

## The Last Wave

The First World War brought the age of high dynasticism to an end. By 1922, Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, Romanovs and Ottomans were gone. In place of the Congress of Berlin came the League of *Nations*, from which non-Europeans were not excluded. From this time on, the legitimate international norm was the nation-state, so that in the League even the surviving imperial powers came dressed in national costume rather than imperial uniform. After the cataclysm of World War II the nation-state tide reached full flood. By the mid-1970s even the Portuguese Empire had become a thing of the past.

The new states of the post-World War II period have their own character, which nonetheless is incomprehensible except in terms of the succession of models we have been considering. One way of underlining this ancestry is to remind ourselves that a very large number of these (mainly non-European) nations came to have European languages-of-state. If they resembled the 'American' model in this respect, they took from linguistic European nationalism its ardent populism, and from official nationalism its Russifying policy-orientation. They did so because Americans and Europeans had lived through complex historical experiences which were now everywhere modularly imagined, and because the European languages-of-state they employed were the legacy of imperialist official nationalism. This is why so often in the 'nation-building' policies of the new

states one sees both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth. In turn, this blend of popular and official nationalism has been the product of anomalies created by European imperialism: the well-known arbitrariness of frontiers, and bilingual intelligentsias poised precariously over diverse monoglot populations. One can thus think of many of these nations as projects the achievement of which is still in progress, yet projects conceived more in the spirit of Mazzini than that of Uvarov.

In considering the origins of recent ‘colonial nationalism’, one central similarity with the colonial nationalisms of an earlier age immediately strikes the eye: the isomorphism between each nationalism’s territorial stretch and that of the previous imperial administrative unit. The similarity is by no means fortuitous; it is clearly related to the geography of all colonial pilgrimages. The difference lies in the fact that the contours of eighteenth-century creole pilgrimages were shaped not only by the centralizing ambitions of metropolitan absolutism, but by real problems of communication and transportation, and a general technological primitiveness. In the twentieth century, these problems had largely been overcome, and in their place came a Janus-faced ‘Russification’.

I argued earlier that in the late eighteenth century the imperial administrative unit came to acquire a national meaning in part because it circumscribed the ascent of creole functionaries. So too in the twentieth century. For even in cases where a young brown or black Englishman came to receive some education or training in the metropole, in a way that few of his creole progenitors had been able to do, that was typically the last time he made this bureaucratic pilgrimage. From then on, the apex of his looping flight was *the highest administrative centre to which he could be assigned*: Rangoon, Accra, Georgetown, or Colombo. Yet in each constricted journey he found bilingual travelling companions with whom he came to feel a growing communalit. In his journey he understood rather quickly that his point of origin – conceived either ethnically, linguistically, or geographically – was of small significance. At most it started him on this pilgrimage rather than that: it did not fundamentally determine

his destination or his companions. Out of this pattern came that subtle, half-concealed transformation, step by step, of the colonial-state into the national-state, a transformation made possible not only by a solid continuity of personnel, but by the established skein of journeys through which each state was experienced by its functionaries.<sup>1</sup>

Yet increasingly after the middle of the nineteenth century, and above all in the twentieth, the journeys were no longer made by a mere handful of travellers, but rather by huge and variegated crowds. The central factors at work were three. First and foremost was the enormous increase in physical mobility made possible by the astonishing achievements of industrial capitalism – railways and steamships in the last century, motor transport and aviation in this. The interminable journeys of the old Americas were quickly becoming things of the past.

Second, imperial ‘Russification’ had its practical as well as ideological side. The sheer size of the global European empires, and the vast populations subjected, meant that purely metropolitan, or even creole, bureaucracies were neither recruitable nor affordable. The colonial state, and, somewhat later, corporate capital, needed armies of clerks, who to be useful had to be bilingual, capable of mediating linguistically between the metropolitan nation and the colonized peoples. The need was all the greater as the specialized functions of the state everywhere multiplied after the turn of the century. Alongside the old district officer appeared the medical officer, the irrigation engineer, the agricultural extension-worker, the school-teacher, the policeman, and so on. With every enlargement of the state, the swarm of its inner pilgrims swelled.<sup>2</sup>

1. Not only, of course by functionaries, though they were the main group. Consider, for example, the geography of *Noli Me Tangere* (and many other nationalist novels). Though some of the most important characters in Rizal’s text are Spanish, and some of the Filipino characters have been to Spain (off the novel’s stage), the circumambience of travel by any of the characters is confined to what, eleven years after its publication and two years after its author’s execution, would become the Republic of the Philippines.

2. To give only one example: by 1928, there were almost 250,000 indigenes on the payroll of the Netherlands East Indies, and these formed 90% of all state functionaries. (Symptomatically, the widely discrepant salaries and pensions of Dutch

Third was the spread of modern-style education, not only by the colonial state, but also by private religious and secular organizations. This expansion occurred not simply to provide cadres for governmental and corporate hierarchies, but also because of the growing acceptance of the moral importance of modern knowledge even for colonized populations.<sup>3</sup> (Indeed the phenomenon of the educated unemployed was already beginning to be apparent in a variety of colonial states.)

It is generally recognized that the intelligentsias were central to the rise of nationalism in the colonial territories, not least because colonialism ensured that native agrarian magnates, big merchants, industrial entrepreneurs, and even a large professional class were relative rarities. Almost everywhere economic power was either monopolized by the colonialists themselves, or unevenly shared with a politically impotent class of pariah (non-native) businessmen – Lebanese, Indian and Arab in colonial Africa, Chinese, Indian, and Arab in colonial Asia. It is no less generally recognized that the intelligentsias' vanguard role derived from their bilingual literacy, or rather literacy and bilingualism. Print-literacy already made possible the imagined community floating in homogeneous, empty time of which we have spoken earlier. Bilingualism meant access, through the European language-of-state, to modern Western culture in the broadest sense, and, in particular, to the models of nationalism, nation-ness, and nation-state produced elsewhere in the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

In 1913, the Dutch colonial regime in Batavia, taking its lead from

and native officials, when combined, ate up 50% of state expenditures!). See Amry Vandenbosch, *The Dutch East Indies*, pp. 171–73. Yet Dutchmen were proportionately nine times as thick on the bureaucratic ground as were Englishmen in British (non-'native state') India.

3. Even in the ultra-conservative Netherlands Indies, the number of natives receiving a primary Western-style education shot up from an average of 2,987 in the years 1900–04 to 74,697 in 1928; while those receiving a Western-style secondary education increased in the same span of time from 25 to 6,468. Kahin, *Nationalism*, p. 31.

4. To borrow from Anthony Barnett, it also ‘allowed the intellectuals to say to their fellow-speakers [of the indigenous vernaculars] that “we” can be like “them”’.

The Hague, sponsored massive colony-wide festivities to celebrate the centennial of the ‘national liberation’ of the Netherlands from French imperialism. Orders went out to secure physical participation and financial contributions, not merely from the local Dutch and Eurasian communities, but also from the subject native population. In protest, the early Javanese–Indonesian nationalist Suwardi Surjaningrat (Ki Hadjar Dewantoro) wrote his famous Dutch-language newspaper article ‘Als ik eens Nederlander was’ (If I were for once to be a Dutchman).<sup>5</sup>

In my opinion, there is something out of place – something indecent – if we (I still being a Dutchman in my imagination) ask the natives to join the festivities which celebrate our independence. Firstly, we will hurt their sensitive feelings because we are here celebrating our own independence in their native country which we colonize. At the moment we are very happy because a hundred years ago we liberated ourselves from foreign domination; and all of this is occurring in front of the eyes of those who are still under our domination. Does it not occur to us that these poor slaves are also longing for such a moment as this, when they like us will be able to celebrate their independence? Or do we perhaps feel that because of our soul-destroying policy we regard all human souls as dead? If that is so, then we are deluding ourselves, because no matter how primitive a community is, it is against any type of oppression. If I were a Dutchman, I would not organize an independence celebration in a country where the independence of the people has been stolen.

With these words Suwardi was able to turn Dutch history against the Dutch, by scraping boldly at the weld between Dutch nationalism and imperialism. Furthermore, by the imaginary transformation of

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5. It appeared originally in *De Expres* on July 13, 1913, but was quickly translated into ‘Indonesian’ and published in the native press. Suwardi was then 24 years old. An unusually well-educated and progressive aristocrat, he had in 1912 joined with a Javanese commoner, Dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, and a Eurasian, Eduard Douwes Dekker, to form the Indische Partij, the colony’s first political party. For a brief, but useful, study of Suwardi, see Savitri Scherer, ‘Harmony and Dissonance: Early Nationalist Thought in Java’, chapter 2. Her Appendix I gives an English translation of the famous article, from which this passage is drawn.

himself into a temporary Dutchman (which invited a reciprocal transformation of his Dutch readers into temporary Indonesians), he undermined all the racist fatalities that underlay Dutch colonial ideology.<sup>6</sup>

Suwardi's broadside – which delighted his Indonesian as much as it irritated his Dutch audience – is exemplary of a world-wide twentieth-century phenomenon. For the paradox of imperial official nationalism was that it inevitably brought what were increasingly thought of and written about as European 'national histories' into the consciousnesses of the colonized – not merely via occasional obtuse festivities, but also through reading-rooms and classrooms.<sup>7</sup> Vietnamese youngsters could not avoid learning about the *philosophes* and the Revolution, and what Debray calls 'our secular antagonism to Germany'.<sup>8</sup> Magna Carta, the Mother of Parliaments, and the Glorious Revolution, glossed as English national history, entered schools all over the British Empire. Belgium's independence struggle against Holland was not erasable from schoolbooks Congolese children would one day read. So also the histories of the USA in the Philippines and, last of all, Portugal in Mozambique and Angola. The irony, of course, is that these histories were written out of a historiographical consciousness which by the turn of the century was, all over Europe, becoming nationally defined. (The barons who imposed Magna Carta on John Plantagenet did not speak 'English,' and had no conception of themselves as 'Englishmen,' but they were firmly defined as early patriots in the classrooms of the United Kingdom 700 years later.)

Yet there is a characteristic feature of the emerging nationalist intelligentsias in the colonies which to some degree marks them off

6. Notice the educational linkage here between 'imagined' and 'imaginary' communities.

7. The celebrations of 1913 were agreeably emblematic of official nationalism in another sense. The 'national liberation' commemorated was in fact the restoration of the House of Orange by the victorious armies of the Holy Alliance (not the establishment of the Batavian Republic in 1795); and half the liberated nation soon seceded to form the Kingdom of Belgium in 1830. But the 'national liberation' gloss was certainly what Suwardi imbibed in his colonial classroom.

8. 'Marxism and the National Question,' p. 41.

from the vernacularizing nationalist intelligentsias of nineteenth-century Europe. Almost invariably they were very young, and attached a complex political significance to their youth – a significance which, though it has changed over time, remains important to this day. The rise of (modern/organized) Burmese nationalism is often dated to the founding in 1908 of the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Rangoon; and of Malayan by the establishment in 1938 of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Union of Malay Youth). Indonesians annually celebrate the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Oath of Youth) drawn up and sworn by the nationalist youth congress of 1928. And so on. It is perfectly true that in one sense Europe had been there before – if we think of Young Ireland, Young Italy, and the like. Both in Europe and in the colonies 'young' and 'youth' signified dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism and revolutionary will. But in Europe 'young' had little in the way of definable sociological contours. One could be middle-aged and still part of Young Ireland; one could be illiterate and still part of Young Italy. The reason, of course, was that the language of these nationalisms was either a vernacular mother-tongue to which the members had spoken access from the cradle, or, as in the case of Ireland, a metropolitan language which had sunk such deep roots in sections of the population over centuries of conquest that it too could manifest itself, creole-style, as a vernacular. There was thus no necessary connection between language, age, class, and status.

In the colonies things were very different. Youth meant, above all, the *first* generation in any significant numbers to have acquired a European education, marking them off linguistically and culturally from their parents' generation, as well from the vast bulk of their colonized agemates (cf. B. C. Pal). Burma's 'English-language' YMBA, modelled in part on the YMCA, was built by English-reading schoolboys. In the Netherlands Indies one finds, *inter alia*, Jong Java (Young Java), Jong Ambon (Young Amboina), and Jong Islamietenbond (League of Young Muslim) – titles incomprehensible to any young native unacquainted with the colonial tongue. In the colonies, then, by 'Youth' we mean 'Schooled Youth,' at least at the start. This in turn reminds us again of the unique role played by

colonial school-systems in promoting colonial nationalisms.<sup>9</sup>

The case of Indonesia affords a fascinatingly intricate illustration of this process, not least because of its enormous size, huge population (even in colonial times), geographical fragmentation (about 3,000 islands), religious variegation (Muslims, Buddhists, Catholics, assorted Protestants, Hindu-Balinese, and ‘animists’), and ethnolinguistic diversity (well over 100 distinct groups). Furthermore, as its hybrid pseudo-Hellenic name suggests, its stretch does not remotely correspond to any precolonial domain; on the contrary, at least until General Suharto’s brutal invasion of ex-Portuguese East Timor in 1975, its boundaries have been those left behind by the last Dutch conquests (c. 1910).

Some of the peoples on the eastern coast of Sumatra are not only physically close, across the narrow Straits of Malacca, to the populations of the western littoral of the Malay Peninsula, but they are ethnically related, understand each other’s speech, have a common religion, and so forth. These same Sumatrans share neither mother-tongue, ethnicity, nor religion with the Ambonese, located

9. Our focus here will be on civilian schools. But their military counterparts were often important too. The professionally officered standing army pioneered by Prussia early in the nineteenth century has required an educational pyramid in some ways more elaborate, if not more specialized, than its civilian analogue. Young officers ('Turks') produced by new military academies have often played significant roles in the development of nationalism. Emblematic is the case of Major Chukuma Nzeogwu, who masterminded the January 15, 1966 coup in Nigeria. A Christian Ibo, he was among the first group of young Nigerians sent for training to Sandhurst to make possible the transformation of a white-officered colonial mercenary force into a national army, on Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960. (If he attended Sandhurst with the future Brigadier Afrifa, who, also in 1966, was to overthrow *his* government, each native was destined to return to his own imperial habitat). It is striking evidence of the power of the Prussian model that he was able to lead Muslim Hausa troops in assassinating the Sardauna of Sokoto and other Muslim Hausa aristocrats, and, consequently, destroy the Muslim-Hausa-dominated government of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. It is no less striking a sign of colonial-school-generated nationalism that over Radio Kaduna he assured his countrymen that ‘you will no more be ashamed to say that you are Nigerian.’ (Quotation taken from Anthony H.M. Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source Book*, p. 126.) Yet nationalism was thinly enough then spread in Nigeria for Nzeogwu’s nationalist coup to be quickly interpreted as an Ibo plot; hence the military mutinies of July, the anti-Ibo pogroms of September and October, and Biafra’s secession in May 1967. (See Robin Luckham’s superb *The Nigerian Military*, *passim*.)

on islands thousands of miles away to the east. Yet during this century they have come to understand the Ambonese as fellow-Indonesians, the Malays as foreigners.

Nothing nurtured this bonding more than the schools that the regime in Batavia set up in increasing numbers after the turn of the century. To see why, one has to remember that in complete contrast to traditional, indigenous schools, which were always local and personal enterprises (even if, in good Muslim fashion, there was plenty of horizontal movement of students from one particularly well-reputed ulama-teacher to another), the government schools formed a colossal, highly rationalized, tightly centralized hierarchy, structurally analogous to the state bureaucracy itself. Uniform textbooks, standardized diplomas and teaching certificates, a strictly regulated gradation of age-groups,<sup>10</sup> classes and instructional materials, in themselves created a self-contained, coherent universe of experience. But no less important was the hierarchy's geography. Standardized elementary schools came to be scattered about in villages and small townships of the colony; junior and senior middle-schools in larger towns and provincial centres; while tertiary education (the pyramid's apex) was confined to the colonial capital of Batavia and the Dutch-built city of Bandung, 100 miles southwest in the cool Priangan highlands. Thus the twentieth-century colonial school-system brought into being pilgrimages which paralleled longer-established functionary journeys. The Rome of these pilgrimages was Batavia: not Singapore, not Manila, not Rangoon, not even the old Javanese royal capitals of Jogjakarta and Surakarta.<sup>11</sup> From all over the vast colony, but from nowhere outside it, the tender pilgrims made their inward, upward way, meeting fellow-pilgrims from different, perhaps once hostile, villages in primary school; from different ethnolinguistic groups in middle-school; and from every

10. The idea of a student being 'too old' to be in class X or Y, unthinkable in a traditional Muslim school, was an unselfconscious axiom of the colonial Western-style school.

11. Ultimately, of course, the apices were The Hague, Amsterdam, and Leiden; but those who could seriously dream of studying there were a tiny handful.

part of the realm in the tertiary institutions of the capital.<sup>12</sup> And they knew that from wherever they had come they still had read the same books and done the same sums. They also knew, even if they never got so far – and most did not – that Rome was Batavia, and that all these journeyings derived their ‘sense’ from the capital, in effect explaining why ‘we’ are ‘here’ ‘together.’ To put it another way, their common experience, and the amiably competitive comradeship of the classroom, gave the maps of the colony which they studied (always coloured differently from British Malaya or the American Philippines) a territorially specific imagined reality which was every day confirmed by the accents and physiognomies of their classmates.<sup>13</sup>

And what were they all together? The Dutch were quite clear on this point: whatever mother-tongue they spoke, they were irremediably *inlanders*, a word which, like the English ‘natives’ and the French ‘*indigènes*,’ always carried an unintentionally paradoxical semantic load. In this colony, as in each separate, other colony, it meant that the persons referred to were both ‘inferior’ and ‘belonged there’ (just as the Dutch, being ‘natives’ of Holland, belonged *there*). Conversely, the Dutch by such language assigned themselves, along with superiority, ‘not-belonging-there’. The word also implied that in their common inferiority, the *inlanders* were *equally* contemptible, no matter what ethnolinguistic group or class they came from. Yet even this miserable equality of condition had a definite perimeter. For *inlander* always raised the question ‘native of what?’. If the Dutch sometimes spoke as if *inlanders* were a world-category, experience showed that this notion was hardly sustainable in practice. *Inlanders* stopped at the coloured colony’s drawn edge. Beyond that were, variously, ‘natives’, *indigènes* and *indios*. Moreover, colonial legal terminology included the category *vreemde oosterlingen* (foreign Orientals), which had the dubious ring of false coin – as it were ‘foreign natives.’ Such ‘foreign Orientals,’ mainly Chinese, Arabs and Japanese, though they might live in the colony, had a politico-

12. Being secular, twentieth-century schools they were usually co-educational, though with boys the preponderant majority. Hence love-affairs, and quite often marriages, ‘off the school-bench,’ which crossed all traditional lines.

13. Sukarno never saw the West Irian for which he fought so hard till he was over 60. Here, as in the schoolroom maps, we see fiction seeping into reality – cf. *Noli* and *El Periquillo Sarniento*.

legal legal status superior to that of the ‘native natives’. Furthermore, tiny Holland was sufficiently awed by the Meiji oligarchs’ economic strength and military prowess for Japanese in the colony to be legally promoted, from 1899 on, to ‘honorary Europeans’. From all this, by a sort of sedimentation, *inlander* – excluding whites, Dutchmen, Chinese, Arabs, Japanese, ‘natives,’ *indigènes*, and *indios* – grew ever more specific in content; until, like a ripe larva, it was suddenly transmogrified into the spectacular butterfly called ‘Indonesian’.

While it is true that the concepts *inlander* and ‘native’ could never be truly generalized racist notions, since they always implied roots in some specific habitat,<sup>14</sup> the case of Indonesia should not lead us to assume that each ‘native’ habitat had preordained or immutable frontiers. Two examples will show the contrary: French West Africa and French Indochina.

In its heyday, the École Normale William Ponty in Dakar, though only a secondary school, was still the apex of the colonial educational pyramid in French West Africa.<sup>15</sup> To William Ponty came intelligent students from what we know today as Guinea, Mali, the Ivory Coast, Senegal, and so on. We should not be surprised therefore if the pilgrimages of these boys, terminating in Dakar, were initially read in French [West] African terms, of which the paradoxical concept *négritude* – essence of African-ness expressible only in French, language of the William Ponty classrooms – is an unforgettable symbol. Yet the apicality of William Ponty was accidental and evanescent. As more secondary schools were constructed in French West Africa, it was no longer necessary for bright boys to make so distant a

14. Compare, by contrast, ‘half-breeds’ or ‘niggers,’ who, beginning at Calais, could crop up anywhere on the planet outside the United Kingdom.

15. On the origins and development of this famous school, see Abdou Moumouni, *L’Education en Afrique*, pp. 41–49; on its political significance, Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*, pp. 12–14, 18–21. Originally an untitled *école normale* located in Saint-Louis, it was moved to Gorée, just outside Dakar, in 1913. Subsequently it was named after William Merlau-Ponty, the fourth governor-general (1908–15) of French West Africa. Serge Thion informs me that the name William (as opposed to Guillaume) has long been in vogue in the area around Bordeaux. He is surely right in attributing this popularity to the historic ties with England created by the wine trade; but it seems just possible that it goes back to the era when Bordeaux (Guyenne) was still a solid part of the realm ruled from London.

pilgrimage. And in any case the educational centrality of William Ponty was never matched by a comparable administrative centrality of Dakar. The interchangeability of French West African boys on the benches of William Ponty was not paralleled by their later bureaucratic substitutability in the French West African colonial administration. Hence, the school's Old Boys went home to become, eventually, Guinean or Malian nationalist leaders, while retaining a 'West African' camaraderie and solidary intimacy lost to succeeding generations.<sup>16</sup>

In much the same way, for one generation of relatively well educated adolescents, the curious hybrid 'Indochine' had a real, experienced, imagined meaning.<sup>17</sup> This entity, it will be recalled, was not legally proclaimed until 1887, and did not acquire its fullest territorial form until 1907, though active French meddling in the general area went back a century earlier.

Broadly speaking, the educational policy pursued by the colonial rulers of 'Indochine' had two fundamental purposes<sup>18</sup> – both of which, as it turned out, contributed to the growth of an 'Indochinese' consciousness. One aim was to break existing politico-cultural ties between the colonized peoples and the immediate extra-Indochinese

16. There seems to have been nothing similar in British West Africa, whether because the British colonies were non-contiguous, or because London was wealthy and liberal enough to start secondary schools almost simultaneously in the major territories, or because of the localism of rival Protestant missionary organizations. Achimota School, a secondary school founded by the colonial state in Accra in 1927, quickly became the main peak of a Gold Coast-specific educational pyramid, and after independence it was where the children of cabinet ministers began learning how to succeed their fathers. A rival peak, Mfantsipim Secondary School, had the advantage of seniority (it was founded in 1876), but the weaknesses of locale (Cape Coast) and semi-detachment from the state (it was in denominational hands till well after independence). I owe this information to Mohamed Chambas.

17. It led, *inter alia*, to a one-generation (1930–1951?) Indochinese Communist Party in which, for a time, youngsters whose mother tongues might be Vietnamese, Khmer, or Lao participated. Today, the formation of this party is sometimes viewed merely as an expression of 'age-old Vietnamese expansionism.' In fact, it was sired by the Comintern out of the educational (and to a lesser extent administrative) system of French Indochina.

18. This policy is ably and thoroughly discussed in Gail Paradise Kelly, 'Franco-Vietnamese Schools, 1918 to 1938'. Unluckily, the author concentrates exclusively on the Vietnamese-speaking population of Indochina.

world. As far as ‘Cambodge’ and ‘Laos’ were concerned,<sup>19</sup> the target was Siam, which had previously exercised a variable suzerainty over them and shared with both the rituals, institutions, and sacred language of Hinayana Buddhism. (In addition, the language and script of the lowland Lao were, and are, closely related to those of the Thai). It was precisely out of this concern that the French experimented first in those zones *last* seized from Siam with the so-called ‘renovated pagoda schools,’ which were designed to move Khmer monks and their pupils out of the Thai orbit into that of Indochina.<sup>20</sup>

In eastern Indochina (my shorthand for ‘Tonkin,’ ‘Annam,’ and ‘Cochin China’), the target was China and Chinese civilization. Although the dynasties ruling in Hanoi and Hué had for centuries defended their independence from Peking, they came to rule through a mandarinate consciously modelled on that of the Chinese. Recruitment into the state machinery was geared to written examinations in the Confucian classics; dynastic documents were written in Chinese characters; and the ruling class was heavily Sinicized in culture. These long-standing ties assumed an additionally unwelcome character after about 1895, when the writings of such Chinese reformers as K’ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch’i-ch’ao, and nationalists like Sun Yat-sen, began seeping across the northern frontier of the colony.<sup>21</sup>

19. I use this perhaps clumsy terminology to emphasize the colonial origins of these entities. ‘Laos’ was assembled out of a cluster of rival principalities, leaving more than half of the Lao-speaking population in Siam. The boundaries of ‘Cambodge’ conformed neither to any particular historical stretch of the precolonial realm, nor to the distribution of the Khmer-speaking peoples. Some hundreds of thousands of such people ended up trapped in ‘Cochin China,’ producing in time that distinct community known as the Khmer Krom (down-river Khmer).

20. They pursued this aim by establishing in the 1930s an Ecole Supérieure de Pali in Phnom Penh, an ecclesiastical college attended by both Khmer- and Lao-speaking monks. The attempt to turn Buddhist eyes away from Bangkok seems not to have been wholly successful. In 1942 (shortly after Siam regained control of much of northwestern ‘Cambodge’ with Japanese assistance), the French arrested a venerable professor of the Ecole for possession and distribution of ‘subversive’ Thai educational materials. (Most likely, these materials were some of the strongly nationalist school-texts produced by the vociferously anti-French regime of Field-Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram (1938–1944).

21. David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945*, p. 146. No less alarming were smuggled Chinese translations of such troubling French authors as Rousseau. (Kelly, ‘Franco-Vietnamese Schools’, p. 19).

Accordingly, Confucian examinations were successively abolished in 'Tonkin' in 1915 and in 'Annam' in 1918. Henceforth, recruitment into the civil services of Indochina was to take place exclusively through a developing French colonial education system. Furthermore, *quốc ngữ*, a romanized phonetic script originally devised by Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century,<sup>22</sup> and adopted by the authorities for use in 'Cochin China' as early as the 1860s, was consciously promoted to break the links with China – and perhaps also with the indigenous past – by making dynastic records and ancient literatures inaccessible to a new generation of colonized Vietnamese.<sup>23</sup>

The second aim of educational policy was to produce a carefully-calibrated quantum of French-speaking and French-writing Indo-chinese to serve as a politically reliable, grateful, and acculturated indigenous elite, filling the subordinate echelons of the colony's bureaucracy and larger commercial enterprises.<sup>24</sup>

The intricacies of the colonial educational system need not detain us here. For our present purposes, the key characteristic of the system was that it formed a single, if ramshackle, pyramid, of which, until the mid-1930s, the upper terraces all lay in the east. Up until then, for

22. In its final form, this script is usually attributed to the gifted lexicographer Alexandre de Rhodes, who in 1651 published his remarkable *Dictionarium annamiticum, lusitanum et latinum*.

23. '[Most] French colonial officials of the late nineteenth century . . . were convinced that to achieve permanent colonial success required the harsh curtailment of Chinese influences, including the writing system. Missionaries often saw the Confucian literati as the main obstacle to the general Catholic conversion of Vietnam. Hence, in their view, to eliminate the Chinese language was simultaneously to isolate Vietnam from its heritage and to neutralize the traditional elite.' (Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition*, p. 145). Kelly quotes one colonial writer thus: 'in effect, the teaching of quoc ngu alone . . . will have the result of communicating to Vietnamese only the French writing, literature, and philosophy which we wish them [to be exposed to]. That is those [works] which we judge useful to them and easily assimilable: only the texts which we transcribe into quoc ngu.' 'Franco-Vietnamese Schools', p. 22.

24. See *ibid.*, pp. 14–15. For a wider, lower stratum of the Indochinese population Governor-General Albert Sarraut (author of the 1917 Code of Public Instruction) urged: 'a simple education, reduced to essentials, permitting the child to learn all that will be useful to him to know in his humble career of farmer or artisan to ameliorate the natural and social conditions of his existence.' *Ibid.*, p. 17.

example, the only state-sponsored *lycées* were located in Hanoi and Saigon; and throughout the prewar colonial period, the sole university in Indochina was located in Hanoi, so to speak 'just down the street' from the palace of the Governor-General.<sup>25</sup> The climbers of these terraces included all the major vernacular-speakers of the French domain: Vietnamese, Chinese, Khmer, and Lao (and not a few young French colonials). For the climbers, coming from, shall we say, My Tho, Battambang, Vientiane, and Vinh, the meaning of their convergence had to be 'Indochinese,' in the same way that the polyglot and polyethnic student body of Batavia and Bandung had to read theirs as 'Indonesian.'<sup>26</sup> This Indochinese-ness, although it was quite real, was nonetheless imagined by a tiny group, and not for very long. Why did it turn out to be so evanescent, while Indonesian-ness survived and deepened?

First there was a marked change of course in colonial education, above all as applied in eastern Indochina, from about 1917 on. The actual, or immediately impending, liquidation of the traditional Confucian examination system persuaded more and more members of the Vietnamese elite to try to place their children in the best French schools available, so as to ensure their bureaucratic futures. The resulting competition for places in the few good schools available

25. In 1937, a total of 631 students were enrolled, 580 of them in the faculties of law and medicine. *Ibid.*, p. 79; see also pp. 69–79, for the bizarre history of this institution, founded in 1906, closed in 1908, reopened in 1918, and never, till the late 1930s, much more than a glorified vocational college.

26. As I shall be concentrating on Khmers and Vietnamese below, this may be the place to make a brief reference to some prominent Lao. The present Prime Minister of Laos, Kaysone Phoumvihan attended the University of Hanoi's medical faculty in the late 1930s. The head of state, Prince Souphanouvong, graduated from Hanoi's Lycée Albert Sarraut before obtaining an engineering degree in metropolitan France. His elder brother, Prince Phetsarath Ratanavongsa, who headed the short-lived Lao Issara (Free Lao) anticolonial government in Vientiane from October 1945 to April 1946, had as a youth been graduated from Saigon's Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat. Prior to World War II, the highest educational institution in 'Laos' was the small Collège [i.e. junior high school] Pavie in Vientiane. See Joseph J. Zasloff, *Pathet Lao*, pp. 104–105; and '3349' [pseudonym of Phetsarath Ratanavongsa], *Iron Man of Laos*, pp. 12 and 46. It is revealing, I think, that in his account of his later schooldays in Paris, Phetsarath regularly and unselfconsciously speaks of his identifiably Lao, Khmer, and Vietnamese classmates as 'the Indochinese students.' See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

aroused a particularly strong reaction from the *colons*, who regarded these schools as by right a largely French preserve. The colonial regime's solution to the problem was to create a separate and subordinate 'Franco-Vietnamese' educational structure which placed special emphasis, in its lower grades, on Vietnamese-language instruction in *quốc ngū* (with French taught as a second language via the medium of *quốc ngū*).<sup>27</sup> This policy shift had two complementary results. On the one hand, government publication of hundreds of thousands of *quốc ngū* primers significantly accelerated the spread of this European-invented script, unintentionally helping to turn it, between 1920 and 1945, into the popular medium for the expression of Vietnamese cultural (and national) solidarity.<sup>28</sup> For even if only 10 per cent of the Vietnamese-speaking population was literate by the late 1930s, this was a proportion unprecedented in the history of this people. Moreover, these literates were, unlike the Confucian literati, deeply committed to a rapid increase in their own numbers. (Similarly, in 'Cambodge' and 'Laos', if on a more limited scale, the authorities promoted the *printing* of elementary school-texts in the vernaculars, initially and mainly in the traditional orthographies, later and more feebly in romanized scripts).<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the policy worked to exclude non-native-Vietnamese-speakers residing in eastern Indochina. In the case of the Khmer Krom of 'Cochin

27. Thus in the previously 'integrated' *lycées* Chasseloup-Laubat and Albert Sarraut, sub-standard 'native sections' were established in 1917–1918. These 'native sections' eventually turned respectively into the Lycée Petrus Ky and the Lycée du Protectorat. (*Ibid.*, pp. 60–63). Nonetheless, a minority of privileged *indigènes* continued to attend the 'real French' *lycées* (the adolescent Norodom Sihanouk graced Chasseloup-Laubat), while a minority of 'French' (mainly Eurasians and natives with French legal status) attended Petrus Ky and its sister institution in Hanoi.

28. Marr notes that in the 1920s 'even the most optimistic member of the intelligentsia [committed to *quốc ngū*] could not have guessed that only two decades later, citizens of a Democratic Republic of Vietnam would be able to conduct all important affairs – political, military, economic, scientific and academic – in spoken Vietnamese linked to the *quốc ngū* writing system.' *Vietnamese Tradition*, p. 150. It was also a disagreeable surprise to the French.

29. It is instructive that one of the first issues raised by the early Khmer nationalists of the late 1930s was the 'menace' of a so-called 'quoc ngu-ization' of the Khmer script by the colonial authorities.

China,' it worked, in combination with the colonial regime's willingness to permit them to have 'Franco-Khmer' elementary schools like those being encouraged in the Protectorate, to re-orient ambitions *back up* the Mekong. Thus those Khmer Krom adolescents who aspired to higher education in the administrative capital of Indochina (and, for a select few, even in metropolitan France) increasingly took the detour via Phnom Penh rather than the highway through Saigon.

Second, in 1935 the Collège Sisowath in Phnom Penh was upgraded into a full-fledged state *lycée*, with a status equal to, *and a curriculum identical with*, those of the existing state *lycées* in Saigon and Hanoi. Although its students were at first drawn heavily (in the tradition of the Collège) from local Sino-Khmer merchant families and those of resident Vietnamese functionaries, the proportion of native Khmers steadily increased.<sup>30</sup> It is probably fair to say that, after 1940, the great bulk of Khmer-speaking adolescents who achieved a solid French high-school education did so in the neat colonial capital the colonialists had built for the Norodoms.

Third was the fact that there was no real isomorphism between the educational and administrative pilgrimages in Indochina. The French made no bones about expressing the view that if the Vietnamese were untrustworthy and grasping, they were nonetheless decisively more energetic and intelligent than the 'child-like' Khmer and Lao. Accordingly, they made extensive use of Vietnamese functionaries in western Indochina.<sup>31</sup> The 176,000 Vietnamese residing in 'Cambodge' in 1937 – representing less than one per cent of the 19 million Vietnamese-speakers of the colony, but about 6 per cent of the Protectorate's population – formed a relatively successful group, for whom therefore Indochina had a rather solid meaning, as it did for

30. The pattern was not immediately followed in Vientiane. Toye reports that in the course of the 1930s only 52 Lao were graduated from the Collège [he wrongly terms it Lycée] Pavie, as opposed to 96 Vietnamese. *Laos*, p. 45.

31. It is possible that this influx paralleled the institution of the Franco-Vietnamese school system, in that it deflected Vietnamese from competing with French nationals in the more advanced, eastern parts of Indochina. In 1937, there were 39,000 Europeans living in 'Cochin China,' 'Annam' and 'Tonkin,' and only 3,100 in 'Cambodge' and 'Laos' combined. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition*, p. 23.

the 50,000 sent into ‘Laos’ prior to 1945. Particularly the functionaries among them, who might be posted from place to place in *all* five subsections of the colony, could well imagine Indochina as the wide stage on which they would continue to perform.

Such imagining was much less easy for Lao and Khmer functionaries, although there was no formal or legal prohibition on fully-Indochinese careers for them. Even the more ambitious youngsters coming from the c.326,000 (1937) Khmer Krom community in eastern Indochina (representing perhaps 10 per cent of the entire Khmer-speaking population) found that *in practice* they had very limited career prospects outside ‘Cambodge’. Thus Khmer and Lao might sit alongside Vietnamese in French-language secondary and tertiary schools in Saigon and Hanoi, but they were unlikely to go on to share administrative offices there. Like youngsters from Cotonou and Abidjan in Dakar, they were destined to go back, on graduation, to the ‘homes’ colonialism had demarcated for them. To put it another way, if their educational pilgrimages were directed towards Hanoi, their administrative journeys ended in Phnom Penh and Vientiane.

Out of these contradictions emerged those Khmer-speaking students who subsequently came to be remembered as the first Cambodian nationalists. The man who can reasonably be regarded as the ‘father’ of Khmer nationalism, Son Ngoc Thanh, was, as his Vietnamized name suggests, a Khmer Krom who was educated in Saigon and for a while held a minor judicial post in that city. But in the mid-1930s he abandoned the Paris of the Mekong Delta to seek a more promising future in its Blois. Prince Sisowath Youtevong attended secondary school in Saigon before leaving for France for further study. When he returned to Phnom Penh fifteen years later, after World War II, he helped to found the (Khmer) Democratic Party and served as Prime Minister in 1946–1947. His Defence Minister, Sonn Voeunnsai, undertook virtually the same journeys. Huy Kanthoul, Democratic Prime Minister in 1951–1952, had graduated from an *école normale* in Hanoi in 1931, and was then returned to Phnom Penh, where he eventually joined the Lycée Sisowath’s teaching staff.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps most exemplary of

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32. Biographical materials on these men were kindly provided to me by Steve Heder.

all is the figure of Ieu Koeus, first of a melancholy line of assassinated Khmer political leaders.<sup>33</sup> Born in the province of Battambang in 1905 – when it was still ruled from Bangkok – he attended a local ‘reformed pagoda school’ before entering an ‘Indochinese’ elementary school in Battambang town. In 1921, he proceeded to the Collège Sisowath in the Protectorate’s capital, and then to a *collège de commerce* in Hanoi, from which he graduated in 1927 at the top of his French-reading class. Hoping to study chemistry in Bordeaux, he took and passed the scholarship examination. But the colonial state blocked his way abroad. He returned to his native Battambang, where he ran a pharmacy, continuing to do so even after Bangkok regained the province in 1941. After the Japanese collapse in August 1945, he reappeared in ‘Cambodge’ as a Democratic parliamentarian. It is notable that he was in his way a lineal descendant of the illustrious philologists of an earlier Europe, insofar as he designed a typewriter keyboard for the Khmer script and published a weighty two-volume *Pheasa Khmer* [The Khmer Language], or as the misleading title-page of the 1967 edition has it, *La Langue Cambodgienne (Un Essai d'étude raisonné)*.<sup>34</sup> But this text made its first appearance – volume 1 only – in 1947, when its author was Chairman of the Constituent Assembly in Phnom Penh, not in 1937, when he was vegetating in Battambang, when as yet no Khmer-speaking *lycéens* had been produced by the Lycée Sisowath, and when Indochina still had an ephemeral reality. By 1947, Khmer-speakers – at least those from ‘Cambodge’ – were no longer attending classes in Saigon or Hanoi. A new generation was coming on the scene for whom ‘Indochine’ was history and ‘Vietnam’ now a real and foreign country.

It is true that brutal invasions and occupations during the nineteenth century, ordered by the Nguyễn dynasts in Hué, left bitter folk-memories among the Khmer, including those in that ‘Cochin China’ fated to become part of Vietnam. But comparable bitternesses

33. He died in 1950, in a grenade attack on the Democratic Party headquarters organized by an unknown, but probably princely, hand.

34. Published in Phnom Penh by the Librairie Mitserei [Free Friends]. ‘Misleading’ because the entire text is in Khmer. Biographical details on Ieu Koeus, drawn from his 1964 cremation volume, were generously passed on to me by Steve Heder.

existed in the Netherlands Indies: Sundanese against Javanese; Batak against Minangkabau; Sasak against Balinese; Toraja against Buginese; Javanese against Ambonese, and so on. The so-called ‘federalist policy’ pursued between 1945 and 1948 by the formidable Lieutenant Governor-General Hubertus van Mook to outflank the infant Indonesian Republic attempted precisely to exploit such bitternesses.<sup>35</sup> But in spite of a spate of ethnic rebellions in almost all parts of independent Indonesia between 1950 and 1964, ‘Indonesia’ survived. In part it survived because Batavia remained the educational apex to the end, but also because colonial administrative policy did not rusticate educated Sundanese to the ‘Sundalands,’ or Batak to their place of origin in the highlands of North Sumatra. Virtually all the major ethnolinguistic groups were, by the end of the colonial period, accustomed to the idea that there was an archipelagic stage on which they had parts to play. Thus, only one of the rebellions of 1950–64 had *separatist* ambitions; all the rest were competitive within a single Indonesian political system.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, one can not ignore the curious accident that by the 1920s an ‘Indonesian language’ had come into self-conscious existence. How this accident came about is so instructive that it seems worth a brief digression. Earlier, mention was made of the fact that only to a limited and late extent were the Indies ruled through Dutch. How could it not be so, when the Dutch had begun their local conquests in the early seventeenth century, while Dutch-language instruction for *inlanders* was not seriously undertaken until the early twentieth? What happened instead was that by a slow, largely unplanned process, a strange language-of-state evolved on the basis of an ancient inter-insular lingua franca.<sup>37</sup> Called *dienstmaleisch* (perhaps ‘service-Malay’ or

35. See Kahin, *Nationalism*, chapter 12; Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution, 1945–50*, chapter 6; and Henri Alers, *Om een rode of groene Merdeka*, passim.

36. The exception was the abortive Republic of the South Moluccas. Christianized Ambonese had long been heavily recruited for the repressive colonial army. Many fought under van Mook against the new-born revolutionary Indonesian Republic; after Holland’s recognition of Indonesian independence in 1950, they had some reason to expect an unpleasant future.

37. See the valuable account in John Hoffman, ‘A Foreign Investment: Indies Malay to 1902,’ *Indonesia*, 27 (April 1979), pp. 65–92.

'administrative-Malay'), it belonged typologically with 'Ottoman' and that 'fiscal German' which emerged from the polyglot barracks of the Habsburg empire.<sup>38</sup> By the early nineteenth century it was solidly in place inside officialdom. When print-capitalism arrived on the scene in a sizeable way after mid-century, the language moved out into the marketplace and the media. Used at first mainly by Chinese and Eurasian newspapermen and printers, it was picked up by *inlanders* at the century's close. Quickly the *dienst* branch of its family tree was forgotten and replaced by a putative ancestor in the Riau Islands (of which the most important had – perhaps fortunately – since 1819 become British Singapore). By 1928, shaped by two generations of urban writers and readers, it was ready to be adopted by Young Indonesia as the national(-ist) language *bahasa Indonesia*. Since then, it has never looked back.

Yet, in the end, the Indonesian case, interesting as it is, should not mislead us into thinking that, if Holland had been a bigger power,<sup>39</sup> and had arrived in 1850 rather than 1600, the national language could not just as well have been Dutch. Nothing suggests that Ghanaian nationalism is any less real than Indonesian simply because its national language is English rather than Ashanti. It is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them – as *emblems* of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*. After all, imperial languages are still *vernaculars*, and thus

38. The military 'constituted something like an *anational caste*, the members of which lived even in their private lives ordinarily distinct from their national environments and spoke very often a special language, the so-called *ärrisch deutsch* ("fiscal German"), as it was ironically named by the representatives of the literary German, meaning by it a strange linguistic mixture which does not take the rules of grammar very seriously.' Jászi, *The Dissolution*, p. 144. Author's emphases.

39. Not merely in the obvious sense. Because, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Holland had, for all intents and purposes, only one colony, and a huge, profitable one at that, it was quite practical to train its functionaries in a (single) non-European *diensttaal*. Over time, special schools and faculties grew up in the metropole to prepare future functionaries linguistically. For multi-continental empires like the British, no single locally-based *diensttaal* would have sufficed.

particular vernaculars among many. If radical Mozambique speaks Portuguese, the significance of this is that Portuguese is the medium through which Mozambique is imagined (and at the same time limits its stretch into Tanzania and Zambia). Seen from this perspective the use of Portuguese in Mozambique (or English in India) is basically no different than the use of English in Australia or Portuguese in Brazil. Language is not an instrument of exclusion: in principle, anyone can learn any language. On the contrary, it is fundamentally inclusive, limited only by the fatality of Babel: no one lives long enough to learn *all* languages. Print-language is what invents nationalism, not *a* particular language per se.<sup>40</sup> The only question-mark standing over languages like Portuguese in Mozambique and English in India is whether the administrative and educational systems, particularly the latter, can generate a politically sufficient diffusion of bilingualism. Thirty years ago, almost no Indonesian spoke *bahasa Indonesia* as his or her mother-tongue; virtually everyone had their own ‘ethnic’ language and some, especially people in the nationalist movement, *bahasa Indonesia/dienstmaleisch* as well. Today there are perhaps millions of young Indonesians, from dozens of ethnolinguistic backgrounds, who speak Indonesian as their mother-tongue.

It is not clear yet whether thirty years from now there will be a generation of Mozambiquians who speak only Mozambique-Portuguese. But, in this late twentieth century, it is not necessarily the case that the emergence of such a generation is a *sine qua non* for

40. Marr’s account of language-development in eastern Indochina is very revealing on this point. He notes that as late as c. 1910 ‘most educated Vietnamese assumed that Chinese or French, or both, were essential modes of “higher” communication.’ (*Vietnamese Tradition*, p. 137). After 1920, however, and partly as a result of state promotion of the phonetic *quốc ngữ* script, things changed quickly. By then ‘the belief was growing that spoken Vietnamese was an important and perhaps [sic] essential component of national identity. Even intellectuals more at home in French than in their mother tongue came to appreciate the significance of the fact that at least 85% of their fellow-countrymen spoke the same language.’ (p. 138) They were by then fully aware of the role of mass literacy in advancing the nation-states of Europe and Japan. Yet Marr also shows that for a long time there was no clear correlation between language-preference and political stance: ‘Upholding the Vietnamese mother tongue was not inherently patriotic, any more than promoting the French language was inherently collaborationist.’ (p. 150).

Mozambiquian national solidarity. In the first place, advances in communications technology, especially radio and television, give print allies unavailable a century ago. Multilingual broadcasting can conjure up the imagined community to illiterates and populations with different mother-tongues. (Here there are resemblances to the conjuring up of mediaeval Christendom through visual representations and bilingual literati.) In the second place, twentieth-century nationalisms have, as I have been arguing, a profoundly modular character. They can, and do, draw on more than a century and a half of human experience and three earlier models of nationalism. Nationalist leaders are thus in a position consciously to deploy civil and military educational systems modelled on official nationalism's; elections, party organizations, and cultural celebrations modelled on the popular nationalisms of nineteenth-century Europe; and the citizen-republican idea brought into the world by the Americas. Above all, the very idea of 'nation' is now nestled firmly in virtually all print-languages; and nation-ness is virtually inseparable from political consciousness.

In a world in which the national state is the overwhelming norm, all of this means that nations can now be imagined without linguistic communality – not in the native spirit of *nosotros los Americanos*, but out of a general awareness of what modern history has demonstrated to be possible.<sup>41</sup> It seems fitting, in this context, to conclude this chapter by returning to Europe and considering briefly that nation whose linguistic diversity has so often been used as a cudgel to club proponents of language-based theories of nationalism.

In 1891, amidst novel jubilees marking the 600th anniversary of the Confederacy of Schwyz, Obwalden, and Nidwalden, the Swiss state 'decided on' 1291 as the date of the 'founding' of Switzerland.<sup>42</sup> Such a decision, waiting 600 years to be made, has its diverting aspects, and suggests already that modernity rather than antiquity characterizes

41. I say 'can' because there are obviously plenty of cases where the possibility has been, and is being, rejected. In such cases, for example Old Pakistan, the explanation is not ethno-cultural pluralism, but barred pilgrimages.

42. Christopher Hughes, *Switzerland*, p. 107. This excellent text, for which Seton-Watson rightly expresses his admiration, is the basis for the argument that follows.

Swiss nationalism. Indeed, Hughes goes so far as to argue that the 1891 jubilees mark the birth of this nationalism, commenting that ‘in the first half of the nineteenth century . . . nationhood sat rather lightly on the shoulders of the cultivated middle classes: Mme de Staël [1766–1817], Fuseli [1741–1825], Angelica Kauffmann [1741–1807], Sismondi [1773–1842], Benjamin Constant [1767–1830], are they all Swiss?’<sup>43</sup> If the implied answer is ‘hardly,’ its significance derives from the fact that, all over the Europe surrounding Switzerland, the first half of the nineteenth century saw the burgeoning of vernacular nationalist movements in which ‘cultivated middle classes’ (as it were, philologists + capitalists) played central parts. Why then did nationalism come so late to Switzerland, and what consequences did that lateness have for its ultimate shaping (in particular, its contemporary multiplicity of ‘national languages’)?

Part of the answer lies in the youth of the Swiss state, which, Hughes drily observes, is difficult to trace back beyond 1813–15 ‘without the aid of some prevarication.’<sup>44</sup> He reminds us that the first real Swiss citizenship, the introduction of direct (male) suffrage, and the ending of ‘internal’ tolls and customs areas were achievements of the Helvetic Republic forcibly brought into being by the French occupation of 1798. Only in 1803 did the state include significant numbers of Italian-speakers, with the acquisition of Ticino. Only in 1815 did it gain the populous French-speaking areas of Valais, Geneva, and Neuchâtel from a vengefully anti-French Holy Alliance – in exchange for neutrality and a highly conservative constitution.<sup>45</sup> In effect, today’s multilingual Switzerland is a product of the early nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup>

A second factor was the country’s backwardness (which, combined

43. Ibid., p. 218. The dates are my interpolations.

44. Ibid., p. 85.

45. Plus Aargau, St. Gallen and Grisons. This last is of special interest since today it is the surviving home of Romansch, the most echt-Swiss of the country’s national languages – a status it achieved, however, only in 1937! Ibid., pp. 59 and 85.

46. We might note in passing that Mme. de Staël barely survived long enough to see its birth. Besides, her family, like that of Sismondi, came from Geneva, which was an independent statelet outside ‘Switzerland’ until 1815. Small wonder that Swiss nationhood rested ‘rather lightly’ on their shoulders.

## THE LAST WAVE

with its forbidding topography and lack of exploitable resources, helped to keep it from absorption by more powerful neighbours). Today it may be difficult to remember that until World War II Switzerland was a poor country, with a standard of living half that of England's, and an overwhelmingly *rural* country. In 1850, barely 6 per cent of the population lived in minimally urban areas, and as late as 1920 the figure had risen only to 27.6 per cent.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, then, the bulk of the population was an immobile (except for the age-old export of hardy youths as mercenaries and Papal Guards) peasantry. The country's backwardness was not merely economic, it was also political and cultural. 'Old Switzerland,' the area of which did not change between 1515 and 1803, and most of whose inhabitants spoke one or other of numerous German patois, was ruled by a loose coalition of cantonal aristocratic oligarchies. 'The secret of the long duration of the Confederacy was its double nature. Against outside enemies it produced a sufficient unity of peoples. Against internal rebellion, it produced a sufficient unity of oligarchies. If peasants rebelled, as they did three times or so in every century, then differences would be put aside and the *governments* of other cantons would lend their assistance, mediating often, but not always, in favour of their fellow-ruler.'<sup>48</sup> Except for the absence of monarchical institutions, the picture is not much different from that of the innumerable petty principalities within the Holy Roman Empire, of which Liechtenstein, on Switzerland's eastern border, is a last odd relic.<sup>49</sup>

It is instructive that as late as 1848, almost two generations after the Swiss state came into being, ancient religious cleavages were much more politically salient than linguistic ones. Remarkably enough, in territories unalterably-denoted Catholic Protestantism was *unlawful*, and in those so-denoted Protestant Catholicism was

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47. Ibid., pp. 173 and 274. Any nineteenth-century 'cultivated middle class' had to be very small.

48. Ibid., p. 86. Emphasis added.

49. An absence of monarchies also characterized the Hanseatic League, a loose political coalition to which it would be problematic to attribute either statehood or nationhood.

illegal; and these laws were strictly enforced. (Language was a matter of personal choice and convenience). Only after 1848, in the backwash of Europe-wide revolutionary upheavals and the general spread of vernacularizing national movements, did language take religion's place, and the country become segmented into unalterably-denoted linguistic zones. (Religion now became a matter of personal choice).<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the persistence – in such a small country – of a large variety of sometimes mutually-unintelligible German idiolects suggests the late arrival of print-capitalism and standardized modern education to much of Swiss peasant society. Thus *Hochsprache* (print-German) has had, until rather recently, the language-of-state status of *ärarisch deutsch* and *dienstmaleisch*. Furthermore, Hughes remarks that today 'higher' officials are expected to have a working knowledge of two federal languages, implying that the same competence is not expected of their subordinates. Indirectly, a similar point is made by the Federal Directive of 1950 which insists that '*Educated* German Swiss are certainly able to work in French, as are *educated* Italian Swiss'.<sup>51</sup> We have, in effect, a situation which at bottom is not too different from Mozambique's – a bilingual political class ensconced over a variety of monolingual populations, with only this dissimilarity: the 'second language' is that of a powerful neighbour rather than of a former colonial ruler.

Nonetheless, in view of the fact that in 1910 the maternal language of almost 73 per cent of the population was German, 22 per cent French, 4 per cent Italian, and 1 per cent Romansch (these proportions have scarcely varied over the intervening decades), it is perhaps surprising that in the second half of the nineteenth century – era of official nationalisms – Germanification was not attempted. Certainly up to 1914 strong pro-German sympathies existed. Between Germany and German Switzerland borders were porous in the extreme. Trade and investment, as well as aristocrats and professionals, moved back and forth quite freely. But Switzerland also abutted on two other major European powers, France and Italy,

50. Ibid., p. 274.

51. Ibid., pp. 59–60. Emphases added.

and the political risks of Germanizing were plain. Legal parity between German, French, and Italian was thus the obverse side of the coin of Swiss neutrality.<sup>52</sup>

All of the preceding evidence indicates that Swiss nationalism is best understood as part of the 'last wave'. If Hughes is right in dating its birth to 1891, it is not much more than a decade older than Burmese or Indonesian nationalism. In other words, it arose in that period of world history in which the nation was becoming an international norm, and in which it was possible to 'model' nationness in a much more complex way than hitherto. If the conservative political, and backward socio-economic, structure of Switzerland 'delayed' the rise of nationalism,<sup>53</sup> the fact that its pre-modern political institutions were non-dynastic and non-monarchical helped to prevent the excesses of official nationalism (contrast the case of Siam discussed in Chapter 6). Finally, as in the case of the Southeast Asian examples, the appearance of Swiss nationalism on the eve of the communications revolution of the twentieth century made it possible and practical to 'represent' the imagined community in ways that did not require linguistic uniformity.

In conclusion, it may be worth restating the general argument of this chapter. The 'last wave' of nationalisms, most of them in the colonial territories of Asia and Africa, was in its origins a response to the new-style global imperialism made possible by the achievements of industrial capitalism. As Marx put it in his inimitable way: 'The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole face of the globe.'<sup>54</sup> But capitalism had also, not least by its dissemination of print, helped to create popular, vernacular-based nationalisms in Europe, which to different degrees undermined the age-old dynastic principle, and egged into self-

52. Romansch's elevation in 1937 scarcely disguised the original calculation.

53. The social structure of Hungary was also backward, but Magyar aristocrats sat inside a huge polyethnic dynastic empire, in which their putative language-group formed merely a minority, albeit a very important one. Small, republican Switzerland's aristocratic oligarchy was never threatened in the same way.

54. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 37. Who but Marx would have described this world-transforming class as being 'chased'?

naturalization every dynasty positioned to do so. Official nationalism – weld of the new national and old dynastic principles (the *British Empire*) – led in turn to what, for convenience, one can call ‘Russification’ in the extra-European colonies. This ideological tendency meshed neatly with practical exigencies. The late-nineteenth-century empires were too large and too far-flung to be ruled by a handful of nationals. Moreover, in tandem with capitalism the state was rapidly multiplying its functions, in both the metropoles and the colonies. Combined, these forces generated ‘Russifying’ school-systems intended in part to produce the required subordinate cadres for state and corporate bureaucracies. These school-systems, centralized and standardized, created quite new pilgrimages which typically had their Romes in the various colonial capitals, for the nations hidden at the core of the empires would permit no more inward ascension. Usually, but by no means always, these educational pilgrimages were paralleled, or replicated, in the administrative sphere. The interlock between particular educational and administrative pilgrimages provided the territorial base for new ‘imagined communities’ in which natives could come to see themselves as ‘nationals’. The expansion of the colonial state which, so to speak, invited ‘natives’ into schools and offices, and of colonial capitalism which, as it were, excluded them from boardrooms, meant that to an unprecedented extent the key early spokesmen for colonial nationalism were lonely, bilingual intelligentsias unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies.

As bilingual intelligentsias, however, and above all as early-twentieth-century intelligentsias, they had access, inside the classroom and outside, to models of nation, nation-ness, and nationalism distilled from the turbulent, chaotic experiences of more than a century of American and European history. These models, in turn, helped to give shape to a thousand inchoate dreams. In varying combinations, the lessons of creole, vernacular and official nationalism were copied, adapted, and improved upon. Finally, as with increasing speed capitalism transformed the means of physical and intellectual communication, the intelligentsias found ways to bypass print in propagating the imagined community, not merely to illiterate masses, but even to literate masses *reading* different languages.

## Patriotism and Racism

In the preceding chapters I have tried to delineate the processes by which the nation came to be imagined, and, once imagined, modelled, adapted and transformed. Such an analysis has necessarily been concerned primarily with social change and different forms of consciousness. But it is doubtful whether either social change or transformed consciousnesses, in themselves, do much to explain the *attachment* that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations – or, to revive a question raised at the beginning of this text – why people are ready to die for these inventions.

In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals (particularly in Europe?) to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism,<sup>1</sup> it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles. On the other hand, how truly rare it is to find

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1. Cf. the passage in Nairn's *Break-up of Britain*, pp. 14–15 above, and Hobsbawm's somewhat Biedermeier dictum: 'the basic fact [is] that Marxists as such are not nationalists.' 'Some Reflections,' p. 10.