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FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO NATIONAL SOCIALISM

The paper criticizes a commonly held misconception of Prussia's especially villainous role in the development and dissemination of nationalism — one of the most malign and destructive doctrines in modern history. With Prussia no longer in existence, having been annihilated by the Allies in 1947, this misconception has spread even more widely. Relying on analysis of German philosophical systems and literary trends of the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as on the historical concepts of nationalism, this paper reveals the origins of the myth of the Prussian nationalism and outlines the main features of the Prussian state. Prussian efficiency, which characterized Prussian governance, was one of these important features. This is why Prussia itself needed no additional nationalist props. This distinguished Prussia drastically from the most of the other European countries. The lack of ideology in Prussia was partly compensated by Pietism, a religious system, which fostered the feeling of loyalty in the subjects of the state. Moreover, as Prussia was definitely conservative, it strongly opposed romantic nationalism diffused from revolutionary France. The paper especially emphasizes the fact of the absence of ethnic conflicts in Prussia and the peaceful coexistence of the Prussian colonists and the local population in the other countries. In the end, as the paper demonstrates, nationalism did manage to infiltrate the German political culture. However, Prussia should not be held guilty for that, as German nationalism stemmed from the general trend typical for European mass society at the turn of the twentieth century. Refs 30.

Keywords: German nationalism, history of Prussia, theoretical origins of nationalism, Pietism, the House of Hohenzollern, National Socialism and the Prussian tradition, Europe and nationalism.

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ОТ ПРОСВЕЩЕНИЯ К НАЦИОНАЛ-СОЦИАЛИЗМУ

Статья посвящена критике весьма широко распространенного заблуждения об особой «злодейской» роли Пруссии в возникновении и распространении одной из самых зловредных и катастрофических для современной истории доктрин — национализма. Этому заблуждению во многом способствовало то обстоятельство, что Пруссия как государство было уничтожено в 1947 г. по решению союзников. На основе анализа немецких философских систем XVIII–XIX вв., литературных течений и обзора существующих исторических теорий национализма в статье раскрывается происхождение мифа о прусском национализме, а также выявляются основные отличительные особенности прусского государства. Одной из таких ключевых прус-

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ских черт было то, что прусская государственная система отличалась особой эффективностью. В связи с этим прусское государство не нуждалось в дополнительных «подпорках» национализма, тем самым радикально отличаясь от большинства европейских государств того же времени. Отсутствие идеологии в Пруссии частично компенсировалось и пietизmом — религиозной системой, которая способствовала воспитанию в подданных чувства преданности своему государству. Более того, поскольку государство носило отчетливо консервативный характер, оно противодействовало распространению романтических заблуждений национализма, пришедшего из послереволюционной Франции. В статье особенно подчеркивается, что в Пруссии не было этнических противоречий, а пруссаки-колонисты мирно сосуществовали в других странах с местным населением, включая страны Восточной Европы и Россию. Тем не менее, как показано в статье, инфильтрация национализма в немецкую политическую культуру все же произошла. Теоретические истоки зарождения чуждого Пруссии национализма выявляются в философской системе И. Канта и в развивавшейся в Европе романтической традиции. В конечном счете национализм смог утвердиться в Пруссии, но не по ее вине, а в силу общих тенденций развития массового общества в Европе на пороге XX в. Библиогр. 30 назв.

Ключевые слова: немецкий национализм, история Пруссии, теоретические истоки национализма, пietизм, Гогенцоллерны, национал-социализм и прусская традиция, Европа и национализм.

German nationalism stands out from all the other varieties. Nowadays, German nationalism is generally associated with severe losses of any kind suffered by many countries during both World Wars, resulting from the high efficiency in German government and administration. In their turn, these outstanding features of German governance originated primarily from Prussia, a country, abolished by the Allies in 1946. Therefore, a malign and deceitful German nationalism is similarly alleged to have had the Prussian origins. However, this is not the case, as German nationalism derived against an entirely different background. This paper aims to reveal specific ideological and political (historical) reasons of its development, as well as to find out what relation Prussia (or rather the phenomenon of this extremely effective state) had to this process.

As Eric Hobsbawm jokingly wrote, historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin-addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market. Nations without a past are contradictions in terms [Hobsbawm 2002, p. 332]. However, this past does not always have to be related to the evolution of nationalism. This is what we will try to demonstrate with a relation to the example of Prussia.

Prussia and the ‘theoretical’ origins of nationalism

Prussia was the largest Protestant state on the continent and had a number of remarkable features. Many cultures, including Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox, Muslim ones, tend to preserve certain religious attitudes in the secular form [Burke 2015, p. 46]. Regarding Prussia, such attitudes revealed themselves in the fact that Prussia became the first country in the world, which established a legal state based on a ruthless rationalism. Almost from the very beginning, administrative jurisdiction was clearly regulated there, in contrast to Europe where despotic rule prevailed. As early as in 1794 Frederick the Great ordered to collect all Prussian laws into the sole ‘Prussian Code’; the laws became “obligatory for all members of society irrespective of their estate, rank or sex; every citizen was obliged to demand for protection of his life and assets” [Schoeps 1967, p. 12]. This

code of laws was enacted around the same time as American Constitution of 1787, and the both sets of laws contributed greatly to the advance of civil society and human rights.

Despite its fundamentally conservative orientation, Prussian bureaucracy supported progressive reforms and modernisation. However, Prussia (as well as Germany on the whole) was a relatively backward country for objective reasons, and had not improved until the last third of the 19th century [Nipperdey 1986, p. 48]. Notwithstanding this backwardness, a distinct and well-arranged division of jurisdictions had enabled efficient functioning of the government. It was not corrupt and strictly adhered to established rules — features rarely to be found nowadays and much less so in the past. It is widely known that, guided by hard rationalism, the Prussian authorities were reluctant to give precedence even to one ethnic community over another, as the case with the Polish or other ethnic minorities revealed. The Prussian legal system was among the first ones which adopted the principle of separation of powers. A French political philosopher of the Enlightenment, who coined the key democratic concept of the ‘separation of powers’, Charles-Louis Montesquieu (1689–1755), the author of the classical work *The Spirit of the Laws*, once mentioned that no European monarch had taken pains to read his book except the king of Prussia [Haffner 1980, p. 41].

For its addiction to juridical formalities, Prussia was often called ‘a state without qualities’, which implied that in its pursuit of mere efficiency Prussia lacked affection for the roots and culture that was common to all Germans. This Prussian feature seriously interfered with the process of building the ‘natural’ national identity after German unification in 1871 in the way it happened in the other countries. Unlike France, where national identity dated back to the Great French Revolution, or Britain where national sentiment was rooted in the Glorious Revolution, or the USA with their War for Independence and Civil War, Germany lacked such an episode in its history. Unification of the country did not stem from a democratic revolution (in 1848 the German history had reached its turning point but could not actually turn due to disunity and weakness of democratic forces), but was reached through the efforts of efficient and well-organized governance. A greater triumph of authoritarian rule than the Prussian victory of 1871 can hardly be imagined.

This triumph was distinctively Prussian; it did not belong to Germany: the negative attitude to the Prussians in unified Germany is well known. Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck was a conservative monarchist and a Prussian patriot, therefore German nationalism was utterly antithetical to him. His Germany, established in 1871, was not even a unitary state (which is an essential prerequisite to encouraging nationalism) but a ‘republic of the princes’ consisting of rather independent twenty four monarchs. Bismarck welcomed this dynastic and local diversity and used to stress that “in order to be effective, German patriotism should manifest itself in subjection to the dynasties” [Krokow 1992, p. 216].

No wonder that a contemporary of Bismarck, a political writer and a scholar, Constantin Frantz (1817–1891), who advocated reconstruction of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation as a strong federative state in the Central Europe which could confront Russian Empire, opposed Bismarck’s means of unifying Germany. In his opinion, a really viable and seamless communion of the German states could be brought only by independent and free cooperation of the state-members of such union, rather than by the pressure of Prussian bureaucracy. According to Frantz, Prussia, having been a colonized territory itself, subdued the ancestral German lands in the West by incorporating Rhine-

land and used them as a basis for establishing a ‘Reich’ without any national idea and cultural continuity [Nolte 1995, p. 17]. In order to put emphasis on the national ‘sterility’ of Prussia, Franz used to call Bismarck’s state “Deutsches Reich jüdischer Nationalität”. Indeed, the Jewish contribution to Prussian history and culture can hardly be overestimated: the Prussians had been the first in Europe who emancipated the Jews and were the first who reaped the fruits of this emancipation in science, culture, economics and finance.

In other words, the country, which initiated unification of Germany, was not carrying the virus of nationalism. Yet, ‘theoretically’ nationalism originated from Prussia. It was in Prussia, where the theoretical foundation of nationalism was laid, thus entirely contradicting the logic of Prussian governance, but conforming to the logic of the ideology of Enlightenment. It is tempting to trace how it happened and what intricate dialectic produced this course of events.

The fact is that another remarkable feature of Prussia was the significant role played by the Enlightenment. Odd as it may seem, Prussia became the country with the most elaborated theory of nationalism due to nothing less than this decisive role of the Enlightenment in its history. The first one who opened Pandora’s box and loosed the demon of nationalism was a Prussian liberal and humanistic philosopher, Immanuel Kant.

Kant was the first thinker who understood that the rationalism of the Enlightenment could not prove the existence of freedom and other ideals. The philosopher did find a solution — the one, which demanded new unconditionality. Kant argued that any endeavours to tackle the issues of morality with the methods of natural science would be unproductive. In his opinion, the root of all problems lied in the fact that philosophers tended to treat the issues of morality in the same way as if it were the laws of physics. Morality and freedom definitely existed, they were widely acknowledged and no one doubted them. Difficulties rose from the attempts to transfer unconditionality into consistent logic. To make morality possible meant to make it unconditioned: if it is conditioned, it is not morality. According to Kant, such independence meant freedom in the strict sense of the word. Human beings are free as long as they obey the laws of morality, which they find within themselves and not in the external world. Only when the human will is directed by such inner law, only then might it be free par excellence, only then might good and evil, morality and justice be discussed. Neither external world, nor the will of God can impose moral values. If God’s will lays the foundation for categorical imperative, it will mean that all human action will be dictated from outside, so freedom will disappear and morality will lose its point completely. In the eyes of Kant, existence of God depended on human needs. God was a prerequisite assumed by a person in the process of asserting his moral freedom. In the end, the only solution Kant could see was to perceive God as a human creation [Kedourie 2010, p. 32–33].

Relying upon this logic of Kant, English historian Elie Kedourie concluded that the idea of self-determination, lying at the heart of Kantian ethical theory, has become the key concept in the moral and political discourse of his followers, mainly in Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s thought. According to Fichte, complete self-determination of an individual required national self-determination. Needless to say, Kant cannot be held responsible for that, though it was he who in his pursuit to avoid the evil of despotism, theoretically validated even a greater evil — nationalism [Kedourie 2010, p. 127]. It is notable that Kant could predict the possible evil of the forthcoming revolution earlier than the others, for he had written five years prior to 1789: “Revolution may eliminate personal despotism,

oppression and exploitation, but it never brings a true reform of the state of mind. Instead, the passive crowds just replace the old prejudices for the new ones” [Krockow 1992, p. 337]. However, Kant did not manage to discern another, greater evil.

Apart from that philosophical background, a crucial role was played by the emotional strand of Prussian culture, and that was a feeling of inferiority that it suffered from over the 18th century. By that time, Prussian endeavours had failed to match the achievements of the Italians in the 15 and 16th centuries, of Spain and England in Cervantes’ or Shakespeare’s days, of Holland in the 17th century, and, least of all, the accomplishments of France, who had been a bulwark of European culture. The Prussians did not have anything to challenge its splendour [Berlin, 2002, p. 679]. Yet, Prussia remained a traditional parochial monarchic country, which tried to find an excuse to keep off the foreign influences, to avoid adaptation of alien cultures and attitudes. Most explicitly, these emotions were expressed by Gottfried Herder, a Prussian himself. He valued diversity, differences, and a variety of national ways, while refusing to accept any general standards for development. Meanwhile, it was revolutionary France, which acted on the premise that there were rationally understandable absolute truths. It aimed to constitute (or restore) a steady and harmonious society based on immutable principles and the dream of classic perfection [Berlin 2002, p. 510]. However, the revolution’s failure to attain most of its objectives became evident shortly after, and this fact strongly supported Herder’s criticism.

In his renowned book *Ideas upon Philosophy and the History of Mankind*, Herder argued that if every national culture had and held a right to have its own outlook, if it was impossible to compare properly the values and targets of different societies, — it would mean that there was no universal set of principles and no general truth that might fit all people, at all times, everywhere. Herder dwelt on that subject repeatedly, asserting that a certain culture should not be qualified according to criteria appropriate for another one; that each nation progresses by following its own path and that it is subject to its own conditions. Therefore, to apprehend a nation would mean to penetrate with one’s own imagination into its essence, to see the world through its own terms [Berlin 2002, p. 503]. Herder’s understanding of nations did not imply an idea of superiority of one over the others. Herder was a pluralist who believed in universal equality of all cultures in the sight of God. All nations have been a part and parcel of the humankind and have made their own contribution to the endless variety of life.

The idea of the German substantial superiority over the Slavs manifested itself largely only in the course of the twentieth century. A completely different approach was generally shared in Prussia. It is noteworthy that in the end of the 18th century, Herder, an East Prussian, had collected the Slavic folk songs, translated them and opened them up to educated Europeans. In his *Ideas upon Philosophy and the History of Mankind* Herder forecasted a bright future for the Slavs. Being a German, Herder gave an impetus to pan-Slavism in literature, and his words about Slavic nations were venerated as Bible verses by the Czech, Polish, Slovak, Croatian and Serbian students, who studied in German universities [Neurohr 1957, p. 206]. It would be no exaggeration to say that the Western Slavs are indebted to a Prussian, Herder, for discovering their own identity and for arousing their national sentiment.

Kant’s defence of the moral freedom and Herder’s idea of cultural uniqueness (although the former strongly believed in inviolability of the moral laws and the latter was certain that national differences did not entail conflicts necessarily) had shaken and later

finally undermined the fundamentals of the Western tradition. They were undermined not for the sake of reason but in favour of will. In Kant's view, this was the will to act according to the common law, while Herder went even further, claiming that it was the will of the nations to live their own tribal life, to cherish their own values, to sing their own songs and domestically to obey their own laws. Eventually, such logic would bring forth romantic self-determination and nationalism.

An ancient wisdom says that the tragedy is not in the triumph of evil but in a perverted understanding of good, national romanticism in our case. Thus one of the perverted forms of understanding democratic benefits gave birth to nationalism. Nationalism embodied a drastic deviation from the basic principle of democracy that affirms the absolute and even sacred value of all humans. Kant considered people to be rational individuals, who were the real aim to be reached; meanwhile in the practice of nationalism they turned out to be just the instruments [Malia 2002, p. 518].

However, these horrors being yet to come, in the eighteenth century the defence of variety against universality had been characterized by cultural, literary, idealistic and humanist approaches. The first who moved beyond this framework was Fichte, inspired by Kant and Herder, although the latter's influence was less evident. A passionate admirer of the French Revolution, having been disappointed in it after the spread of terror and suffering from humiliation of defeat of Germany, Fichte became a father to Romanticism [Berlin 2002, p. 687]. In Germany, the latter led to especially harmful consequences: whereas in Europe Romanticism developed into literary and artistic explorations, in Germany, its outcomes were primarily political. The romantic strand had the greatest impact definitely on the German nationalism.

As the famous German language scholar and an expert in German culture Victor Klemperer wrote, "Nazism was the most poisonous consequence of German Romanticism, it was just as guilty of its rise as Christianity was of the Inquisition; Romanticism had fostered specifically German Nazism and distinguished it from Fascism and Bolshevism. Romanticism found its strongest expression in the racial issue, and this showed itself up more evidently in antisemitism" [Klemperer 1996, p. 576].

Such was the intricate dialectic of emergence and development of theoretical preconditions of nationalism in Prussia, a country whose overall history demonstrated cold and rational detachment from any ecstatic 'bourgeois' nationalism. Meanwhile, the latter had been developing according to its own logic, preconditioned by circumstances irrespective to Prussia. These circumstances were common for the whole Europe while it was entering an 'Age of Empires' — the title, created by Eric Hobsbawm to signify the period of 1875–1914, which preceded World War I. In other words, the great-power concepts about the place of Germany among the other nations began to spread in there only after Bismarck's resignation. The other European powers had been going through the same process.

Prussia and a practice of nationalism: a historical perspective

Thus, the major Prussian virtues had nothing in common with the above-mentioned fumes of nationalism and the great-power ambitions. This statement requires some clarification or refinement. To put it more precisely, the governance in Prussia was remarkably efficient and the adherents of doctrinal nationalism took full advantage of this efficiency,

right up to Hitler, whose quasi-public bodies and the Party were but artificial superstructures built over the traditional Prussian administrative system.

The most striking example of this excellent governance was perhaps the army. "In Prussia, it is not the army that serves the state, but it is the state that serves the army." These words, usually attributed to Mirabeau, were actually uttered by a military historian and writer of the late 18th century, Heinrich von Berenhorst [Winkler 2002, p. 32]. This phrase implies that the Prussian military spirit of discipline, subordination and duty infiltrated every facet of the social life. Moreover, military successes of Prussia, together with the size of its territory and the resources it possessed, made it a Sparta of contemporary Europe. All classes of its hierarchically structured population had assumed their fundamental duty, a Kantian-like categorical imperative, although this duty was mostly a homage towards the state.

A contemporary of the Russian tsar Peter I, the 'Soldier King' Frederick Wilhelm I (1713–1740), a staunch and committed Calvinist, was the first who inspired the Prussian spirit. He strongly believed in the importance of simplicity, frugality and efficiency, and in that, he was a direct opposite of Louis XIV. It was this 'Soldier King' who created a state, the stability of which had been astonishing the rest of the world for one and a half centuries; which had lived through the storms of history; which was born out of continual chaos; and the central location of which had seemed to be geopolitically impossible. Prussia was created as such by Frederick Wilhelm I by means reason, oppression, force and command. Ironically, instead of powerful and technologically advanced countries such as France or England, it was a backward and economically undeveloped Prussia which gave birth to the modern legal state and sense of duty and maintained the discipline of its subjects, which had become an engine for progress.

While the Great French Revolution might be labelled as a juristic revolution and the Russian Revolution a social revolution, the Prussian revolution 'from above' implemented by Frederick Wilhelm I might be tagged as a pedagogical one. Moreover, unlike the other revolutions, this one did bring positive changes. Even after 1789, the French bourgeoisie had kept its class-oriented outlook, remained equally avaricious and its ideology ultimately degenerated into bigoted chauvinism. In Russia, despotism of the authorities and passivity of the masses was not overcome even after the Revolution of 1917 [Fenohr 2004, p. 14].

It is worth mentioning that the Prussians had never constituted a racial or ethnic community, as they were a nation created and brought up by Calvinist kings. It was a feeling of a common identity that united the Prussians, rather than awareness of common roots. Interestingly, Baron von Stein, Fichte, Hegel, Scharnhorst, Stahl, Gneisenau were not Prussians by birth: they had become Prussians.

However, there were certain periods in the Prussian history when it demonstrated remarkable patriotism and a strong belief in its own nationhood. For example, in 1813, tiny and exhausted Prussia recruited an army of 300 000 soldiers and militiamen — more than France did in the days of the Convention. It was a truly national army, inspired by patriotism and love for the motherland. It is safe to say that Napoleon's bourgeois imperialistic cosmopolitanism had been opposing the governmental and civil patriotism of the Prussians and Gneisenau.

Furthermore, it was Prussia that encouraged a wave of German migration to Eastern Europe. This migration was purely voluntary and peaceful: the reason why the Danube

Schwabians, the Transylvanian Saxons, the Galizien, Dobrujan, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Crimea, Caucasus, Volga Germans arrived to these lands was not a military campaign and a conquest, but the invitation of local landlords made for the mutual benefit. The colonists were invited intentionally to settle in desolated lands in order reclaim them and to insure the loyalty of these domains to their landowners. The first record of such an invitation dates back to 1192–1196, when the Saxons were called to Transylvania to reclaim the deserted lands. Likewise, in 1723 the Hungarian Diet in Pressburg (Bratislava) laid down the legal framework for German colonization needed to revitalise the Danube region devastated after the war against the Turks. Catherine II similarly encouraged Germans to settle in uncultivated lands of the Russian south that had recently been annexed to the Empire. The colonists did not force anyone out of these lands; as a result of wars, internecine conflicts and cataclysms the population was sparse and, initially, there was room for everyone [Die Donauschwaben 1987, p. 11]. The settlers had contributed greatly to development of their adopted countries: they drained the marshes, turned wilderness into tilled soil, broken fresh steppe ground. They brought along the necessary skills and equipment from their motherland, and for a long time they maintained ties with it.

Prussian Pietism as a ‘substitute’ for the state ideology

Pietism as a ‘living godliness’ had been a vital part of the Prussian political culture, based on Prussian rationalism and representing a significant element of the Enlightenment in this part of Germany.

Regarding its discipline, pietism was a sober and rigid movement within the Reformation, close to Calvinism in its social and economic activities. In addition, Pietism denounced bureaucratisation of religion and the Church’s indifference to social problems, without any aspirations to reform fundamentally the church and the state. The ideas of August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) profoundly influenced several generations of Prussian teachers, priests, officials and officers. As nowhere else, the public service in Germany was at its best. Immanuel Kant rightfully wrote, “While France is a country of fashion, England is a country of whims, Spain is a country of pedigrees and Italy is a country of magnificence, Germany is a country of titles” [Eich 1963, p. 119].

Pietism had opened an age of folk schools, ‘real’ schools, workhouses, orphanages, rest houses, which by no means resembled the grotesque and ugly institutions depicted by Dickens, and were properly arranged in full compliance with Prussian scrupulousness, solidity and order. Besides, Pietism had accomplished another mission: during the Napoleonic wars, many officers joined Pietist meetings in search of firm religious principles as such principles offered the best way to challenge French rationalism, secularism and the disastrous influence of revolution. Finally, Pietism satisfied the popular need of spiritual consolation.

In his testament, the Prussian king Frederick II articulated Pietistic credo: “A human life is a short passage from birth to death. In its course, a man should work hard for the benefit of the state he belongs to” [Haffner 1980, p. 60]. Moreover, Frederick II was the one who initiated German Enlightenment itself. He wrote in his testament, “The system of a proper government should be as clear as a philosophical one” [Craig 1999, p. 24]. Upon ascending the throne, he granted equal rights to all Confessions in the kingdom. Frederick embodied the principles of the Enlightenment: with all the wars he led, he did his best to

relieve people from the hardships the wars inflicted; he was thrifty; he provided public education, pursued intellectual progress and an overall economic development of society. His policy was by no means a liberal one; however, a good reputation of the Prussian order, especially its system of law, became known throughout Europe; the Russian Emperor Paul I and the Austrian Emperor Joseph II were among the ardent admirers of Frederick II. Needless to say, that in spite of Frederick's despotism, the contemporaries considered the Prussian order to be progressive and by no means tyrannical. Frederick would be greatly surprised to know that anti-liberal anti-rational nationalism would worship him as its own idol. However, it was exactly what happened both in the age of Weimar Republic and then, under the Nazis, who venerated Frederick's name as a symbol of nationalism. Gerhard Ritter quite reasonably mentioned that in that regard National Socialism differed from the nationalism of the age of Frederick the Great as drastically as a *Sanssouci flute concerto* differed from hymn '*Horst-Wessel*' [Ritter 1966, p. 30]. In the first half of the nineteenth century, German Romanticism fostered an opinion that Frederick the Great had been 'anti-German', 'distanced from the nation' and 'atheistic'. Only after the Revolution of 1848 was Frederick's contribution gradually re-examined. It is obvious that Frederick the Great was an extremely controversial political figure: a king-enlightener, a reformer, an advocate of tolerance, an educator, a crusader against the vestiges of medieval regimes. Meanwhile, with all those qualities, for a long time Frederick the Great was viewed by the left-wingers as a reaction incarnate.

What were the drawbacks/advantages of the Prussian way?

As it is widely known, Germany was unified in 1871, but in fact, the process of unification spread over the period between 1848 to 1871 and became possible only after Prussia and the German national movement had united their efforts. Both contributors were relatively young. Prussia became a kingdom in 1701, and a European power after the Seven Years' War of 1756–1763, a 'German' power after the Congress of Vienna of 1815. (Before that, Prussia had been gravitating to Poland: from 1796 to 1806 it was a binational state with Warsaw included in its territory.) Prussia turned West only in 1815 when it annexed the Rhineland, which however had no connections with Eastern Prussia.

The German national movement was as young as Prussia, it emerged in the age of Napoleon. Although being established in the 13th century, the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation had never been a national state. Initially, Prussia and the German national movement had been natural enemies. Indeed, as a feudal agricultural country equipped with the modern bureaucracy, Prussia obviously belonged to the 'right' wing. In its turn, German national movement was 'left-wing', as it tried to emulate liberal and freedom-loving revolutionary France. A little bit later, revolutionary France had become a role model for the German national movement, with Napoleon practically being as its father. At the same time, the Germans took the French as foes, because they were invaders; moreover, many German soldiers perished while fighting for Napoleon in his army.

In other words, the Germans had mixed feelings about Napoleon — a hatred closely interwoven with the wish to imitate. Contemporaries differed in their attitude to the German national movement: Goethe, who disapproved of it utterly, is himself a sufficient example. The matter was that early German nationalism was saturated with Nazism: it included self-adulation and self-glorification of Germany as the best nation in Europe am-

plified with hatred toward the others [Ritter 1966, p. 25]. The Prussians tended to oppose this nationalism due to the tactical and fundamental reasons which are to be found in the essence of the Prussian Protestant state.

Similarly, in his foreign policy Bismarck adhered to the following points: 1. Renunciation of German expansion in Europe. 2. Deterring any kind of German extremism, especially the one referring to the concept of the Greater Germany. 3. Discouraging expectations of the foreign German minorities to be annexed to the German state. 4. Pursuing moderate colonial policy in order to avoid any anti-German alliances in Europe. 5. Bismarck believed that due to its central position, Germany should serve as a lump of lead laid in the foundation of the tumbler-toy Europe. By any and all means Germany had to avert any possibility of war in Europe [Nipperdey 1986, p. 65].

Thus, ironically, the chief disadvantage of the Prussian way was the lack of nationalistic sentiment. In fact, Prussia was a state without qualities, based on pure rationalism devoid of any romantic or mythic admixtures.

Nevertheless, the Prussian way proved to be false in practice. Prussian society was but a society of loyal subjects endowed with certain liberties and legal guarantees but unable to influence the country's policy in a democratic manner (at least, having lesser opportunities compared to the other European countries). A German political scientist Martin Greiffenhagen correctly observed that "once the democratic principle replaced the absolutistic regime, Prussia could do nothing but become a reactionary state" [Greiffenhagen 1983, p. 28].

There is no doubt that a bureaucratic and statist modernization in Prussia pursued liberal objectives: the state did not intend to impose its control over every facet of life (as totalitarian systems of the 20th century did); its only aim was to encourage civil engagement. Meanwhile, the state itself was certainly authoritarian [Nipperdey 1986, p. 50]. Not surprisingly, this state did not affect such ancient premodern elites as the aristocracy, landowners, or the army. With all that, the political ramifications of modernisation, usually highly traumatic, were diminished in Prussia.

In perspective, it is evident that the Age of Enlightenment and Frederick II had helped to instil in the German mind an image of the all-sufficient role of the state. As Hegel put it, this state had nothing transcendental in it: the state just embodied transcendentality, which could have only servants and subjects. According to Martin Greiffenhagen, while in Western Europe the Enlightenment had entailed only a gradual development of civil rights, in Prussia, the ideas of Enlightenment permeated both the machinery of the government and the Church. The Enlightenment constituted the substance of Protestantism, while Protestantism provided a frame for Enlightenment. Brought together, Lutheran commitment to the state and Prussian Enlightenment produced a certain kind of piety towards the state, which interwoven adoration of God and the reason of State.

Unlike the English and French Enlightenment, the Prussian one, represented by Leibnitz and Wolff, sought reconciliation of religion and philosophy. The probable reason of this discrepancy was that the German philosophers of Enlightenment could complain neither of scholastic obscurantism in religion nor of ruthless tyranny in governance. This is why the German thinkers took almost no interest in political questions and dealt with the issues of education and perfection of a human being. Philosopher Ernst Troeltsch has justly noted that, starting with Dante onwards, all Western European and American philosophers set the personal freedom of every man and his right to control the authori-

ties at the hub of the political universe. As an exception, the Germans considered the development of an individual and a nation as a single process. Hegel's political doctrine provides a brilliant example of such approach. Similarly, Wilhelm Dilthey held that "the German Enlightenment had emancipated Christian piety from dogmatism and resettled it to the solid ground of morality. Following its objective to serve the interests of the state and society, the German thought had set new challenges for education and proposed new methods; it reformed the legal system and refined understanding of the politics. With all that moral solemnity and pedagogical fervour, the German Enlightenment has a strong resemblance to religion" [Nipperdey 1986, p. 41].

Inherently Prussian inclination to follow evolutionary development and to preserve historical continuity in long run allowed it to secure the peasantry and middle classes from impoverishment and decay as well as to integrate the working class into the state system to a greater degree than in the other European countries. It is remarkable that Prussia together with its hierarchy and inflexibility, was admired by such a devoted liberal as Ernest Renan. According to him, in spite (or due to) its reformism, Prussia remained the single European country, which preserved the main components of power: aristocracy, hierarchy, and a cruel treatment of its own people [Nolte 1967, p. 79].

The age of Bismarck inherited traditions set by Frederick II. In spite of higher levels of civil involvement in England and France, Prussia had left them far behind in respects of social legislation, order, and the legal platform of the state. Due to the continuing reforms in Prussia, the Germans did not have any reason to participate in civil activity and thus remained law-abiding and loyal citizens of the state.

Its effectiveness as a Protestant state enabled Prussia to expand its dominance over the other German lands. After unification of 1871, the Catholics constituted only one third of the German population, and that contrasted greatly to the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 when the Protestants of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation were in minority. Unification of Germany and expansion of Prussian values almost coincided with the second and the crucial stage of industrial revolution. As a prominent social scientist, Talcott Parsons strongly emphasized that Prussia had pioneered in the development of instrumentally effective collective organisation, i.e. a generic resource, which would later be implemented in all the functional facets of the modern society [Parsons 1997, p. 101–102].

Despite the crucial role and significant influence of the state both in Prussia and in Germany, this effective and functional state lacked any long-established hallowed national idea. While the USA had initially been erecting its nation on the myths of democracy; and England and France have been constructing their states on the bases of various interpretations of bourgeois revolutions, Prussia (and then Germany) was a state of reason, built exclusively on pure rationality, as Martin Greiffenhagen observed. He wrote, "Effectiveness had been a fundamental law, which regulated functioning of the state and which was an engine of its development" [Greiffenhagen 1983, p. 32]. German historian Sebastian Haffner brilliantly defined Prussian political culture as 'a state without qualities'. However, these circumstances did not prevent the Weimar Republic from mythicizing Prussia. On the one hand, this happened because the process of myth-building does not require any identity, on the other hand, Prussian business ethics, Prussian style and rationality, sense of duty and honour are features by no means worth to be respected and admired.

The Allied powers abolished Prussia as a citadel of reaction and militarism. Indeed, at certain periods of its history Prussia had been a reactionary state, but what state was

not? The same could be said about militarism. The foreign policy of Frederick II was aggressive and aimed at spreading Prussian dominance over the other territories, but did not Charles XII, Peter I, Catherine II do the same? At the height of World War II, American political scientist Quincy Wright calculated that since 1480 to 1940 it was Great Britain, which was engaged in wars more often than all the other nations, its participation constituted 28% of all cases. Great Britain was followed by France, Spain, Russia, Austria, Turkey, Poland, Italy, while the German Reich, despite its central position, occupied the ninth place in that row and constituted only 8% of all cases (the Prussian wars included) [Mehnert 1967, p. 32].

It is also worth to mention that during the age of Weimar Republic, quite oppositely, Prussia had been a bulwark of the Social Democrats, of republic and order. The minister-president of Prussia was often jokingly, though respectfully, called the ‘Prussian king’, because, in stark contrast to the other German lands and Germany as a whole, where government reshuffles followed one after another, the government of Otto Braun had been in power continuously during the Weimar Republic. It is even more remarkable, that there were almost no Prussians in the upper echelons of Nazi power. On the contrary, it was mostly Prussians — Claus von Stauffenberg, Henning von Tresckow, Fritz von Schulenburg and others — who organised the conservative Resistance (July 20, 1944). After the July 20 Plot failed, the Nazis exterminated the best men of the Prussian aristocracy and that marked the end of the German political elite of the old days. In this regard, Ralf Dahrendorf wrote, “The Prussian discipline, law order, but also Prussian illiberalism; honest directness but also authoritarian Prussian tradition; humanity, but also common deliberate unwillingness to voice opinion according to the old Prussian political practice — all that came to an end on July 20, 1944” [Dahrendorf 1968, p. 428]. The Prussianism, which “for a long time had represented a close affinity between markedly soldierly spirit and Christian-Evangelical ethos became a thing of the past. The Prussian style is a commitment, modesty, humbleness, the rule of law in the state. Gneisenau, Clausewitz, Stein, Hardenberg, Moltke may perfectly exemplify it. One cannot distill National Socialism from Prussian kings: the extreme radicalism of Nazism had found its leader in an Austrian and Catholic, while the sober Prussian spirit of Calvinism and Enlightenment had denounced this radicalism” [Grebing 1964, p. 137].

It appears that the Law no. 46 (25 February 1947) of the Allied Control Council, which proclaimed the abolition of Prussia as a “citadel of militarism and reaction in Germany”, stemmed from emotion rather than from objectivity, although, the latter hardly could have been expected from the winners after the most atrocious of all the wars came to its end... However, law No. 46 concerned an already-dead myth while the specific features of Protestant Prussia enabled the GDR to develop into a loyal Soviet satellite.

On the flip side, if the Nazis had not relied on the famous Prussian military tradition and had not applied its effective military discipline, they would not have won a single battle in the war, as the Nazis’ system was characterized rather by ineffectiveness and struggling between jurisdictions than by effectiveness. However, it would be grossly wrong to cast the blame on Prussia, as Prussian professional ethos and its governance were exemplary. As Raymond Aron put it, “historical reasons of a certain event can always be revealed [...] however, none of them should be considered as the major one. It is impossible to anticipate the outcomes of any event in advance. Even the statement that some facts are more important than the others is ambiguous” [Aron 1993, p. 30]. At all accounts,

in Germany the Prussian spirit facilitated organization of any activity. Therefore, it is too easy to confuse abhorrent deeds and their efficient fulfilment.

Is Prussian tradition relevant to nationalism?

As it is widely known, the German Resistance revealed itself in two main endeavours: the Communist ‘Red Orchestra’ and aristocratic Prussian 20 July 1944 plot. However, there was another concept, which synthetically embodied both approaches — that of Ernst Niekisch [Haffner 1980, p. 247]. According to Niekisch, the workers should not strive for liberation of the whole of mankind, instead, they should personify with themselves their own nation and symbolize the interest of their state. In his opinion, the October Revolution of 1917 used Marxism as a front in order to defend Russian identity from the interference of the Western capitalism: “Leninism is a fine residue of Marxism left after a genius has applied it to the purposes of national policy” [Fure 1998, p. 229]. While in prison, Niekisch elaborated on the political synthesis of the ‘left’ and ‘right’ ideas; and under the title of ‘National Bolshevism’ this combination made him famous in Germany from 1926 to 1935. It is more accurate to label this mixture as ‘National Socialism’, ‘state nationalism’ or ‘Prussian socialism’ [Niekisch 2011, *passim*].

Niekisch could definitely realize the feudal character of the Prussian system; still he cherished such ascetic features of the Prussianism as strict discipline, self-denial, liberal idealism, a bitter enmity towards Western bourgeois individuality and liberal capitalism. Niekisch stressed that “the Prussian lifeline contradicts the lifeline of the German bourgeoisie; Prussia lives and flourishes where bourgeois cosmopolitanism would languish and die”.

Is it not a lifeline of the socialist revolution? Can the revolution not win in Germany if it is identified with the old idea of the Prussian state? Once, Bismarck and Lassalle discussed these questions in 1863. However, Niekisch was the first who exhaustively thought it through and defended this point. Niekisch had been a Socialist revolutionary above all; therefore, he detested the bourgeois spirit, which he considered the main reason why the Revolution of 1918 had lost. At the same time, Niekisch was a Prussian patriot and suffered from the disgrace of the Treaty of Versailles and unfair defeat in the war. Eventually, Niekisch concluded that only the revolution might dispose Germany from the bondage of Versailles. Only revolutionary and socialist Germany, in alliance with revolutionary Russia could withstand the bourgeois West and to win this fight in the same manner as it happened in 1813, when precapitalist Prussia and precapitalist Russia had gained the victory.

In Germany of that time, the idea of pursuing a ‘Prussian’ policy against Versailles, which meant entering in alliance with Russia, was in the air. Some steps had been even taken (the Treaty of Rapallo, the military cooperation of Reichswehr and the Red Army), though German capitalism and Russian communism made such an alliance rather unnatural. More than the others, Niekisch did realize this collision, but he was not an experienced politician, he lacked the opportunism, flexibility, demagogic rhetoric, and, in the end, the thirst for power, so necessary a prerequisite for a statesman.

During the Weimar Republic, Niekisch in one sense was in competition with Hitler, for National Socialism was seemingly alike National Bolshevism: both were addressed to the young, called out to their idealism, nationalism, willingness sacrifice and to act, their negative stance on capitalism. Both movements were strictly national — both opposed

the Weimar Republic, both pleaded for the need of national revolution. These similarities, however, were superficial: actually, these movements drastically differed from each other, sharing only hatred towards the Weimar Republic. Hitler demanded punishment of the ‘November criminals’, Niekisch called for continuation and accomplishment of the November revolution; in other words, while Hitler was counterrevolutionary, Niekisch was a revolutionary. Hitler aspired to launch an anti-Bolshevik crusade and to enslave Russia, Niekisch sought for alliance with Bolshevik Russia against the West. Hitler used concepts of race and space, Niekisch talked about classes and state. Hitler aimed at embroiling people in the imperialistic war, Niekisch tried to involve the masses in ascetic Prussian socialism [Haffner 1980, p. 253]. The biggest tactical mistake Niekisch made was that he believed he could engage the ‘right-wingers’ (or a part of them) in the left-wing policy; in Germany, however, it was much easier to engage the left-wingers in the right policy...

After 1933 and until 1937 Niekisch had remained Hitler’s single outright opponent. Niekisch was arrested in 1937 and sentenced to life imprisonment for the ‘crime against the State’. He was released by the Red Army only in April 1945. Much later, Niekisch’s idea to blend socialism and national liberation movements was implemented by Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, Khomeini and other anti-bourgeois, anti-Western revolutionary movements. It was not Marx or Lenin, who was their genuine theoretician, but a committed Prussian, Ernst Niekisch. Does not this prove the fundamental difference of Prussian tradition from the Western path, Western democracy, which, in contrast, has been historically connected with nationalism?

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