

Response of Aaron M. Zack to the review of his book *Hegemonic War and Grand Strategy: Ludwig Dehio, World History, and the American Future* (Res Publica, Vol. 22, Núm. 1, 2019).

César López Rodríguez has most ably and creatively reviewed the main body of my book, *Hegemonic War and Grand Strategy: Ludwig Dehio, World History, and the American Future*. However, Mr. Rodríguez asserts that the Epilogue contradicts the analysis and conclusions presented in the main text, and implies that the Epilogue is something of a mysterious and inexplicable departure from both Dehio's thought and my (previously, at least) faithful interpretation. On both counts, Mr. Rodríguez is mistaken. He suggests that the concepts of culture, barbarism, and nihilism are of minimal importance to Dehio, as compared to the dynamics of hegemony, hegemonic war, and Great Power rivalry. But, rather than an innovative interpolation on my part, it is Dehio himself who prioritizes barbarism and culture, in both the Author's Note to the American edition and general Introduction to *The Precarious Balance*. That may perturb Mr. Rodríguez, but an engagement with the entirety of Dehio's thought will enrich our understanding of current challenges better than a circumscribed reading, even if we reject some of his conclusions. As I clearly detail in my Epilogue, Dehio fears that Europe after 1945 is comparable to the later Roman Empire in its vulnerability and decay, and cites Gibbon's apprehensions about Europe to express his own fears. Dehio, not I, stated: "Indeed, as early as the end of the eighteenth century, Gibbon spoke of the frightening possibility that a *barbarian* (my emphasis) flood might engulf Europe as far as the Atlantic. But he consoled himself with the hope that 10,000 American ships would stand ready to rescue the remainder of the old peoples and carry them to «New Europe»"¹. It is Dehio who prioritizes European culture and spirituality in his Introduction to *The Precarious Balance*, and fears that European culture has never been so threatened: "Our task is to save our spiritual personality, which for half a generation has been in mortal peril"². The identity and culture of the Occident, as Dehio calls it, are specifically contrasted with the alien cultures to the East, North, and South by Dehio himself: "The part of Ranke's insight that I shall apply to this study is his realization that the Occident has formed a political and cultural unity from the time of the migrations down to our own day"³. And: "The early Middle Ages found them (the Papacy and Holy Roman Empire) acting predominantly together

in combating the barbarous chaos that threatened their higher interests from within, and in fighting the Magyars, the Normans, and Islam, the external enemies of the Christian West"⁴. I could go on. Similarly, Dehio discourses at length on the spiritual-universal missions of some Powers seeking hegemony, as opposed to those Powers, such as Germany and, I suggest, contemporary America, without such a spiritual mission and ethos: "...the Anglo-Saxon concept was designed for global application, based on confidence in progress, and filled with the island spirit of free social evolution... In this idealistic form, Anglo-Saxon world leadership, with the United States in the van, made its appearance for the first time"⁵. And: "Bolshevism, like the French Revolution in earlier days, was still able to appeal to certain ideals of mankind; the Third Reich could not... (it) failed to generate the strength of a world mission"⁶. Finally, my discussion of nihilism is a response to and meditation upon Dehio's melancholy, tragic panorama: the dynamism of a plural state system, so necessary, in Dehio's mind, for culture, precipitates the wars for hegemony which either establish a stagnant empire, or continue *ad nauseam* until the system itself descends into exhaustion and decay. For Dehio, as I explain in the Epilogue, the most dangerous nihilists and barbarians to fear are *within* the West. He speaks of the French revolutionaries' introduction of "propaganda and terror"⁷. Of the Nazis' "dark, terrorist civilization" Dehio says: "...on the most ancient Western soil, indeed shooting up from it, a system of government was consciously initiating a total break with all the values of human personality honored in the West"⁸. By addressing Dehio's melancholy preoccupations in the Epilogue and considering their importance for our own time, I am consistent with the method and analytical spirit of my book as a whole. I commend Mr. Rodríguez for his cogent explication of the main body of my text, but his critique of the Epilogue relies upon a selective and narrow interpretation of the historical dynamics that both Dehio and I address.

Aaron M. Zack

¹ L. Dehio, *The Precarious Balance: Four Centuries of the European Power Struggle*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, p. viii.

² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 243-4. Dehio expands upon his theme of Powers with and without "universal missions" in *Germany and World Politics in the Twentieth Century*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1960.

⁶ L. Dehio, *The Precarious Balance: Four Centuries of the European Power Struggle*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 261.