

### CHAPTER III

#### THE STRUGGLE OF THE CROWNS

This feudal world, with which we became acquainted in the foregoing chapter, had its expression in a particular constitutional order whose basis and development influenced very deeply the history and the fate of the monarchy. There were several territorial entities in the monarchy which developed a stubborn resistance against all efforts of a more organic unification of the empire. In the course of its historical evolution every kingdom, every country, and every province defended jealously its own autonomy which gave to the noble classes special privileges in the administration of their territory. In this variegated historical frame due to the eventualities and the accidents of the feudal past, there grew up a kind of feudal nationalism which may be regarded as a precursor of the modern national feeling. There arose a certain solidarity among the privileged classes against the unifying state and its administrative organs. This feeling of solidarity was rather constitutional than national, in the modern sense of this word, as it signified rather a tendency to keep at a distance the central power and to maintain the local organizations and privileges, whereas the modern national efforts as they manifested themselves in the great French Revolution had just the opposite tendency: to eliminate the antiquated feudal structures, to abolish the privileges of the estates, and to unite the whole nation under the same law.

“The principle of nationality,” wrote Robert Michels in his pioneer essay in this field, “is an enlargement of the principle of Human Rights with which it is connected both historically and logically. Nay, it is a necessary continuation of the same principle. . . .”<sup>1</sup> The author of this present volume, too, came to similar conclusions one year before Michels in a book, written in Hungarian,<sup>2</sup> which emphasized the eminently peasant and bourgeois character of the national movement. I tried to demonstrate that the whole ideology of the feudal world cannot be regarded as national in the modern sense because national language, national literature, and national culture had no important part in it. We may even say that it was anti-national because it separated rigidly the nation into classes instead of uniting them, because it identified the nation with the nobility which refused any real economic and cultural solidarity (both *commercium* and *connu-*

<sup>1</sup>“Zur historischen Analyse des Patriotismus,” *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (Tübingen, 1913).

<sup>2</sup>*The Evolution of the Nation States and the Problem of Nationality* (Budapest, 1912).

*bium*) with the people which it ruled and who cultivated its lands as serfs. The great masses of the peasantry were not members of the nation but they were—according to the forceful expression of Otto Bauer—the *Hintersassen der Nation* (“the tenant farmers of the nation”).<sup>3</sup> The so-called patriotism of the feudal estates tried simply to conserve the privileges of the nobility both against the kingdom representing more general tendencies and against the masses of the bondsmen anxious for their emancipation. Besides, among the too powerful and too rich representatives of the nobility, there was always a tendency to expand their territorial estates (for in the feudal period each big estate was a real state within the state) if necessary by forceful means against the king and the weaker elements of peasants and nobility. In this greedy desire they did not hesitate to settle armed conspiracies with whatsoever foreign power, if their service meant for them a greater advantage. One who studies the medieval history of any nation will agree with the remark of Michels that the great lords never felt themselves bound to their fatherlands. “History is everywhere full of the treasons of the princes who led the enemies of the country against their own compatriots.” Under the impression of the same spectacle I wrote in my book, mentioned above, that “feudal Hungarian history is a history of continuous high treasons” because the great landlords had no scruples about fighting with foreign armies against their own country and even in their upheavals against the Emperor, though called patriotic and national by certain historians, we can always observe purely personal interests in curious mixtures with national claims.

The rampart of this feudal nationalism was each territory in which the estates were successful in building up a political organization in the past. As we saw, the Habsburg monarchy resulted from the conquest, amalgamation, and unification of such territories. These territories were very unlike in size, population, and power, but it was their common trait that they were an organization of the privileged classes for keeping the central powers at a distance and the peasant masses in silence. Even in pre-war Austria there were still seventeen distinct constitutional territories with separate Diets: Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Trieste, Görz and Gradiska, Istria, Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Galicia, Bukowina, and Dalmatia. The unity of the Hungarian crown was far more real, but also here Croatia-Slavonia could be regarded as a distinct state, and before the constitutional era there were several territories having more or less independent life. Especially in Transylvania the feeling of its independence and distinct historical life was very vivid until the end of the old monarchy. Besides,

<sup>3</sup> A brilliant analysis of the situation is given in his book, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie*, Zweite Auflage (Wien, 1924).

the county organization of the nobility developed a very strong feeling of local patriotism and many of the Hungarian patriots deplored in their effort for national unification the particularist atmosphere of these "small republics of noblemen."

The bigger territorial unities of the monarchy were in former periods independent kingdoms or parts of such independent kingdoms. The most essential and the most powerful among them was the Hungarian kingdom consisting of Hungary proper and her connected countries under the symbol of the Crown of St. Stephen as a visible sign of the independence and sovereignty of the country. This crown and the traditional ideology attributed to it, played a preponderant rôle in the struggle between the Habsburgs and the Hungarian nation. The doctrine of the "Mystery of the Holy Crown" which, since the fifteenth century was a firmly established theorem, assumed more and more dogmatical influence against the centralizing tendencies of the Habsburgs. The importance of this doctrine was very much exaggerated by the newer school of Hungarian historians because they interpreted it as an expression of a pretended attitude which did not practice the feudal institutions of the western states, and which constructed the state, not from the point of view of private rights, but public obligation. An enthusiastic admirer of this doctrine writes :

The idea of the public power gains in opposition to the individualistic kingly power a concrete formulation in the public right conception of the Holy Crown. . . . The Hungarian people regarded the state as a society organized in the interests of the whole as an organic entity incorporated in the Holy Crown. It conceived the Holy Crown on the one hand as a sign and symbol of the Hungarian state; on the other, it personifies it as the owner of the public power residing in the Nation and belonging to the King and to the people in a political sense, i.e., to the nobles. Public power is, by a mystery, present in the Holy Crown. Each factor of the state life is in immediate touch with the Holy Crown and receives its function from it. It is the source of all right and all power. . . .<sup>4</sup>

However, one who knows Hungarian history somewhat more closely will doubt such an interpretation of the mystery of the Holy Crown. During centuries the big landowners developed typically feudal tendencies robbing the properties of the smaller nobility and of the free peasants. They plotted continuously with foreign enemies against the integrity of the country. Besides, until the middle of the nineteenth century, all the working-elements of the country were hermetically excluded from the Holy Crown, the so-called *Totum Corpus Sacrae Regni Coronae*. (Not only the peasantry but the citizens of the town, too, who had only one collective vote against the hundreds

<sup>4</sup> This conception is explained in all its juridical subtleties by Akos von Timon, *Ungarische Verfassung und Rechtsgeschichte mit Bezug auf die Rechtsentwicklung der Westlichen Staaten* (Berlin, 1909), pp. 509-42.

of the deputies of the nobility.) What this doctrine really signified was a defensive attitude of the feudal world against the unifying tendency of imperial power. It was an emphasis of the unity and integrity of the country against new administrative divisions and of the legitimacy of the feudal administration against the Habsburg administration. It was, therefore, a symbol of the privileges of the nobility and their effort to retain the feudal estates in case of the dying out of a family as a possession not of the king but of the Holy Crown. At the same time it signified the claim and aspiration for those countries and territories which belonged formerly to Hungary and which could be reconquered in the future by the Habsburgs. (The practical importance of this doctrine became manifest at the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina when the dogma of the Holy Crown made a definite constitutional status of these provinces impossible as we shall see in the treatment of the southern Slav problem.)

This strong solidarity of the Hungarian nobility and its rigid state conception was capable of resisting for centuries the unifying work of the Habsburgs who were trying to build up a *Gesamtmonarchie*. In the historical part of this book we witnessed some phases of this struggle of the feudal estates. Sometimes these movements in the hand of remarkable personalities (of a Bocskay, a Bethlen, and a Rákóczi) became real mass-movements when these leaders were successful in combining the cause of their feudal privileges with certain popular claims, especially with the claim of religious freedom.

But not only the feudal society organized under the Hungarian crown felt the foreign dynastical power as a hateful burden; similarly the other great historical constituent parts of the monarchy cherished analogous separatistic sentiments. Though the greatest part of the old Czech nobility was extirpated, the idea of the Crown of Wenceslaus, comprising Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, as the symbol of national unity and independence did not die out completely and had a revival in the modern period. The Polish nobility of Galicia, too, did not forget the former splendor of the Polish crown and, though they later enjoyed a complete autonomy in their province, the restoration of the unity of all the Polish territories under the symbol of the historical crown remained an inextinguishable longing in the Polish soul. Similar sentiments were dormant in the Croatian nobility, which, in spite of its secular connection with Hungary and the regular use of the Latin language, clung stubbornly to the fiction of an independent Croatian state, to the tradition of the Crown of Zwoinimir. Even in Lombardy the memory and tradition of the Lombard Crown continued as the symbol of a specific territorial and constitutional solidarity.

The situation was in essence the same in the crownlands in those smaller provinces of the dynasty which never played such an eminent

rôle as the kingdoms or former kingdoms just mentioned. In these, too, there survived a more or less clear consciousness of constitutional and territorial privileges, even in those where a German majority was the ruling element. The noble estates felt themselves as the owners of the provinces and opposed the work of unification of the central powers. The *postulata* of the crown were always confronted by the *desideria* and *gravamina* of the estates. The state remained until the middle of the nineteenth century a double state: the unified state of the Emperor and the local petty states of the nobility which developed a specific territorial consciousness. The social atmosphere of these crownlands is demonstrated by the example of Bohemia. Here, until the beginning of the modern constitutional era, were sitting in the Diet four bishops and twelve abbots in the estate of the prelates; in the estate of the lords, sixty princes, counts, and barons; in the estate of the knights about the same number, whereas the citizens of the towns were represented by only fourteen deputies from seven cities who possessed only a single vote though there were in Bohemia at that time 119 cities and 178 smaller towns.<sup>5</sup>

The feeling of this territorial independence and local privileges remained a driving-force even in the modern period when the peasants and the citizens got a larger, though not adequate, share in the local legislation of the provinces. This crownland consciousness was so strong that it resisted successfully all those modern efforts which tried to reorganize the state on the basis of economic and administrative efficiency irrespective of the historical formations. And, when the triumphant absolutism, after the crushing of the revolution, made an energetic effort in the *Bach system* to organize a new state machine on the basis of a mechanical uniformity, Baron Joseph Eötvös, the brilliant Hungarian statesman, one of the deepest thinkers of the monarchy, opposed to this conception of a uniform state the doctrine of the so-called "Historico-Political Individualities" which, cordially accepted by the Czech nobility, played henceforth an important rôle in the constitutional struggles of the monarchy. Baron Eötvös demonstrated with great sagacity that a real Austrian patriotism was entirely lacking as such a feeling was only alive in some isolated strata of the statesmen, of the army and of certain groups of the *intelligentsia*. A common constitutional life and cultural activity would, perhaps, have created in the future a general patriotism, but for the moment nothing could have been built on it. What did really exist, was the local intimate life of the various historical formations. To divide these Historico-Political Individualities into administrative districts exclusively on the basis of linguistic frontiers would not have rendered the state any more fit to live.

<sup>5</sup> Beidtel, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

However anxious one might be to destroy provincial patriotism by robbing it of its object, through the new division of the provinces, the love for Tyrol, for Styria, or for Hungary will probably survive the existence of these countries. And nobody who loves his fatherland now will imagine it otherwise than he did before. History and the present time demonstrate that there is no need for a diplomatic recognition and for an official title that a country should be ardently loved by its inhabitants. It is in the nature of man that where he sees a past he hopes still for a future. The hopes of the love of country can disappear only with its reminiscences, for where a man loves he believes in immortality. . . .<sup>6</sup>

This theory of Eötvös from 1850 was evidenced by the results of the absolutism during Bach and Schmerling. A rearrangement of the monarchy from a purely linguistic or administrative point of view was unsuccessful as it was opposed by the traditional particularism of the crowns and other historical territories. Many distinguished political thinkers regarded this particularism as a simple resistance of the feudal spirit and were of the opinion that, connected with a complete democratization of the monarchy, the same course would have been the only way out of the difficulties of the empire. It was also the fundamental idea of the plan of the Socialists, already mentioned, that the problem should be solved on the basis of national corporations independent of territorial divisions. Others like A. Popovici and R. Charmatz advocated the scheme of dividing the whole monarchy into distinctly new territories entirely disregarding the historical limits of the states and provinces. All the old historical organisms were to be eliminated and the peoples rearranged in nationally homogeneous territories made by rule and compass inside of a completely united Greater Austria. By such artificial construction they hoped to subdue the resistance of the old nationalistic spirit attached to the traditional feudal territories. They regarded the crowns and the crownlands as the chief enemies of a harmonious co-operation of the nations. These and similar criticisms were not without foundation. Many of the former territorial units became really obsolete for, in the lapse of time, larger economic and cultural unities had developed and the narrow-minded local atmosphere of the crownlands evened the co-operation of an ethnographically mixed population. In spite of this, the real essence of these separatistic movements since the beginning of the nineteenth century was no longer the reactionary nationalism of the feudal world but a growing democratic nationalism of the popular masses who were trying to build up a national state in accordance with historical traditions and which was satisfying at the same time

<sup>6</sup> Not only in this connection but concerning the problem of nationality as a whole the works of Eötvös may be regarded as one of the deepest expressions of European thought. His most important contributions in this connection were, *Über die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in Österreich* (Pest, 1850), and *Die Garantien der Macht und Einheit Österreichs* (Leipzig, 1859).

the new economic and cultural needs. Therefore, the real problem of the former monarchy was not the annihilation of all historical individualities and constitutions in the unity of a nationless super-state (as the Socialists and some prophets of Greater Austria imagined), but to give fair opportunity to the nations to build up their own states according to their historical traditions and to combine them as equal members of a confederation.

From the point of view of higher justice and fuller administrative efficiency, a supra-national state would have meant perhaps a more advanced type of political organization but this plan did not take into account the actual existing power relations. In a period of acute nationalism the struggling nations aspired not only toward a linguistic and cultural autonomy but also toward the establishment of their nation states on a traditional basis. The Magyars fought for the Hungarian state, the Czechs for the Czech state, the Jugo-Slavs for their own state, and they were not willing to abandon these ideals in the interest of a bloodless supra-national state. On the other hand, it is true that the historical territories of the various nations included large national minorities and the danger was near (which Dr. Renner foresaw and which has been fulfilled since in a large measure) that these new nation states would oppress their national minorities in the same manner the dominant nations did in the dual monarchy. But the real remedy for this danger would have been, not the Utopia of a nationless supra-state (which would have meant as a matter of fact a centralized German state), but a statesmanship which would have combined the new national organisms in a confederation. The sovereign power of such a confederation could have efficiently defended the national minorities by appropriately uniting them in national districts and in broader organizations on the whole territory of the confederative state.

This was the only way out of the growing difficulties of the monarchy. Unfortunately, both the absolutistic and the socialist supra-nationalism did not understand this connection. Both were of the opinion that a united monarchy was opposed only by the old feudal spirit of the crowns whereas the new particularism was fomented by a democratic nationalism. *This democratic nationalism was the new force which attacked Habsburg unity at a time when the hydra-heads of the former feudal particularism were already cut down.* And, whereas, the Habsburgs triumphed with comparative ease against the feudal nationalism which represented a lower type of economic and political organization (based on anachronistic privileges and the exploitation of the bondsmen), the new popular and democratic nationalism, which tried to reconstruct the crowns on the basis of popular sovereignty against the nationless absolutism of the Habsburgs, signified a higher principle of political organization which the dynasty

could not conquer. That is the reason why the many plans for a purely mechanical redivision of the monarchy never had a really popular support. Witnessing the various artificial schemes for dividing the empire into new ethnographic divisions with political scissors, an acute German observer, during the war, wrote the following forceful remarks:

There comes to one's mind the myth of the daughters of Pelias who, following the advice of Medea, cut up their old father into small pieces and boiled him in a magic pot in order to rejuvenate him. Unfortunately the recipe was not successful and the old gentleman died.<sup>7</sup>

Why the feeling of national solidarity conquered all state expediencies and social rationalism, the reader will see more clearly in the next chapters when we shall analyze the struggles and dynamics of the national awakening. But the American reader will understand the situation more clearly if he remembers the statement of Woodrow Wilson to the effect that "State patriotism was far more strong than the Union which was only an arrangement."<sup>8</sup> For, if that was true in the North American states, the comparatively short history of which was not burdened by the atmosphere of the feudal past and by the memories of national struggles against each other, how much better can we understand the virulence of the particularisms and local patriotisms in the Habsburg monarchy the whole history of which was a series of feudal and national conflicts.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. B. Guttman, *Österreich-Ungarn und der Völkerstreit* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1918), pp. 13-14.

<sup>8</sup> *The State: Elements of Historical and Practical Politics* (Rev. ed.; Boston, 1911), p. 464.



## CHAPTER IV

### NATIONAL AWAKENING

After the suppression of feudal nationalism it seemed for a long time that the Habsburgs would be triumphant in their work of unification and centralization. Dynastical administration extended everywhere, the recalcitrant feudal nobility was replaced by a servile, courtly one and a policy of mercantilism tried to give to the country an economic uniformity. This relative peace and consolidation was only a seeming one. Beginning approximately with the end of the eighteenth century a new social force appears which, originating from small rivulets, became in several decades the torrent of a powerful stream which undermined more and more the spirit and institutions of the dynastico-patrimonial state. This force was the modern national feeling in the name of which each nation of the monarchy, great and small, laid claim to self-expression and local administration, and, several of them, to an independent state life. This new nationalism, in antagonism with the feudal one, was based on broad popular forces, on the millions of the small bourgeoisie, of the peasantry, and of the industrial workers.

#### A. THE IDEALISTIC INTERPRETATION

Whence did this new type of a democratic and social nationalism originate? We used to hear two antagonistic answers to this question. One was constructed in the spirit of historical idealism, the other in that of historical materialism. The first lays the chief stress on the intellectual and moral forces. Nationalism is nothing else than a growing realization of the consciousness of the human soul which can reach its completeness only in a national existence fulfilling the work which the World-Spirit assigned to every national individuality. All the great representatives of democratic nationalism stood on this platform. Mazzini, Fichte, Palacký, Kossuth, Gaj, Kollár, Obradović, and others regarded nationalism as an irresistible historical force which tries to unify into a moral intellectual and political organization a whole nation previously divided by accident or dynastical domination. These great prophets of nationalism always emphasized the creative forces of spiritual interests. *Mens agit at molem*. In order to attain its liberty and independence, each nation must, above all, cultivate its spiritual and moral forces. As Mazzini said, in his prophetic mysticism to his *Europa Giovane* (1834): "Each nation has its own task by the fulfilling of which it contributes to the general mission of humanity. This mission constitutes its nationality. Nationality is a