

Emilien Martin  
Maire  
M1 IST-IE  
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Richard

## Le Nationalisme Lorrain - *Separatism in Lorraine*

When people consider themselves as part of a group that is defined through an identity, then of course they want it to be self-run. Lorraine, a region of the French state, has a particular history that makes some of Lorrains think this way. We're trying to know where Lorrain nationalism comes from, what it is today and how these people think of Lorraine.

300 B.C., Celtic peoples settled in Lorraine, which no one called this name then. Conquered by Julius Caesar, the land enjoys the Roman peace (certain roads currently used were built by Romans, and many Roman buildings still stand) until 451, when Huns invaded it and deleted Metz. This region became part of Austrasia, one of the kingdoms lead by the Merovingian Frank kings, and rebuilt Metz was named its capital. In 843, Charlemagne's son divided his empire between his three sons. One of them, Lothaire (whose name came from the Germanic Hlothari, glory) divided himself his kingdom into duchies for his own three sons. That's how in 855, Lothaire II heirs Lotharingia (from the latin Lotharii regnum, Lothaire's kingdom) that goes from Frisia to the Vosges Mountains. When Lothaire II died, his uncle wanted to take over Lotharingia in arms, but could not. From that moment, Lotharingia became an argument subject between Charlemagne's political descendants (that went on to XXth century). At each generation, alliances and domination on Lotharingia went from Francia to Germany.

In the XIth century, Gérard, Duke of Lorraine, founded Nancy. We situate in the same period the appearance of the written word Lohereigne in French,

which quickly became Lorraine. It is interesting to notice that modern separatists consider Lorraine nation was born with the name. Let's remark that Local lords passed Middle Ages making small wars to each other, and giving fun names to them, such as "The War of the Friends", "The War of the Four Lords" or "The War of the Bunch of Apples". I understand them, they had plenty of food, money and time to spend, they were happy with any game. However, many people died, and it makes History harder to learn, that is why I oppose.

In 1480, René II heired Duchy of Bar, which was then more or less integrated to Lorraine. This region was deeply touched by pest, many times in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries. The Thirty Years' War began at the right moment to make the situation of Lorraine burst : Charles IV, Duke of Lorraine, made the wrong strategic choices, France attacked him, his allies looted on him, the Lorrains were too weak to defend the land, and worst of all, many of them left their houses and became brigands. Lorraine went back to Barbary. Auguste Digot said in 1856 that "pest, famine and war unified to make a desert out of the most beautiful country in Europe."

After three periods of occupation, France gave back Lorraine to its legitimate heir, Léopold. But after a time of rebuilding, Léopold's son François III accepted to let down Lorraine for the Duchy of Tuscany in Italy, at the occasion of his wedding with an Austrian princess. That allowed Louis XV, King of France, to take control over Lorraine, but he could not directly reign. He named Duke of Lorraine the old, exiled, former King of Poland, Stanislas Leszczyński, and married his daughter Marie Leszczyńska. Stanislas had only power in the cultural and social domains, but he is still remembered for the job he did. Stanislas died in 1766, and bequeathed his duchies to his grandson, Louis XVI. From that moment, the history of Lorraine and France is no different.

Many years after Lorraine became part of France, some Lorrains began to think of their identity, and consider themselves as a nation who respects itself,

and wants to be respected. A publication named “La Revue Lorraine Populaire” involved notably Jean-Marie Cuny, a regionalist Lorrain writer who is known for his relations in very right-wing parties. The Internet allowed nationalism believers to gather, exchange ideas and organise better to get their voices through. Some organisations can be found on forums, blogs or Facebook groups. Among them, NFEL Alsacian-Lorrain or Lothringen (which is specifically a Mosellan separatist) are in a low-down phase. But Separate Lorraine, a very active forum, is about to launch a true party, the Lorrain Party.

« Le Parti Lorrain veut une organisation fédérale de l'Europe, dans le respect de tous les peuples qui la composent. Celle-ci devra continuer à maintenir des alliances avec les autres mouvements de l'Etat français, d'Europe et du monde qui, comme elle, veulent arriver à une solidarité entre toutes les communautés qui souhaitent défendre l'identité des peuples sans Etat. »

The Lorrain Party claims for Lorraine's autonomy, characterised by a proper executive, judicial and legislative system. It wants also Europe to become a slight-structured federation in which every federal state, whom territory would be defined on the people who live in, would have much authority and autonomy. This might have been inspired by the Swiss Confederation, which is built on the same idea.

According to its ideas, running the Lorrain affairs closer to the land and people would be more efficient than Paris-centred France does. Indeed, separatists think autonomy would allow Lorraine to develop economy, to engage a true reconversion (both intelligent and durable), to fight the lack of job, and to optimise infrastructures and public transport in a way more efficient than the French institutions currently do.

The Party refuses to set itself in a right-wing, left-wing scheme. It rejects also any alliance with any organisation or party which does not fight for a separatist cause, wherever it is from.

Many separatists are very expressive and let their prose shine over the Internet, allowing us to know how deep their thoughts are. Not only do they not consider themselves as French people, but they like to think of themselves as non-French people. This is obvious in their will to expel from the right-to-

left political axis they say to be very French.

Certain people express very extreme opinions: “Depuis que j’ai appris (par moi même) notre réelle histoire je ne me sens plus du tout Français, ce beau pays des droits de l’homme qui défend le Tibet, alors qu’il a fait (de manière très sournoise) avec la Lorrains ce que les Chinois font aujourd’hui avec les Tibétains.” (*Since I learned our true History through my own ways, I don’t feel as a French one at all. France is a beautiful civil rights country that defends Tibet, although it did the same (in a very underhand way) to Lorrains as China did to Tibetans*) This person builds a far-fetched analogy between Lorrain and Tibetan situations, but there is clearly no comparison. How can he imagine the French government

“Quand on regarde notre passé, notre histoire d’Etat nation souverain depuis plus de 700 ans, je crois que nous sommes la seule région de France à avoir une légitimité de demande d’indépendance.” (*As I look back to our past, our History as a sovereign, nation state for as long as 700 years, I think we are the only region in France whose will for independence is legitimate*)

However, the Lorrain Party distinguishes itself from that kind of opinion, and claims for every people's freedom. It wants to build a European Federation who will respect the identity of the peoples who live in. In this prospect, the Federal State of Lorraine shall keep alliances with the other federal states in Europe and nations in the world. The aim is to cultivate a solidarity between the peoples, implying as less as possible central authority.

The Party claims also for “un idéal humaniste et de développement qui rejette toute forme de racisme et de xénophobie. Il s’agit en outre de favoriser la solidarité et l’intégration des Lorrains quel que soit leur horizon, le tout dans un esprit de vie en commun et de respect mutuel.” (*...an ideal of humanism and development that rejects any kind of racism and xenophobia. We furthermore want to increase solidarity and integration to the Lorrains, wherever they are from*) As Lorrains who come from out Lorraine are accepted in the new Lorrain state (but only Lorrains), we wonder how Lorrains could be distinguished from Bourguignons, Corsican or South African, but this point is

not developed.

Currently in Europe, people gather in political entities to ensure their material subsistence, driven by reason. The separatists would like to gather according to their feelings, to their heart. That kind of management is not considered economically and politically durable in our world.

Lorraine was born as a kingdom when Carolingian kings shared their land in the IXth century, and as a nation when a word appeared referring to the country itself, more than the king's possession. Nowadays, Lorraine is part of France, but some of the inhabitants consider their country was stolen to them many years ago, and want to get it back. This project implies a deep political refoundation of Lorraine, France and Europe, but needs better organisation, communication and precisely defined, realistic claimings and goals.

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