

Intellectuals and Europe
Imagining a Europe of the Regions in Twentieth Century
Germany, Britain and Ireland

Fergal Lenehan

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DEUTSCH-IRISCHE STUDIEN
LÉANN NA GEARMÁINE AGUS NA HÉIREANN

7

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Fergal Lenehan, February 2014

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Introduction

The word ‘crisis’ has been ever present in the discourse surrounding Europe since 2008, with the nationalizing of irresponsible banking debts, the constant questioning of the Euro currency and the subsequent ‘bailing out’ of Greece, the Republic of Ireland, Portugal, Spain’s banks and Cyprus. The idea that an overriding crisis pervades the contemporary period is not new and, indeed, may be seen as a recurring motif of intellectual debate. While the causes of the contemporary crisis, if one views it as distinctly linked to unbridled casino capitalism and its aftershocks, may be abstract and less than concrete (although those now affected by it live, of course, with very real consequences), crisis discourses have also frequently been linked to events that are unambiguously tangible. Two historical moments permeated by crisis are examined here; the years surrounding World War II, 1939-1945, and the years encompassing the fall of Eastern European Communism, 1987-1992, marked also by continuing violence in Northern Ireland. These were periods of crisis but also of great hope; many authors viewed post-war peace and moves towards increased European integration as allowing for the positive remoulding of European territory.

The present work examines how a number of intellectuals imagined a new European space. Their imagining retains (with the noted exception of Hans Magnus Enzensberger) something of a uniform quality: the authors argue for the embracing of a new spatiality that combines regionalism and Europe, often called a Europe of the regions.¹ Thus, this work engages with *one specific* configuration of the European idea that seeks to merge decentralization and the notion of a united Europe. The principal authors discussed argue in a similar manner but often from diverse ideological perspectives. It is ultimately argued that those engaging with the present crisis, and looking for Europeanized solutions, could find a stimulus in these texts for the thoughtful remoulding of the contemporary EU.

1 For more on crisis periods and changing spatiality see: Charles S. Maier, Transformations of Territoriality 1600-2000. In: Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad and Oliver Janz (eds), *Transnationale Geschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2006, pp. 32-55 and Ulf Engel and Matthias Middell, *Bruchzonen der Globalisierung, globale Krisen und Territorialitätsregime: Kategorien einer Globalgeschichtsschreibung*. *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 15/5/6 (2005), pp. 5-38, here p. 25.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Thinkers from within the borders of the present day nation-states of the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany and Austria are examined – intellectuals thus from disparate contexts in relation to issues of decentralization and the intellectual engagement with Europe.² The present work does not constitute an exhaustive history but centres on a number of individuals in what is an “extrinsic narrative” that is not distilled from events themselves, as an “intrinsic narrative” would be, but from the inquiry’s “frame of reference”.³ The frame of reference is the imagining of a decentralized Europe that combines ideas of European unity and regionalism. What one may call the Europe of the regions discourse contains “statements different in form, and dispersed in time”, which form a discursive formation due to the “regularity” between statements.⁴ Public intellectuals remain at the centre of this work and the problem of definition permeates any study of the figure of the intellectual.⁵ The definition used here comes from the sociologist Ron Eyerman. He states that:

The role and practise of the intellectual is bound up with communicating ideas to an audience, with ‘education’ and with persuasion [...] intellectuals arouse and stir pub-

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- 2 See e.g. Paul Michael Lützeler, *Kontinentalisierung: Das Europa der Schriftsteller*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2007; Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002*. London: Harper, 2004; Hartmut Kaelble, *Europäer über Europa: Die Entstehung des europäischen Selbstverständnisses im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2001; Michael Keating, *The New Regionalism in Western Europe*. Cheltenham: Elgar, 1998; John Kendle, *Federal Britain: A History*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997; Peter Wagstaff, *Introduction: Region, Nation, Identity*. In: Peter Wagstaff (ed.), *Regionalism in Europe*. London: Intellect, 1994, pp. 3-13; Alan Butt Philip, *Regionalism in the United Kingdom*. In: Wagstaff (ed.), *Regionalism in Europe*. pp. 99-115; Theo Stammen, *Federalism in Germany*. In: Wagstaff (ed.), *Regionalism in Europe*. pp. 51-67; Peter Bugge, *The Nation Supreme: The Idea of Europe 1914-1945*. In: Kevin Wilson and Jan van der Dussen (eds), *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 83-149; and Paul Michael Lützeler, *Die Schriftsteller und Europa*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998.
 - 3 John R. Hall, *Theorizing Hermeneutic Cultural History*. In: Roger Friedland and John Mohr (eds), *Matters of Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 110-39, here p. 113.
 - 4 See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. London: Routledge, 1994, p. 32, 38. See also: Moritz Bassler, *Einleitung*. In: Moritz Bassler (ed.), *New Historicismism: Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995, pp. 7-28.
 - 5 Liam O’Dowd, *Intellectuals and Intelligentsia: A Sociological Introduction*. In: Liam O’Dowd (ed.), *On Intellectuals and Intellectual Life in Ireland*. Belfast: Baird, 1996, pp. 1-31, here p. 5.