

BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Pandaemonium. Ethnicity in International Politics

Oxford University Press, 1993, 221 pp., \$ 19.95

"The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling round nations and nationalism." (p. 29)

In his new book, Senator Moynihan's aim is **not** to settle questions, but to raise them. True to his word he does not even define the term "ethnicity" (although there are many clues). Ethnic conflict, as he says in his Cyril Foster Lecture, is something "we" are not intellectually ready for (e.g. events in Yugoslavia), but it is nothing that just happens "elsewhere". His advice is to avoid ethnic preferences, to tolerate diversity, not to put emphasis on the nation-state, but to promote economic growth to smooth tensions. To explain his opinion he goes back to Europe before World War I. In the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Romanov empires, borders were crossed without passports and various ethnic groups lived in peace without interfering in each other's lives. Moynihan states that ethnic strife began with the assassination in Sarajevo, reached a sad climax in Nazism and has been popular ever since. During the period of cold war, both sides "used" it to their advantage and by doing so, killed all principles of international law. And now the world has arrived at a second Sarajevo!

As a large part of the work is on the "right" of self-determination, independence, sovereignty, and the "right of intervention" arising from general principles of humanitarian law, Moynihan carefully examines the U.N. Charter, especially Art. 1 and Art. 2 (7). The main problem of self-determination is that it is often sought for egotistical reasons, sometimes to deny it to others. In the opinion of the General Assembly "it is illegal to aid secessionist or insurgent movements, but equally illegal to use force to prevent self-determination" (p. 151). There have been changes recently, e.g. did the Security Council act to protect the Kurds in Iraq by finding a "threat to international peace and security". "The life of the law [...] has not been logic; it has been experience. Experience will now change, probably dramatically" (p. 152/152).

The author offers examples and explanations of cases, e.g. Vietnam, India, Israel and criticizes recent American policy. He argues that his country seemed at times incapable of conceptualizing a world in which states break up. As regards ethnicity in international politics, American policy persisted in getting it wrong. Even as the Serbs and Croats were declaring their independence and a Serbian-dominated army was on the move, Secretary of

State James A. Baker III was insisting that "The U.S. continues to recognize and support the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia [...]" (p. 165/166).

According to Senator Moynihan, American policy has changed, "but always in response to events, rather than anticipation of them" (p. 166). A good example of this is the diplomatic acceptance of the Baltic States. The U.S.A. did not establish diplomatic relations until over 30 other countries had done so. All these "mistakes", Moynihan vows, are not to be ascribed to one administration alone. He feels, "there has been and continues to be an inadequate understanding of what has made the world turn upside down [...]. There was enough of a knowledge base, both theoretical and practical, to make possible a sufficiently accurate anticipation as to what the present era would look like. Let us hold firm to that. The world does not defy understanding; and what can be understood can sometimes be modified" (p. 167/168).

In the end, the author repeats his warning that the large states and associations of states and definitely the United Nations need to set about fashioning responses to conflicts concerning "self-determination".

"Pandaemonium" (the title of this work), the capital in Milton's "Paradise Lost", is defined as a state of wild and noisy disorder. Unlike Milton, we cannot regain paradise easily if at all. If we are not extremely careful and act responsibly as one world, we will ultimately lose what is left of it. To Moynihan, it is of utmost importance not to give up fighting for it and against a nationalism that includes inter-ethnic hostilities.

Only about a year ago, in an interview, did the Senator remind us that "Above all, because they are so easily overlooked, scholars need to attend to successes. The partitions that didn't happen. The strife that went away. The multiethnic societies that seem to work"¹.

Just like "On the Law of Nations" (Harvard University Press, 1990), this book is written in an easily comprehensible though intellectual style. Despite the seemingly unsurmountable wealth of facts from both history and present times that show the Senator's dazzling knowledge and deep understanding of the topics, his work allows access to everybody who is concerned about the situation of our world.

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¹ *M. Barone*, Ethnic tribes and pandemonium, in: U.S. News and World Report, Feb. 15th, 1993.