

3 The Transmigration of Nations

At the beginning of the first millennium, the centre of culture and power in our part of the world was the still wealthy and, in relative terms, peaceful Roman Empire, arranged around the Mediterranean. Beyond its borders, in Europe beyond the Rhine and Danube, poor tribes of Barbarians lived, attempting to plunder the Romans' wealth. From the 3rd century, it was ever more expensive to defend against these, and developing towns were impoverished under the pressure of taxes; markets went into decline and rural areas became self-sufficient. The urban civilization of antiquity, founded on market economics, was coming to an end and changing into a civilization of farmers. The self-possession and confidence of citizens, the belief in reason and in the municipality was transformed into uncertainty and restlessness; people no longer depended on philosophy but searched for consolation in various eastern religions which promised redemption or salvation. Among these, the teachings of the small Jewish sect of Jesus of Nazareth, who was meant to become the Saviour of his faithful, eventually came out on top. Christianity spread quickly among the urban population. It was organized and formed its church. Eventually Constantine the Great (r. 306–337 CE) transformed it from a persecuted anti-state religion to the *de facto* established Church.

It was intended to consolidate the Empire, but it was too late for that. The Barbarian masses beyond the Danube and Rhine were on the move after 375, pushed from the east by the itinerant Huns, and fell upon the Empire, not it would seem in order to destroy it but rather to settle there as "allies" (*federati*). The western part of the Empire with its centre in Rome could not withstand this pressure and collapsed into a number of smaller states founded on its territory by German marauders. Only the eastern part, with its centre in Constantinople (Byzantium) remained. Far beyond these German tribes, somewhere in the expansive regions of the central Dnieper, a new Slavic-speaking people emerged at some stage during the 2nd to 4th centuries. The Romans knew nothing of them and neither does modern research have any clear ideas about their origins. All that can be said is that archaeologists are researching the existence of the oldest Slavic settlements from the end of the 5th century in the Ukraine and confirm that about the year 530 masses of Slavic marauders appeared at the border of Byzantium on the Lower Danube. The Slavic transmigration had begun, and in a relatively short period (from the 6th to 7th centuries) it poured into the greater part of Central and Eastern Europe and the entire Balkans.

The population reserves of the German transmigration were at that time exhausted and the area between the Rhine and Volga was an uninhabited waste land. Similarly, on the territory of what would become the Czech Lands there remained only a scattering of Germans. Most of them probably left Bohemia around the year 530, and some would have participated in the origin of the tribe of Bavarians, giving them their name (*Baiuvarii* – "men from the land of Baia-Boiohama"), and in western Moravia some of the Lombards settled, who at that time owned Lower Austria and western Hungary. When a strong current of settlers came from the Ukraine making across the Cracow region and the Moravian Pass to the rich south some time soon after 530, they found free territory only in that stretch of land beside the

mountains, from the Carpa
Mountains (*Krušné Hory*).
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and the Balkans. The Slav
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with the Lombards and th
pedition took place in 551.

The Lombards eventual
Asia, for assistance against
help, they themselves pref
However together with th
military allies of the Avars.
Avars, they were responsib
there were so many of the
In only a few years the mi
Serbia, Moravia and wester
and Elbe. They mixed with
of the Germans, arranging t
In Bohemia the tribe of Cz

From the start the Avars
their independence. When t
Constantinople, the Slavs, w
territories, rose up against t
were joined by the Czech
the Saale and Elbe joined t
as leader, the Frankish mer
in the confederation. The w
when the Merovingian king
also able to resist successfu
Wogastisburg (perhaps some
be at the summit of Rubín
Dagobert's army, which was
domain was most likely locat
and the tribes became indepe

In continental trans-Alpi
culture was established wh
nature. Farmers tilled land i
with relatively large returns c