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THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPE SINCE
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the seventh issue of Prudentia Journal!

Following the previous issue, which dealt with the future of Europe regarding its Internet policy, I am publishing a synopsis of the development of Europe since the French Revolution.

I hope you will find my essay valuable.

Enjoy reading, and feel free to send me feedback!

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPE SINCE THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

When Charlemagne was crowned Roman Emperor in 800, a period of political stability lasting about a thousand years followed. Stable in this context does not necessarily mean peaceful; there have been many wars. But the social order was clear, there was a spiritual hierarchy with the Pope at the top and a secular hierarchy with emperors, kings, princes and serfs at the bottom. This was also not doubted.

With the American Revolution in the second half of the 18th century, a republic arose on the North American continent in which all light-skinned citizens were free and equal. This was followed by the French Revolution, which transformed France into a republic of this kind. As with all revolutions, the French Revolution also contained the danger that a power-hungry sociopath could seize leadership in the country. This actually happened in the person of Napoleon Bonaparte. The Napoleonic Wars led to the dissolution of the Holy German Nation; at the Congress of Vienna a post-war monarchist order was adopted. But the fire of the revolution was kindled; the nationalities in Hungary and other Austrian crown countries brought about "reconciliation". With the victory of the Germans in the Franco-German war of 1871, the second German Empire was finally founded, which now sought overseas colonies and was therefore perceived as a threat by the English in particular. The Englishmen, who at that time ruled the founding world empire of all time, joined forces with the French and the Russians against the Germans. The tensions increased, and it was clear that they would eventually unload. When the Austrian heir to the throne was murdered in 1914, a chain reaction of mutual declarations of war led to the First World War.

The result of the war was that Germany, Austria and Russia became republics or a Soviet republic. Large parts of Europe were now republican. However, the democratic system proved unstable, with dictators coming to power in many of the young republics. Dissatisfaction with the Versailles peace dictatorship, which had brought much hardship and misery to the German population, led to Hitler's election as Reich Chancellor. He started the Second World War, a consistent continuation of the First World War.

When Germany was defeated once again, the winners divided Europe; the communist-ruled Soviet Union, which had emerged from the Russian tsarist empire, wanted to increase its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. After all, almost the entire Eastern bloc was under Soviet yoke; the border between East and West ran through the middle of Germany. At the same time the construction of NATO and the European communities began in the West.

1989 brought the turning point; predominantly peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe brought about the resignation of the communist governments and the holding of free elections. In the 1990s, the European Communities were transformed into the European Union, which also Austria joined; the common currency, the Euro, was introduced in 2002, and from 2004 the accession of Eastern European countries to the Union followed. Then,

however, in 2008, the great financial crisis came, triggered by irresponsible business in the United States - banks had given loans to private individuals for the construction of homes, although they knew that they would never repay the loans, and resold these loans to unsuspecting European banks. In addition, there was the sovereign debt crisis, which particularly affected countries such as Portugal, Italy and Greece; Greece had even joined the euro zone without meeting the so-called Maastricht criteria.

The next crisis followed in 2015 with the mass influx of refugees, although the phenomenon of mass influx is nothing new; it already existed in the 1990s (Balkan wars). Overall, there was a strengthening of European-critical, "right-wing populist" parties, and Great Britain even voted in favour of leaving the Union ("Brexit").

At the moment there is a clear picture that Europe's leading politicians have no visions. They only have problems and are trying to react, but they don't know where the journey is going. While Helmut Kohl was still talking about a political union to follow the Monetary Union, NEOS is the only party in Austria that still speaks of the "United States of Europe".

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