

# Learning@Europe



## Interviews' abstract

July 4th, 2007



HOC - Hypermedia Open Center (Lab)  
Politecnico di Milano  
Electronic and Information Department

phone: +39 031 332 7389  
fax: +39 031 332 7365  
[www.learningateurope.net](http://www.learningateurope.net)

## Interviews' abstracts

---

### 1. INTERVIEWS ON HISTORICAL ISSUES (AT EUROPEAN LEVEL)

*These interviews deal with historical issues that did not affect one single country, but rather had an impact all over Europe. They describe the main aspects of the issue, with examples taken from the history of different European countries.*

#### **TOWARDS THE BIRTH OF NATIONAL STATES: EUROPE (Claudia Di Filippo - Professor of Modern History - Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy)**

The interview is about the main historical changes in various European regions during the passage from the feudal system to the modern state. The most influential causes can be found in the economic needs and in the role played by the cities. Three different paths can be noted; the centralized model typical of France, Spain and England, the largely autonomous model of the Italian cities and the German model, under the authority of the Empire. The role of the Reformation is also discussed.

#### **THE MODERNIZATION OF STATES AND THE BIRTH OF NATIONALISM (Bo Stråth - Professor of Contemporary History - Department of History and Civilisation, European University Institute, Florence, Italy)**

The interview begins by explaining the differences between the concept of a state and that of a nation. It then describes the role of the French Revolution in influencing the birth of modern European nations. Additional fundamental sociological issues are also discussed: the idea of the sovereignty of 'the people', that 'the people' should feel part of the land, the role of a common language, the relationship between religion and nationalism.

#### **THE MODERN WELFARE STATE (Edoardo Bressan - Professor of Contemporary History - Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy)**

The interview describes the characteristics of the modern state and introduces the concept of welfare, presenting its origins and process of consolidation. Particular attention is spent on the mechanisms underlying the realization of welfare state in Europe. Finally, the U.S.A. model of welfare state is discussed in relation to the European ones.

#### **THE ROLE OF LAICISM AND RELIGION IN THE BIRTH OF MODERN STATES (Libero Gerosa - Professor of canonical law and provost of the Theology Faculty of Lugano - University of Lugano, Switzerland)**

The interview investigates the concept of laicism as "separation of spheres of competence", its origins, its positive and negative aspects, with reference to the way laicism is currently interpreted in Europe. The interview deals also with the function of the Church, with particular attention to the role it played in fostering cultural integration and democracy, and defending human dignity. Finally, the laic state is opposed to the totalising, all-embracing state.

#### **THE BIRTH OF NATION STATES (Heinz Gerhard Haupt - Department of History and Civilization - European University Institute, Florence, Italy)**

The interview deals with the main aspects of the birth of nation states in Europe, concentrating on the process of centralization and definition of the state as a nation. The analysis underlines the specificity of the three processes that were brought to the formation of national states: revolution, unification, desegregation of multinational empires. The interview also explains the difference between the concepts of nation state and national identity.

#### **THE NOTION OF NATION (Heinz Gerhard Haupt - Department of History and Civilization - European University Institute, Florence, Italy)**

This interview explains how the notion of nation arose in Europe. First, the analysis underlines the differences in the coming up of the nation (from "above" or from "below"), then it explain how the notion of nation progressively spread through society thanks to national movements. The importance of religion in the process of national identification is also pointed out.

**THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL STATES: THE EUROPEAN UNION (Alberto Martinelli - Professor of Political Sciences, Department of Social and Political Studies – Università degli Studi di Milano)**

The interview analyzes some characteristics of the European Union and compares it to the Swiss model, with the aim of finding ways to realize an effective European Union through a common administrative system and a common education system.

**THE PROCESS OF NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION: SYMBOLS AND STEROTYPES (Heinz Gerhard Haupt - Department of History and Civilization - European University Institute, Florence, Italy)**

Topics discussed in this interview are the creation of national symbols and the role of identity in the process of national identification. The analysis points out that national symbols are created in order to build the idea of nation. It then explains how national identities arose in modern nation states, focusing on their relationship with other social identities.

**NATIONAL STATES AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES (Alberto Martinelli - Professor of Political Sciences - Department of Social and Political Studies – Università degli Studi di Milano)**

The interview starts by highlighting the importance of two concepts, the state and the nation, in the historical process of a state modernization and in the development of nationalism in Europe. It then proceeds to point out the elements that compose the notion of modern nation, underlining the negative consequences of nationalism and highlighting the emergence of the idea of a European Union.

**EUROPEAN NATIONAL IDENTITIES (Alberto Martinelli - Professor of Political Sciences - Department of Social and Political Studies – Università degli Studi di Milano)**

The interview concerns nation-states in Europe: are they a unique European characteristic? How did they develop? In what political framework? Many examples are examined that still exist in Europe today, with special focus on the French Revolution, which, according to the expert, gave rise to the concept of national identities. The interview then discusses the peculiarities of the European Union and the difficulties it needs to address.

**THE CONCEPT OF HOMELAND IN LITERATURE: THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON THE FORMATION OF MODERN STATES (Francesca Tancini - Professor of Italian Literature, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy)**

The interview describes how the concept of homeland was tackled in literature, presenting several examples of relevant literary sources. It also analyzes the way literature and culture influenced the process of national identification.

**THOUGHTS ON HISTORY AND EUROPEAN UNION (Bartolomé Yun Casalilla - Professor of Early Modern History - European University Institute, Florence, Italy)**

The expert explains his opinion about the teaching of history and points out the importance of this discipline in order to build a united Europe.

**THE SWISS STATE MODEL AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (Libero Gerosa - Professor of canonical law and provost of the Theology Faculty of Lugano - University of Lugano, Switzerland)**

The interview deals with the peculiarity of the Swiss model and the elements of the model that could be used to build Europe: respect of minorities, diplomacy, and solidarity. It also examines the Christian foundations of the Swiss model, and how strong ethical values could be shared across Europe.

**THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN TODAY'S EUROPE (Yves Mény - President of the European University Institute - Florence, Italy)**

The interview discusses the importance of learning foreign languages today and teaching history from a European perspective.

**WHY HISTORIANS, SOCIOLOGISTS AND STUDENTS STUDY HISTORY (Alberto Martinelli - Professor of Political Sciences - Department of Social and Political Studies – Università degli Studi di Milano)**

The interview is about the meaning and the modalities of studying history in schools. It begins with a comparison of history and social sciences as disciplines. The expert then states his opinion on how history should be taught: students should have an overall view of all history, and also learn about specific topics in depth. He concludes by stating that L@E is a pragmatic example of this model of studying history.

## 2. ON THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

*These interviews deal with single European countries, either by telling their history (with special focus on the moment in which they became nation-states), or by analyzing how a historical phenomenon took place there.*

### BELGIUM

**THE BIRTH OF BELGIUM AS A NATIONAL STATE** (*Vincent Viaene - Postdoctoral Research Fellow - Department of Modern and Contemporary History - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium*)

The interview analyses the birth of Belgium as a modern nation-state. It explains the historical events that brought to Belgian independence, situating them in a wider, European historical context. The interview discusses then the processes of state modernization and the role of the Church in those processes. Attention is also paid to the wars of religion that occurred during the process of state formation.

**BELGIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY** (*Vincent Viaene- Postdoctoral Research Fellow - Department of Modern and Contemporary History - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium*)

The interview analyses the birth and development of a Belgian identity within the framework of two pre-existing regional identities (Flemish and Wallonian). After explaining the historical problems that occurred between the two communities and the historical causes of the federal reform, the author analyses the role of Belgium in the European union. The interview also gives examples of the main symbols which constitute Belgian national identity.

### FRANCE

**THE BIRTH OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL STATE** (*Yves Mény - President of the European University Institute - Florence, Italy*)

The interview analyzes the centralization process that characterized the history of the French National State. It deals with the origins of state centralization, which began with the French kings, and the reasons of its success, greater than in any other European country. It also analyzes the relationship of the French state with the Church.

**THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND ITS HERITAGE IN EUROPE** (*Yves Mény - President of the European University Institute - Florence, Italy*)

The interview discusses some basic concepts of the French Revolution, their origin and development: from the Humanistic idea of man as centre of the universe to the Enlightenment's concept of "citizen", from the "absolute sovereignty" of the king to the absolute sovereignty of the nation, leading to nationalism. It also deals with the causes of the French Revolution and following events, with legacies that still influence Europe today.

**THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN FRANCE** (*Yves Mény - President of the European University Institute, Florence, Italy*)

The interview analyzes the role of French language in French history as a means to strengthen the kings' power, inside and outside the country. It illustrates the problems related to the diffusion of different local languages and the measures taken by central power for the protection and diffusion of the French language.

### FINLAND

**THE HISTORY OF FINLAND** (*Henrik Stenius - University of Jyväskylä - Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy*)

The interview deals with the history of Finland and mostly with the events which led to the formation of the idea of Finnish nation. It also deals with the symbols and the elements which characterize the Finnish society.

### GERMANY

**TOWARDS GERMAN UNIFICATION** (*Sven Oliver Müller - Fellow of the European University Institute - Florence, Italy*)

The interview explains the process of German unification in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, highlighting the role of Prussia as a 'catalyser' of the united nation. Otto von Bismarck is introduced as the main architect of this process, especially during the three wars against Denmark, Austria and France.

**GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY (Sven Oliver Müller - Fellow of the European University Institute, Florence, Italy)**

In the interview, professor Müller speaks about languages and culture in Germany between 1770 and 1870. In those years, the awareness of being German and the struggle for unification led to the birth of the German Empire, after the war against France.

## ITALY

**TOWARDS THE BIRTH OF NATIONAL STATES: THE HISTORY OF ITALY (Claudia Di Filippo- Professor of Modern History - Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy)**

The interview discusses the development of a national Italian consciousness, from the Middle Ages to the 18th and 19th Century, paying attention to the cleavage between Northern, Central and Southern Italy. It describes the role of the cities of the North, the State of the Church in the Centre and the foreign dynasties who ruled in the South. It also discusses the contribution of the press, of Enlightenment and of economic factors in the process of unification.

**THE FORMATION OF ITALY AS A NATIONAL STATE (Alberto Martinelli - Professor of Political Sciences - Department of Social and Political Studies – Università degli Studi di Milano)**

The interview points out two important characters of pre-united Italy, showing the consequences of the Italian unification process.

## LATVIA

**A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO LATVIAN HISTORY (Maris Klisans – Director of the Ventspils Museum, Latvia)**

Prof. Klisans unveils the history of Latvia from its Christianization by the Teutonic Order (13<sup>th</sup> Century) to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the new Latvian state, after the fall of the Soviet Union. The complex elements of the Latvian identity (a lingering sense of paganism, folk traditions, the passion for lyrics and music) are also described.

**THE ORIGIN OF THE LATVIAN STATE (Armand Vijups - Director of Science - Ventspils Museum, Latvia)**

The interview describes the birth of the Latvian State. It shows the formation of Latvia starting from the so-called Livonian Confederation, involving four tribes: the Couronians, the Latgallians, the Selonians and the Semigallians.

## POLAND

**THE FORMATION OF POLAND AS A STATE AND AS A NATION (Marek Ziółkowski - Professor of Sociology - Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)**

The interview describes the main events which contributed to the shaping of Polish national identity across the centuries, from the earliest days, considering the role and the attitude of the bordering ethnical groups, to more recent times. The interview includes a discussion on the effects of the tri-partition of the Polish state during the XVIII Century, the rebirth of a national identity and the geopolitical consequences of WWII.

**THE POLISH IDENTITY (Marek Ziółkowski - Professor of Sociology - Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)**

The interview discusses the development of Poland as a state in recent history. The discussion begins with 19<sup>th</sup> Century Poland. It describes the presence of a large Jewish community, the concepts of Polonization, Russification and Germanization. The interview ends with the phenomena of immigration and emigration flows during and after WWII, some general considerations about Poland today, and modern Polish national symbols.

**THE HISTORY OF POLAND DURING AND AFTER THE TWO WORLD WARS (Marek Ziółkowski - Professor of Sociology - Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)**

The interview describes the Polish State during the second half of the XX Century. After the Great War, Poland was a multi-ethnic state with a Polish majority, but after WWII it became almost a single ethnical group. According to the expert, the modern Polish borders - defined in 1945 - are the direct consequence of the Hitler-

Stalin pact of 1939. The interview concludes with a discussion on the consequences of the Communist regime and the process of re-privatization.

## SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES

### **SWEDEN AND THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES: HISTORY AND RELATIONS** (Bo Stråth - Professor of Contemporary History - European University Institute Department of History and Civilisation, Florence, Italy)

The interview describes the process of formation of the Swedish state. It discusses the main historical and political facts that characterize Swedish modern history. The process of Sweden democratization and modernization is discussed especially in relation to the birth of social democracy. The second part of the interview introduces the idea of a Scandinavian nation and describes the movement for a unified Scandinavia.

### **THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES AND A EUROPEAN IDENTITY** (Bo Stråth - Professor of Contemporary History - Department of History and Civilisation, European University Institute, Florence, Italy)

The interview discusses the Scandinavian people's perception of Europe, focusing in particular on the feeling of Swedish citizens towards the European Union. The expert expresses then his opinion about the meaning of a European identity and its relationship to the phenomenon of multiple identities and the idea of patriotism. Finally, some political actions are suggested, to promote an effective European school.

## SPAIN

### **SPAIN FROM THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE ARAB INVASION** (Guillermo Pérez Sanchez - Professor of Contemporary History - Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain)

The formation of Spanish national identity is described as somewhat peculiar in comparison to other experiences. The interview starts by underlining the importance of the Roman period and of Roman law. It then explains the consequences of the Arab invasion in the process of creating the Spanish national identity.

### **THE RECONQUISTA AND THE REPOPULATION** (Guillermo Pérez Sanchez - Professor of Contemporary History - Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain)

The historical process of the Reconquista had important consequences from a political, social and demographic point of view. The interview deals with the role of the King and the importance of the religion in this historical process. It continues by describing how the Reconquista affected Portuguese territories and why it remains a symbol of the Spanish national identity today.

### **SPAIN AT THE TIME OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT** (Ricardo Martín De La Guardia - Professor of Contemporary History - Universidad de Valladolid, Spain)

The interview describes the main events that occurred in Spain during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It presents the economic, political and social situation of Spain at that time. The influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment on Spanish society is discussed. Finally the interview explains which sectors of the population promoted these ideals and the reasons why they did not have an effect on Spain.

### **SPAIN AFTER THE CADIZ CONSTITUTION IN 1812** (Ricardo Martín De La Guardia - Professor of Contemporary History - Universidad de Valladolid, Spain)

The interview describes the historical events occurred in Spain in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, from the approval of the Cadiz constitution to the civil wars that took place in the country during the 1940s. A parallel is drawn between these events and the political events that were occurring in the rest of Europe during the same period and that were leading other European countries towards more liberal forms of government.

### **SPAIN AS A MODERN STATE** (Bartolomé Yun Casalilla- Professor of Early Modern History - European University Institute, Florence, Italy)

The interview presents the evolution of the Spanish political system, from an Ancient Régime "composite monarchy" (in Elliott's words), in which kingdoms were gathered together, to a 19<sup>th</sup> Century nation-state.

### **COLONIALISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON SPAIN'S MODERNIZATION** (Guillermo Pérez Sanchez - Professor of Contemporary History - Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain)

The interview deals with the process of Spanish colonization and with its effects on the country's modernization. It considers the social consequences (from a religious, economic and cultural point of view) of the emigration of a significant part of the population to America. It continues by considering some political effects of colonization with the role played by Spain during the colonization of America.

**THE SPANISH IDENTITY** *Bartolomé Yun Casalilla - Professor of Early Modern History - European University Institute, Florence, Italy)*

The interview deals with 3 main factors affecting Spanish identity: the Reconquista (the conquest of the South from the Moors), South-American colonies, and Christianity. The role of the Spanish school system is also analyzed. Finally, 3 Spanish heroes (El Cid, Cervantes and Augustina de Aragon) are presented.

## SWITZERLAND

**BIRTH AND HISTORY OF THE SWISS STATE MODEL** *(Libero Gerosa - Professor of canonical law and provost of the Theology Faculty of Lugano - University of Lugano, Switzerland)*

The interview deals with the origins of the Swiss federal state and with its structure, explaining what makes the Swiss federal model work, what is required to face the complexity of the modern world, and how Switzerland, with one in six inhabitants coming from foreign countries, succeeded in integrating so many different cultures.

**THE CREATION OF THE SWISS CONFEDERACY** *(Giuseppe Chiesi - Director of the Cultural Heritage Department in Bellinzona, Switzerland)*

The interview traces the origins of the Swiss state back to the primary alliance among the cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden in 1291. It then describes the process of aggregation that characterised the history of Switzerland from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup>. The borders of the Swiss Confederacy have not changed since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

**SWITZERLAND AND THE EUROPEAN UNION** *(Giuseppe Chiesi - Director of the Cultural Heritage Department in Bellinzona, Switzerland)*

The interview explains the complex social and political motivations that have kept Switzerland out of the European Community, according to the expert. It then describes the basis of the current administrative and fiscal management of the Swiss federal system. Finally, the Swiss system is evaluated in comparison with the European Community system.

**FOUNDATION AND FEATURES OF THE SWISS NATIONAL IDENTITY** *(Giuseppe Chiesi - Director of the Cultural Heritage Department in Bellinzona, Switzerland)*

The interview describes the creation of the national identity of the Swiss Confederacy. It initially defines the Swiss identity; it then discusses the effects of the continuous annexation of new territories on the formation of a Swiss national identity and the religious clashes that have characterised the history of the Confederacy.

## UNITED KINGDOM

**THE BIRTH OF A "BOTTOM-UP" WELFARE STATE IN U.K.** *(Margaret Archer - Professor of Contemporary Social Theory - Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, U.K.)*

The interview begins with an identification of the stimulus for the introduction of U.K.'s welfare state; the important role of political institutions and others are pointed out with particular reference to the health care and the education systems. The expert proceeds to analyze the reasons of this kind of stimulus, considering the limitation of vote rights, and the incapacity of the lower class to organize into political parties.

**THE ROLE OF THE REFORMATION IN U.K. HISTORY** *(Margaret Archer - Professor of Contemporary Social Theory - Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, U.K.)*

The interview begins by underlining the differences within the territories of the United Kingdom. It continues by describing the most important event in U.K. history, the turn to Anglicanism. The historical consequences of this event, the implications on membership of the clergy and the different reactions to this change are analyzed at a social and political level.

***THE BRITISH IDENTITY (Margaret Archer - Professor of Contemporary Social Theory- Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, U.K.)***

The interview starts by explaining how the English national identity was formed with a complete lack of struggle, although different identities have always been present. It then underlines the crucial role played in this process by the industrial revolution, with the great changes that took place at social and cultural level. It also analyzes the very special relationship between the U.K. and Europe.