Europe in the 17th-20th centuries

The starting point in our deliberations is that Europe is not just a great idea, not merely a project, but also a real existing part of the world, a continent whose inhabitants have shared a common destiny since a certain historical time and the nations of which are constantly being bound closer together through politics, culture and trade. Accordingly, we should examine the way to a modern Europe in the light of two aspects, from two perspectives. First, Europe is understood as a structure, i.e. as a historical reality, as an immense number of events and processes that played themselves out in the area that is today called "Europe". Second, Europe manifests itself as a project, as an idea, as a subject of discourse. On this level we ask how the contemporaries, originally only a thin stratum of the educated elites and later also broader segments of the population, understood this continent. How did they perceive their affinity with each other and the borders between them?

Both of these levels were, naturally, connected. However, it seems appropriate to me to examine Europe first and foremost as a structure, as a "network" that was never aimed for and therefore came into being "by coincidence", as an entity that spontaneously took shape. Since this process has been formulated and reflected on by many contemporaries, what is in the foreground for us is above all the components of identity and otherness.

The decisive steps towards a deeper reflection on otherness, on European particularities, were stimulated and effected by the Ottoman invasion, but above all by early European overseas expansion. Whereas in the Middle Ages, those perceived as "others" or opposites were confined to the Islamic (and Jewish) world, by the time the Europeans found themselves on the threshold to the early modern period, they were having to come to terms with an ever-growing diversity of non-Christian, i.e. non-European cultures.

This happened at the very same time as European culture and the European economy were entering a new era characterised by, on the one hand, renaissance and humanism and, on the other, economic growth accompanied by increasing intensity of long-distance trade, which extended from the Atlantic coast all the way to the eastern Mediterranean and eastern Baltic.

However, it was in international relations that the highest intensity of intracontinental ties was found; in other words, in the increasing scale of dynastic policy combined with **diplomatic contacts and wars**. This European scale of dynastic policy could be illustrated by the Hapsburg marriage policy around 1500, which led to the first attempt to create an empire that would include Spain and the Netherlands, Italy, the German lands, Bohemia and Hungary. Nevertheless, the numerous wars of the 16th century were local conflicts triggered by a quest for dominance in various European macro-regions.

To facilitate both unfolding trade and also the constantly expanding geographical reach of politics, cartography assumed a special significance. The cartographers and those who used their creations slowly developed a perception of Europe as a unique totality. This "body" could inspire the setting of goals for a hegemonistic policy: for the first time since the disintegration of Medieval universalism, we can observe it in Hapsburg hegemonistic aspirations – in the guise of Catholic renewal – in the 16th and early 17th centuries, then again under Louis XIV, but above all in the Napoleonic era, this time in the name of bourgeois "civilisation".

The embodiment of the continent also meant that this body had different members, which could become ill or even be lost, as was the case when the southeast fell under Ottoman rule. The embodied Europe also needed a clear demarcation – above all in the east, where the seashore could not form a natural border in the way that it did in all other directions. In concrete terms, that posed the question of whether Muscovite Russia belongs to Europe. It was no coincidence that Peter the Great had relocated his capital westwards and since

his time the Ural Mountains have been regarded as the eastern boundary of Europe; incidentally, a project that is sometimes called into question to the present day.

Under these conditions in trade and politics, geographical knowledge became extremely important and acquired significance in the contemporary discourse. It was against this background that the first symbolical map of Europe was conceived. It is known above all from Sebastian Munster's "Cosmography" (first published in 1544 with more than 20 reprints over the next 100 years). In it, "Europa in forma virginis" is presented as a female figure, with Spain (and the Spanish crown) as her head, Italy and Denmark as her arms, France and "Germania" as her body, Bohemia as her heart or (in some reprints) as a locket. Below the belt we find countries that are today regarded as belonging to eastern Europe: Hungaria, Prussia, Sarmatia, Lithuania, Russia, and also lands under Ottoman rule, like Graecia, Albania, Bulgaria, etc. Even though this Europe was imagined as a symbolical space, it is important evidence that there was already a strong understanding of a continent seen not only as an abstract concept, but also as a place with concrete components, "members", called by their historical names.

All of this was, however, a pure intellectual game. In political reality, it was not until the first pan-European conflict, called the **Thirty Years War,** that our continent achieved the status of an interconnected territory. It was the first conflict that involved, more or less, almost all European countries. Never before had so many financial and material resources been spent on a war, no earlier conflict had claimed so many lives, not only on battlefields, but above all as a consequence of rapine and epidemics. Significantly, the most popular periodical – and one of the earliest periodicals at all – that published accounts of recent military events was called THEATRUM EUROPEAUM.

These circumstances were characteristic of further development toward European coherence in the course of the following two centuries. Wars, for both regional and continental dominance, succeeded each other almost continuously after the Hapsburg attempt to achieve European dominance failed in the Peace of Westphalia. They were presented as wars for new lands, for the king's glory, but the rulers faced the very real fact that the basic precondition for their success was "nervus belli" – money. Already in the 17th century the English humanist F. D. Pistorius had opined that

"War begeth Poverty, Poverty Peace,
then People will traffic and Riches incriese,
Riches produceth Pride, Pride is War's Ground,
War begets Poverty, so we go round."

What do we know about those "Riches" that were the cause of pride and consequently of wars? In attempting to answer this question, we cannot be content with a superficial explanation referring to an influx of American silver, which was naturally important – above all for Spain. We have to remember that the 16th century was a period of **economic and commercial prosperity** in western and central parts of Europe.

It was the period that saw the establishment of the first manufactories, a time when long-distance commerce alongside trade in luxury goods, which was also being engaged in more widely, was oriented towards mass consumption goods like grain, wood, linen, cheaper textiles, hemp, tar, and so on. These brought a massive upswing in sea and river transport with them, with the result that two new directions gained the upper hand alongside the old Mediterranean axis in long-distance commerce: the Baltic-North Sea line and the line from the North Sea along the Atlantic coast. The increasing interconnection of markets can be indirectly illustrated through correlations of price curves, but directly through the so-called price revolution, a dramatic and almost Europe-wide devaluation of silver and correspondingly of money that resulted from an influx of cheap

silver from the Americas to Spain and from there to the rest of Europe. We know today that the influx of silver was not the only cause of this; another was a steep increase in the extent of trade in goods. In other words, it had more the character of a growth crisis.

This prosperity was damaged temporarily by the Thirty Years War in some European regions, but it was not stopped. It continued and became important for European integration, because it created economic bonds that brought European countries together. Yet this coherence was not based on equality of all regions, but on an increasing dependency of the less-developed countries on those that formed the "core" – to use Immanuel Wallerstein's term – of European development: the Netherlands and England. This was not only a matter of communication, but a structural change: in these times, as a result of economic prosperity in the 16th century, the foundation for the uneven development that still exists was laid down. From here, the less-developed countries, "the periphery", depended on the more highly developed "core". This relationship of dependency was institutionalised and strengthened in the course of the centuries between then and our times, translated into the metaphorical myth about "East" and "West".

This was not the only case of **new emerging dependences** in European early modern history. At the very same time, the European countries were compelling the newly "discovered" parts of the world to accept their dominance. Although the Spanish and Portuguese expansions were chronologically the earliest, the really effective system of combined political and economic domination by Europeans was developed during the 17th and 18th centuries through Dutch and English conquest, followed by France and also Russia in a particular manner of Siberian expansion. Symptomatically, Europe as a continent of permanent wars transferred its militant habits also into newly conquered colonies. They became battlefields in the struggle for dominance – originally in Europe, gradually also throughout the world. The configuration in the conflict changed from one of

Anglo-Dutch rivalry in the second half of the 17th century to Anglo-French colonial expansion in the 18th, while the position of the oldest major colonial power – Spain – was gradually weakened. In the 19th century the struggle between these two established colonial powers was enlarged and deepened through their conflict with the ambitious new emerging powers – above all Germany – that aspired to acquire colonies. Their enthusiasm for profit, prestige and exploitation was disguised under the banner of a more digestible ideology, that of a "civilising mission". In this context, Europe's singularity and its rulers' claim to a leading role in the world were conceptualised less in terms of the only true religion, as had earlier been the case, but rather in terms of a singularity of an advanced "progressive" civilisation or higher culture, which had to be imposed on "barbarians".

We know, nevertheless, also a very different, **peaceful view of Europe**, which somehow opposed and alternated to the reality of the continent of wars and conquests. This view of a peaceful continent understood Europe since the Middle Ages as above all synonymous with Christianity, which had to live in peace in order to be unified against the Turkish threat. This was the view of Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini (Pope Pius II) and the same argument was used by the King of Bohemia, George of Podiebrady, in his project to create a league of Christian kings against the Ottoman Empire. However, the idea of European peace became secularised during the 16th century, – maybe since Erasmus of Rotterdam (Querella pacis 1517). The idea of a unified and peaceful Europe was later accompanied by the principle of stable borders and of some kind of institutional guarantee for this peaceful "coexistence" of rulers. Even though some of the architects of projects of this kind were involved in politics, like the famous Count of Sully, a minister to King Henry IV of France, these pacifist dreams remained above all a matter of powerless intellectuals, like the last Bishop of the Bohemian Brethern Jan A. Comenius, the English Quaker William Penn, the French Abbé de Saint-Pierre (1713), or one century later the German

philosopher Immanuel Kant, already with a broader, world-wide perspective. Symptomatic tension can be observed in the changing motivation of peace-projects: on the one hand, it is presented as a common interest of European rulers (Sully), on the other, as an interest of all the population (Kant).

It is symptomatic that since the 16th century Europe has been one of the favourite objects of symbolism in the visual arts. However, the intensity of symbolic depiction has been uneven and it has a certainly evidentiary value that it culminated in two periods: in the 17th century and then again in the first half of the 20th. In the early modern period, war, art and science were among the most important attributes of the symbolism of Europe. In the 19th century and especially the 20th, this was accompanied by the symbolism of a self-confident, highly effective industrial society, in some cases expressed also through the physiognomy of the (naturally white) European.

Let us turn back from these symbols and utopian dreams towards the historical reality and ask to what extent Europe really **differed from other continents** in early modern and modern times. This seems to be the central question if we try to define or construct the historical background of European identity. The already mentioned 16th century specificities – humanism, the Renaissance, the Reformation – were supplemented by three important processes in the 17th and 18th centuries: the formation of the modern state, revolutionary changes of political system and incipient capitalist enterprise.

Associated with this since the end of the 19th century was a search for the roots of European singularity in human nature, and perhaps also in human mentality. Should these peculiarities be looked for in the nexus between rational, capitalist ethics and religiousness, as Max Weber thought? Or was Europe's singularity attributable to the capability of the white race? Or was it the love between man and woman, as some researchers recently claimed? Let us, however, remain for now with the historically identified peculiarities of the early modern period – state, political revolutions and capitalist enterprise.

The state as such was naturally not a European peculiarity. The only aspects of it that could be described as specifically European in the early modern period were a number of special circumstances, traits that we do not find in other continents. Roman law had already strongly inspired and stimulated Medieval scholars. With the advent of humanism, its reception acquired a new significance. For the entity of the state there arose a perpetual latent tension between norms based on "national law" and the principles of Roman law, which are oriented towards universal validity. At the same time, an intensification of international relations had given topical relevance to the problem of "ius inter gentes"– in other words, a quest for universally recognised norms to be observed in both diplomatic relations and armed hostilities between states.

A broader European particularity that also had older, Medieval roots was the tradition of estates, the principle that the privileged estates and their institutions had a share in the power of the state. In the highly inflamed circumstances of a political crisis, this principle could easily be transformed into a revolutionary demand for popular representation. This could happen above all in opposition to another, likewise specifically European form of government in the early modern period – **Absolutism**. We distinguish this form of government from Oriental despotism first and foremost in the respect that the power of the ruler is subject to certain rules and cannot be equated with arbitrary rule. The higher phase of this form of government was enlightened absolutism, which was not only specific in and of itself, but also as an institutionalisation of a general characteristic of the way of thinking described as European: the conviction, regarded as progressive, that one can and must change circumstances and institutions. This was where the ruler's obligation with regard to the wellbeing of his subjects lay. With the quest for transformation of the existing circumstances that were perceived to be in need of reform, we return to the European particularities. It is true that the longing for better circumstances was

initially oriented primarily towards reforms, but it was most consistently in the shape of revolution that it manifested itself.

There have been a great number of rebellions, bloody upheavals in the history of the whole world. What was particularly European was **the revolution** as a fundamental, planned change of the political (eventually also social) system, or attempt at such a change, achieved by using force and sometimes only by threatening violence. Conflicts of this kind of occurred in the 16th-20th centuries and contributed decisively to the breakdown of the outdated traditional system of feudal privileges and inequality of human beings: the Dutch revolution in the 1560-70s, the English revolutions, the American and French revolutions. In all of them, there was an indispensable precondition: the vision of a better, fair political system and the conviction that human beings are able to formulate principles of structural change and that it is possible to realise such a new system, which is regarded as just and progressive. Our reflections on revolutions are necessarily accompanied by reflections on reforms: usually, it is difficult to distinguish a revolutionary breakthrough from reforms caused by revolutions or prompted by the danger of revolution.

The **capitalist system,** in which the entrepreneur aims at maximal profit through investing capital and exploiting the wage labour of workers who are personally free, seems to have come into being in Europe. Its Medieval – or more properly ancient – precursor was the principle of inviolability of private property inherited from Roman law. Its correlation with the "spirit of Calvinism" is evident, even though not in the sense given to it by Max Weber. Only under a system of rational profit-oriented decisions, did it become possible from the scientific revolution onwards to apply new inventions in production, above all as components of the industrialisation that became the most significant factor in European domination on a global scale.

Have these three particularities contributed something essential to shaping the present-day Europe or are exclusively early modern phenomena involved? In

their historical concrete form, they were naturally linked with the early modern period, but when we observe them on a more abstract level, we note that what we are dealing with is the essential fundamental components of the process that we can describe as **modernisation**, or alternatively as a transition from the traditional feudal society to the capitalist, bourgeois one. First, it was the process of bureaucratisation and rationalisation of the apparatus of state and the public service. Second, it was an effort to achieve civil rights and constitutionalisation – be it through revolutions or reforms. Third, it was a longing for a maximisation of profits, achieved in capitalistically organised production and tied to the high ethical value of labour. Together these three processes were – to formulate the matter in even more abstract terms – an activist attitude to life, motivated by a longing for change, for an improvement in conditions and correspondingly also a feeling of dissatisfaction with things as they were and faith in the possibility of improvement, often coupled with the idea of constant, necessary progress.

Hand-in-hand with modernisation went a weakening of the hitherto dominant role of Christianity, the highest level of which was the religiosity of the Baroque period. **Secularisation** gradually penetrated both the private and also the public sphere. The religious legitimacy of the old order was increasingly often called into question. All of this weakened the absolute validity of the old, religiously based moral norms, especially in the eyes of the educated. Even more important was the relativisation of the old patrimonial ties and feudal dependencies, allied with the rapidly spreading principle of civil equality, which was initially not yet necessarily coupled with the principle of political participation. This led to a crisis of the old, traditional identities and consequently resulted logically in a search for new secularised certainties and affiliations; in other words for new or newly modified identities. The new identity, a consciousness of a value-related affiliation with a large social group, was articulated and formulated mainly among the intellectual elites. It presented itself as a mixture of the historical

heritage – historical institutions (including also the old state), collective memory, collective culture, language ties, etc. – and the modern principle of civil rights, freedom of the individual and equality of all people. It was on this path that a new type of polity – the modern nation-state – gradually came into being in various parts of Europe in the 19th century.

The 19th century saw the transformation of Europe from a configuration of states into a **continent of nations** and – as some authors say – nationalism became the strongest and dominating ideology – compatible both with liberalism and with conservativism. Wars and struggles between kings and princes were replaced by conflicts presented as conflicts of national interests. Dynastic claims were replaced by national ones. Not only European borders were "nationalised", also colonial expansion – insofar as it was possible – became a matter of national discourse.

Trying to explain this important turn, we must take into account that nation-formation proceeded according to two basic models. The first was based on internal civic reconstruction of old early modern states, like England, the Netherlands, France or Sweden: state-nations, which were regarded as the "property" of the feudal ruler and had "their own" ruling classes and high culture, transformed themselves into nation-states as communities of equal citizens.

The other model was more diverse and complicated. It was represented by a development, which started in a situation where a non-dominant ethnic group lacked a state, a written language (or the tradition of a culture in this language had been interrupted) and had virtually no ruling classes. These groups lived on the territory of multiethnic European empires, like the Ottoman, the Russian or the Hapsburg, but also the Danish, British and Spanish. As they became increasingly integrated into the system of strengthening communications that accompanied modernisation, members of the non-dominant ethnic group – mostly belonging to the unprivileged, or even lower classes of society – were

confronted with the experience that using their vernacular instead of the dominant state-language led to their being regarded as second-class citizens, as primitives. Once they had overcome the old subject mentality, they found their situation of linguistic inequality degrading and intolerable. Since it was only in rare instances that general assimilation entered the picture as a way out of this situation, the adoption of a new identity, defined as national, was the only alternative. Consequently, a new social engagement emerged: **"national movement",** i.e. purposive, well-organised efforts to achieve all attributes of fully formed nations: a national culture based on a written language, a full social structure and some degree of autonomy.

National movements were mostly, but not everywhere successful: national agitation demanded equal conditions for their language and culture, initiated mass movements and achieved some degree of political participation. Their nation-formation differed from that of established state-nations, where the nationalisation proceeded "from above", in that it was a social innovation starting from below. The principle of civil equality was incorporated into the idea of national solidarity and equality of nations regardless of their size.

It was not by accident that the Declaration of Human Rights and the French Constitution, enshrining the principle of a "one and indivisible nation" of citizens, were promulgated at the same time. Modern **European constitutions** drew decisive inspiration from the French model and, analogically, they differentiated in the concept of political participation between liberalism and democracy. Both of these doctrines were frequently discussed in the course of the 19th century and almost consensually regarded as specific "Western" values, but their general acceptance took a long time and was usually coupled with the process of nation formation.

The acceptance and spread of the principles of constitutionalism and liberalism did not at all mean that the principles of civil and human rights had achieved a breakthrough. This fact can be illustrated by, for example, pointing out that for a

long time Europe knew no unambiguous, generally accepted list of human rights and that until the present day some aspects are not uniformly interpreted. While today a consensual opinion on the theme “right to work” still does not exist, throughout the 19th century there was also no consensus regarding the right to political participation. Should also the poorer; also the women have a share in political decision making? It was not until the first decades of the 20th century that the journey to a breakthrough of democratic principles (in the sense of general participation) had been completed in most European countries. And it is one of the ironies of history that soon after full democratisation had been achieved in most of Europe, two alternative anti-bourgeois concepts established themselves: in the west fascist corporatism and in the east Bolshevik social democracy which, however, would come into effect only after a period of dictatorship of the proletariat.

When we reflect on European particularity, we must not forget two further processes or principles closely associated with the principle of equality of civil rights. The first was the high value attributed to **secularised education**. This was highly appreciated already by humanists, but in their time as a symbol of exclusive elitism, as a workshop of intellectual aristocratism. Through the enlightened and constitutional principle of equality, a new concept of education was created: at the elementary level obligatory for all, at the academic level open to all gifted (men) without regard to their birth or property.

Incidentally, some degree of secular education was included in the prerequisites for modern nation formation: only pupils with some level of training in abstract thinking could achieve the ability to imagine that each of them is a member of a large social group, without having the opportunity to meet at least a smaller part of them. This was exceptionally important in the case of national movements and it has had consequences in recent European history – in the fact that school education was and sometimes still is highly appreciated especially among those nations that emerged “from below” as a result of successful national movements.

To give one example: it seems to me that the recent excellent performance of Finnish schools in comparative evaluation of their results cannot be explained without taking into account this high position of education among national values.

Another old principle passed down from the Middle Ages and reconstructed through the modernisation of Europe was the **principle of solidarity** with poor and suffering people, which was originally based on Christian charity. This principle gained new strength and social relevance in the 19th century against a background of industrialisation and the new capitalist form of division of labour and exploitation. It served as a basis for the struggle to realise the vision of social justice, even though it was understood in many controversial ways: as Christian socialism, social market economy, Proudhonism, Blanquism, Marxism, etc. Also in this case, we are dealing with European particularity, which was later exported in a similar way to the concepts of nation and nationalism, as "socialism" or "communism" from modern Europe to rather different societies and civilisations in other continents.

How was the **image of Europe** perceived during this decisive phase of modernisation from the beginning of the 19th century onwards? Napoleon Bonaparte represents the first and last conscious attempt to combine European progress – understood as liberation from the relicts of feudalism with its unification under one ruler – with unity brought about through French conquest. This project provoked a series of European conflicts, the greatest since the Thirty Years War – and failed. Nevertheless, the idea of some kind of unification combined with emancipation survived and became a part of European heritage. Already in 1814, Saint-Simon had some very utopian ideas about the need to unify European nations to protect them against wars and exploitation. At the same time, a man at the opposite end of the political spectrum, Count Metternich, successfully tried to realise another concept of a peaceful Europe – not as a unity of nations, but as an alliance, a brotherhood of

European rulers based on a balance of powers. He understood that if they continued to wage wars among themselves, as they had been doing for centuries, they would open the door to international instability and revolutions. In other words, Metternich understood the idea of European unity as a conservative concept, as the most important instrument for preserving the old pre-modern system of inequality and feudal dependences. As we know, this system – called the Holy Alliance – managed to survive for only a few decades, but at least they were an almost peaceful period.

An alternative, idealistic and democratic idea about European unity had no chance of becoming reality, but this vision created a tradition, represented by, among others, Giuseppe Mazzini with his "Europe of homelands", by Victor Hugo's idea of a "United nations of Europe", which became the central aim of the League for Peace and Liberty at its congress in 1868 (publishing a journal under the same name until the 1870s) – and many others. The call for unification was also later usually combined with a call for peace and included a specific gender dimension represented by, among others, Bertha Suttner.

How did the media of this period represent the continent of Europe to the ordinary citizen? What conceptions and opinions could he get in individual countries from the press and other printed items, such as **encyclopaedias**, aimed at a wide readership? Answering this question would, however, require a concentrated research project. Here I would like to limit myself to a small example: the definitions of Europe in Czech encyclopaedic dictionaries. In the oldest – dating from 1862 – Europe is characterised as the most highly developed continent, and indeed above all thanks to the power of its states and also thanks to the school system. Thereby, and also as a result of its geographical location, Europe is quasi-predestined to become the centre of trade and civilisation in the whole world. At the same time, Europe is developing itself, thanks to the great French Revolution, into a civil society of which the defining characteristics are equality of citizens and liberation of peasants. Thirty

years later, the biggest Czech encyclopaedia of the day described Europe as a civil society whose love of freedom had been consolidated since the Middle Ages in struggles against dangers from the east (the Huns, Mongols and Turks). However, a symptomatic characteristic is added to that: Europe has become a kind of "federation of nations", the further progress of which will depend on the extent to which the individual nations participate in it. In this, an important role belongs to the new nations, those that are just in the process of taking shape. The so-called Masaryk Encyclopaedia, a semi-official work from 1926, repeats the key characteristics of Europe as economic progress and a large number of nations, but also attaches key significance to the continent's cultural particularity, which is anchored in the Christian tradition and a highly developed historism.

The Czech perceptions fundamentally reflected the then prevalent European auto-stereotype, supplemented with high esteem for the role of the small and emerging nations in the building of Europe. Already in the compendiums of the 18th century Europe appears as the continent that is superior to all of the others in the sciences and arts, and also in lifestyle. The Europeans were likewise presented as humane, intelligent and industrious, and also as the guardians of the true Christian religion. Then, in the 19th century, general superiority in trade, transport and industry, which was accepted as natural, was added on to this. And it is only understandable that this superiority had to be interpreted: the predominant and almost consensual view was that what was involved was a merit of the "white man", abilities that he had been given either by nature or by God. It is no coincidence that in this period race theory was taken seriously as a new scientific discovery and became widely accepted.

Thematisation of European particularities bore one further differentiation within itself. The whole of Europe did not distinguish itself through a high level of scientific and cultural development, but rather only a part, for which a new name was invented: "the West", "the Occident". When, for example, Max Weber

speaks of the region where the most important cultural innovations and rationally reasoned science came into being and thereby benefited humankind as a whole, this region is not called Europe, but rather the Occident. Concealed in this is the germ of the stereotype that we can still see today: Europe is divided into two parts, the more developed, albeit territorially smaller, West and the backward East, and when European dominance in the world is talked of, what is really meant is the dominance of the West.

In addition to what was communicated to them through literature, citizens in the 19th century increasingly often had the opportunity to get to know Europe for themselves through **travel.** This became possible thanks to several innovations of the industrial era, especially railways. Travel became "bourgeoisised" in that destinations were, on the one hand, chosen for business reasons, but also determined by cultural motives: those who could afford it wanted to see the monuments of European culture and also get to know different European peoples. Educational trips paved the way to the concept of "Museum Europe", which is considered an essential factor in present-day Europeanisation. Later, from the end of the century onwards, mass migration by the lower classes entered the picture alongside the travel done by the better off.

We must not forget that at the level of international relations national interest developed in increasingly opposing ways. Decisive for the development of the European idea was the formation of two great coalitions, the Entente and the Central Powers. This produced a face-to-face confrontation between two groupings imbued with the increasing aggressive nationalism that was one of the negative results of the successful process of nation formation. The arguments on which the ideology of these two coalitions was based included the assertion that they were "better" Europeans or represented European "progress".

An argument concealed behind nationalist vocabulary concerned the transformation of "classical" colonialism into expansionist imperialism. In the end of the 19th century, only a nation-state with colonies could be accepted as a

member of the internally divided family of "civilised" states. Europe's claim on dominance over the whole world was accepted as legitimate and self-evident.

We know where all of this led. **The First World War** and its consequences endangered the coherence that Europe had inherited from the 19th century. The October Revolution emancipated the eastern part of the continent from the capitalist and liberal Europe. The principle of self-determination, formulated both by the western leaders (with Woodrow Wilson foremost among them) and by the Bolsheviks and Lenin, opened the way to the emergence of new nation-states, whose politicians were liberated from the historical burden of colonialism, but inherited ethno-national ressentiments and conflicts. They could not form the main trends of international relations, which remained the preserve of the great powers, but they did represent important strategic positions and provided a great variety of pretexts for new trends in great-power policy.

The terrible experiences of the First World War should probably not be described as primarily a crisis of the European idea. It was much more a result of the internal contradictions in modernisation and above all of the hegemonistic thinking and self-assertive moral exceptionism that characterised European politicians in all of the leading powers.

For many intellectuals and politicians the experience of the war and also the emergence of new nation-states represented a turning point in their thinking about Europe. It strengthened the project to build up Europe as a continent of peace, democracy and "cultural synthesis", as for example T.G. Masaryk hoped in his 1918 book "New Europe". However, his concept of authentic Europeans was limited to western powers and smaller European states and excluded (the old Imperial) Germany and Bolshevik Russia.

It is no wonder that Masaryk was one of the politicians who demonstrated a great understanding of the better-known and more important pan-European project of Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi. It is symptomatic that also this project failed to take account of the Soviet Union and, on the other hand,

supported the possession of colonies by the continental powers. Admirers of this project should be reminded of that, and also of the fact that Britain (or more accurately the British Commonwealth) was not supposed to belong to this Europe. However, the European reality was glaringly the opposite of this utopian intellectual vision.

First and foremost, the First World War brought a new era of brutal warfare to Europe. It differed from "classical wars" in that it no longer had the sole goal of subduing the opponent's military might, but rather of destroying all of his resources of strength, which included the civilian population. Physical annihilation of the civilian population, the construction of extermination camps for military and civilian opponents – all of these things had hitherto been known only as instruments of European supremacy in the colonies, but now they assumed a constantly growing role as weapons that Europeans used on each other – and not just on external enemies like members of other nations or races, but also the "enemy within". A wish to dominate Europe by exterminating national or political "others" became a perverted variant of European communality.

One of the results of the First World War was that Europe lost its dominant position in the world to the USA, but American post-war isolationism enabled the illusion of world hegemony to cling to life for a little longer. What was of essential importance was that the structure of the European great powers had totally changed – not only as a result of Germany's defeat and Austro-Hungary's disintegration, but also rather also as a consequence of the October Revolution. The change was reflected not only on the map of Europe, but also in the internal form of the European states. The Czarist empire was replaced by the anti-Bourgeois USSR. All that remained of the "classical" capitalist Europe of the 19th century was a fraction – Britain, France and a few smaller states, such as those in the Benelux area or Czechoslovakia. Over the next 20 years, more and more European states embarked on the road of authoritarian regimes – from

Spain to Bulgaria, from Italy to Lithuania – naturally with the extreme case of the triumphant German National Socialism, which would decisively determine events in the next few decades. On the other hand, a different alternative to liberal capitalism appeared in the form of the Scandinavian "welfare state".

In such a politically fragmented Europe, Pan-Europeanism never became anything more than an intellectual game. Ironically, the first temporarily successful European unification project began in the anti-democratic camp – in Nazi Germany. As early as 1934, Alfred Rosenberg formulated a vision of a Europe united by old Medieval values and above all through the idea of nationalism, implicitly under the rule of Germans. Explicitly, the ideology of a "New Europe" did not become the key argument until the latter phase of the Second World War, when it was presented as a moral, political and cultural value that had to be defended against Russian, i.e. Bolshevik barbarians. This new Europe was presented as a German-dominated alternative to the Jewish, Bolshevik and Americanised capitalist Europe, a degenerate entity that had to be destroyed.

Already the First World War had certainly altered the structure of economic relations, which since the end of the 19th century had appeared to be strongly integrated. Indeed, many authors even speak of an end to European economic integration, the renewal of which was attempted through various regional customs unions. There are also references to the economic difficulties that in the post-war years are believed to have played a destabilising role in the newly established nation-states. This problem will certainly become the theme of many historical studies in the future. Something that they will not be able to ignore in that is the extent to which in the inter-war period the global preponderance of Europe was still able to assert itself relative to the economic superiority of the United States. The great depression from 1930 onwards was of decisive significance for both the economic structure and European self-understanding. European capitalism appeared totally threatened, not only by the crisis itself, but

also by its ripple effects on domestic politics – through constantly deepening class conflicts. For anyone unwilling to adopt either the Fascist model or the Bolshevist alternative, all that remained was a fundamental restructuring of capitalism in the sense of a social market economy. However, this succeeded only in only a few countries.

Immediately after the global economic crisis, Europe – or more precisely the part of it that had remained democratic – had to contend with another grave threat. This came from Hitler's Germany, which sought a way out of the system crisis through force. Europe should be united under German leadership and contend for world supremacy. This was supposed to be achieved through the broader world war and it is one of the ironies of destiny that the Europe of liberalism and (western) European bourgeois society was saved through the victories of the "anti-European" communist world power the USSR and the non-European USA. However, the price that Europe had to pay for this was a fairly high one. Europe's dominance of the world was yielded in favour of the USA. On the European continent, the sphere of Soviet power extended as far as Berlin, Prague and Ljubljana. Europe was divided into western and eastern parts. A new regionalisation of the continent could begin, at the same time as a new stocktaking of themselves by its inhabitants. Discussion focused not only on war crimes, but also the question of ideological reasons: and it was fairly easy on the abstract level to identify racism and "nationalism" as the principal culprits. It remains open to this day whether that was a perfect diagnosis.

The two great wars of the 20th century divided Europe into hostile camps. Whereas during the First World War these camps were defined primarily in national terms and survived the end of it, after the second, in which the fundamental difference could be expressed also in political terms, only the anti-fascist camp survived, declaring "nationalism" to be an enemy of humanity. Europe was redefined as a continent of peace and democracy. Nevertheless, this remained an empty declaration of goodwill, since the defeat of Fascism did not

pave the way for European unification. It was not long before Europe was again divided into two parts as a consequence of a new war – the Cold War – and all successful steps toward European unification concerned only one part of the continent. The term “Europe” itself was re-defined in the political terms of liberalism and democracy and occupied by the West. We still know how difficult it is to forget the four decades when the West, the “Occident” or literally the “evening land”, was understood as the only Europe and “the East” was excluded not only from the present European community, but also from its history.