an article about celebrated Utopians, he is credited for "a hypothetical future of peace, order, and happiness of Nations" (Farrell xvi). While neither the Treaty of Westphalia in Crucé's time, nor the Congress of Vienna preceding the publication of that article had secured a lasting peace in Europe, Crucé foresaw a world order based on free trade and religious freedom (xvii), in which peace was maintained by a world-wide organization (viii). Every independent government would join and have representation in a permanent organization that would immediately address disputes or disagreements, imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions if necessary. Armed intervention was to be used only if all other measures failed (viii). He favored the abolition of duties, except for a moderate tax, so that commerce could increase and every state would have sufficient goods and a stable revenue (x). Crucé expected that world peace could be accomplished by global thinking and the belief in a common humanity (xi). Since the death of Henry IV, who (with his minister Sully) wanted to create a balance of power in Europe through military victories, rumors of a grand design for world peace had circulated (xiv). Crucé articulated such a plan at a time of domestic unrest, in face of an imminent war which could involve France in the religious and territorial struggles on the Eastern side of the Rhine, devastating the entire European continent. He was not, however, motivated by French nationalism, like Petrus de Bosco (Pierre Dubois) who formulated a plan for a lasting peace in 1305 in an effort to unite Christian rulers against the Moslems. In conceiving his idea of international arbitration and a council of world rulers to form an international court of arbitration (xii), Bosco "valued power for France, national

sovereignty above international goals, and control by threat of excommunication rather than by diplomacy” (xii).

Many of Crucé’s ideas have come close to realization. Although perpetual peace is still a utopian idea, the European Economic Community was established as the precursor to the United Europe, which will have a common currency and duty-free borders to encourage free trade among its member nations. Ideally, it aims at an equilibrium of power and wealth and a democratic form of government to assure personal and political freedom and cooperation. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations have been given the task of maintaining peace on the European Continent and among the nations of the world and have the power to intervene by force, if necessary, as we saw recently in Kosovo (and before that in Bosnia). On June 11, 1999, Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State, commented on the resolution of the conflict in Yugoslavia, indicating that the integration of Europe is a matter of war and peace. For Eméric Crucé, as for Novalis, universal peace is linked to faith and religion, morality, and truth (3). “Our first task,” Crucé indicates, “must be to uproot inhumanity, the most rampant of all vices and the source of all the others” (1). Moral outrage at “ethnic cleansing” (the killing and displacement of Albanians by Serb soldiers) was the motivation for NATO and the US in Operation Allied Force during the 79 days of aerial bombing in Belgrade and for intervening in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia. The conflicts sparked in that area of the world originate from ethnic and religious differences which are hundreds of years old and date back to the days of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish invasions of Europe. They are fueled by the desire to regain hegemony in lost territories and are fed by nationalisms and racial hatreds which obstruct world peace in an attempt to recreate the Empires of the past. According to Crucé, the Christians and Muslims have divided the world, and “if they could

come to an agreement, it would be a great step forward in the cause of universal peace” (15). Karl Martell (714-741), who defeated the Moors in 732 at Tours and Poitiers, prevented the spread of Islam beyond the Pyrenees and is considered the saviour of the Christian Occident. While Islam united the tribes of North Africa and spread in the course of a century to Syria, Persia, Spain (the kingdom of the Visigoths), Egypt, and the valley of the Nile, Charlemagne christianized the tribes of his empire, which reached from the Saxon Mark bordering Denmark to the Lombard Kingdom in the South, and from the Pyrenees to Thuringia and the Ostmark into the Pannonian Plain (Magocsi 10). Charlemagne’s empire was multi-racial and multi-ethnic, including not only the Germanic tribes but also Romans, Basques, Celts, and Slavs, often opposing nationalities accustomed to self-determination, which led to many internal conflicts from the 9th to the 13th century (Kelling 49), some of which continue to this day. After the Interregnum, the House of Luxembourg ruled the Empire for almost a hundred years (1347-1437), and from 1438-1806 the Austrian dynasty of the Habsburgs (52).

The French Romantic writer Victor Hugo formulated his ideas about a federation of European states and later a United States of Europe between 1827 and 1849. In 1827, he responded to a diplomatic incident when, during a reception at the Austrian embassy, four marshals of the Empire were not announced by their ducal titles. This action was construed as an insult to the glory of France’s imperial past, and Hugo wrote an ode, “A la colonne de la place Vendôme,” glorifying Napoleon and equating his legacy with that of Charlemagne. By doing so, Hugo evoked “the dream of French empire, a preliminary form of the idea that would later become the United States of Europe” (Metzidakis 73).

The idea of a federation of European states was not entirely new, predating the nineteenth century, but it was gaining in popularity after the failed revolutions of 1848 and was discussed at the various peace congresses during the latter half of the nineteenth century (72). As Chair of the Paris Peace Conference in 1849, Hugo expressed his views on the United States of Europe before an international audience. One finds echoes of Petrus de Bosco and Eméric Crucé in his speech envisioning a day when battles between nations will be replaced by commerce and free ideas, when bullets and bombs will be replaced by universal suffrage and the arbitration of a sovereign Senate (72). On this occasion, Hugo announced that a day would come when war would seem absurd between Paris and London, between Petersburg and Berlin, between Vienna and Turin . . . , where the nations of the continent would be united without losing their distinct individuality and form a European brotherhood (72). He foresaw the creation of the United States of Europe, “whose commercial and cultural ties with the United States of America would influence the entire world” (72).

In 1842, nearly 30 years before the Franco-Prussian War, Victor Hugo had proposed an alliance of France with Germany (i.e., Prussia) and peaceful coexistence of the two empires (in *Le Rhin, lettres à un ami*), in spite of the fact that the French government favored a Franco-British entente (76). After two world wars in this century, France, England, and Germany stand united in the New Europe, taking a leadership position in securing peace. In the 19th Century, Victor Hugo favored a Greater Germany under Prussian rule to the detriment of Austria. In the conclusion of *Le Rhin* (1842), Victor Hugo “views Europe in terms of a balance of power” (76) east and west of the Rhine. A year later, he favored an international union, a United Europe with French leadership. His views evolved with changing political conditions at home and abroad. As a member of

France's Legislative Assembly in the 1840's and Chair of the Paris Peace Conference in 1849, Victor Hugo declared his position at different times. His idea of the United States of Europe is politically motivated and is related to the growth of his republican beliefs (78). He was also inspired by events in the Americas, where Simon Bolivar had proposed a "holy alliance of nations" at the Pan-American congress in Panama in the mid-1820's "to oppose the despotic policies of European monarchies in the New World" (74). Hugo popularized the idea of a United States of Europe, and his Paris speech has been much quoted in international congresses and peace conferences: 1) in Geneva in 1867, where the International League for Peace and Freedom was established, whose journal *Les Etats-Unis d'Europe* was published in Bern until 1922 and in Paris from 1922 until 1938; 2) at the second Pan-American Congress in 1930; 3) by Sir Winston Churchill in a speech at Zurich University, where he recommended building a "kind of United States of Europe" (83). Hugo's ideas are now being realized. Since the end of World War II, a new Europe has emerged as a result of the Treaty of Rome (1957), which established the original European Economic Community; the 1965 Brussels Treaty, which approved formation of the Commission of European Communities -- the EC -- in 1967; and the Single European Act of 1986, which set 1992 as a target date for a "Europe without frontiers" (81). The emerging New Europe is an alliance of democratic nations with self-government and independent political identities, while Hugo, writing after the Napoleonic Wars, proposed a United Europe under French rule or an alliance of France and Prussia to contain the power of Austria.

When the Holy Roman Empire ended in 1806, the Habsburg ruler Francis I (r. 1804-35) declared himself "Emperor of Austria," a title which became hereditary among his successors (Magocsi 73). Between 1867 and 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire included Cis-Leithania and Trans-Leithania: the three

kingdoms Bohemia, Dalmatia, and Galicia-Lodomeria; two archduchies: Lower Austria and Upper Austria; six duchies: Bukovina, Carinthia, Carniola, Salzburg, Silesia, Styria; two margraviates: Istria, Moravia; three counties: Gorizia-Gradisca, Tyrol, Vorarlberg; and one town: Trieste. Austria was joined with Hungary in the dual monarchy after the compromise of 1867, and the Austrian Emperor was crowned King of Hungary. Both states had common ministries of foreign affairs, war, and finance, but separate parliaments in Vienna and Budapest (80). The Habsburg Emperor Franz Josef ruled in conservative fashion over Austria-Hungary from 1848-1916. His death saved him from witnessing the collapse of his Empire at the end of World War I, which might have been averted if he had considered the political ideas of his son.

Crown Prince Rudolf might have been able to accomplish a United Europe under Habsburg rule, had his life not been cut short by his premature suicide in 1889. As a representative of liberalism and democracy, who espoused the rights of the minorities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and opposed nationalism and anti-semitism, he stood in opposition to the policies of his father and Franz Josef's councillors. Rudolf would have forged alliances with France, England, and Russia rather than Germany and Bismarck and wanted to incorporate Bosnia-Herzegovina into the existing empire as independent states. This would have isolated Germany and could have led to a federation of self-determining nations that extended into the Balkans. Actually, he believed that Austria had already achieved a United States of Europe when he said to Georges Clemenceau in December 1886 that under the Habsburgs, Victor Hugo's dream of a United States of Europe had been accomplished in miniature form: "Österreich ist ein Staatenblock verschiedenster Nationen und verschiedenster Rassen unter einheitlicher Führung. Jedenfalls ist das die grundlegende Idee eines Österreich, und es ist eine Idee von ungeheurer Wichtigkeit für die Weltzivilisation" (13).

He admits that conditions were not totally harmonious, but this was temporary, he thought, and did not detract from the idea itself. “Es besagt nur, daß eine solche Idee im liberalsten Sinn Harmonie und Gleichgewicht sichern müßte” (13). To assure such a balance is the task of the New Europe, not as a political entity but as an economic union with humanitarian goals for equality.

Notes

1. Friedrich Hiebel considers this essay meta-historical, although Novalis employs historical facts: “Der Essay . . . schwebt gleichsam in einem übergeschichtlichen Raum, obwohl er sich historischer Fakten und Daten bedient” (288).

2. Eméric Crucé remarks that in ancient times, emperors divided their domains among their closest heirs to avoid quarrels over inheritance of land (69). Louis the Pious brought misfortune upon himself not because he gave too much to his children; Crucé considers the causes for rebellion against him “the little ability that he showed in worldly affairs, the cruel manner in which he treated his nephew Bernard, King of Italy, and the other lords who had attended him, the affection that he lavished on his last son to the neglect of those of his first marriage, and the arrogance of his second wife who disposed of both king and kingdom as she pleased” (70).

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