

ENGLISH NAMES AND MISNOMERS FOR THE GERMANS: DUTCH, GERMAN, TEUTON

by *Max Freund*

This investigation will be dealing with far-reaching questions of nomenclature on a historical and philological basis.

Deutsch is what the Germans call themselves in their national language. Unlike most other adjectives denoting nationality, such as English and French, the word *deutsch* is not based on the name of any tribe. In fact, its origin is quite unique and unparalleled. It occurs for the first time in the fourth century A.D. as the equivalent of the Greek word *ethnikos* in the Gothic translation of the Bible by Bishop Wulfila. There the word *thiudisko* is used with the meaning heathenish and in contrast to Jewish. It is derived from the Gothic noun *thiuda* meaning people, which, in its turn, is supposed to be related to Latin *tota*, meaning whole, and to go back to an Aryan stem **teut*, meaning people. It took four hundred years for our word to reappear frequently, but then in the Latinized form *theodisc-*, used with reference to language and in contrast to the Latin word *latine*. Its successive meanings now were vulgar, Germanic, and German. Continuing via Old High German *diutisk*, we are ultimately led to the modern German word form *deutsch*.

I

The word *Dutch* is the Anglicization of the word *deutsch*, i.e., the result of its adaptation in pronunciation and spelling to the English language. *Dutch* is what the English have called (though not consistently) the German-speaking inhabitants of the old German Empire, founded by Charles the Great, during the one thousand years of its existence, as well as their descendants down to the present day.

From the 15th to the 17th century the English were in constant

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lively intercourse of rivalry and enmity with those of the Dutch who were their closest neighbors, i.e., the Netherlanders, and thus for them the name *Dutch* gradually came to mean *Netherlanders* more or less exclusively. When the Netherlanders became independent in the 17th century, they raised their particular Low German dialect, Low Franconian, to the dignity of their national language. They referred to it and themselves as *Netherlandish* or *Hollandish* while they continued to refer to the remaining inhabitants of the German Empire, which they had left, as *Dutch*. The English (who had in the meanwhile adopted another name for the latter) as well as the Anglo-Americans have continued down to the present to call the Netherlanders *Dutch*, and the Netherlanders do not like it at all, as would appear from the following telling account:

An American of Hollandish ancestry who had felt maligned by the application to Hollanders of such expressions as "hardheaded Dutchman" and "Dutch treat," wrote a letter to the *Houston Chronicle* which appeared in the issue of March 9, 1960, and included the following: "We Hollanders are insulted. . . . People whose ancestors came from the Netherlands, don't like being called Dutchmen because it's really the Germans who are Dutch, not us. In fact, the word is 'Duits' meaning German."

Is it not time to do something about the confusion of these names in the English language?

II

In their search for a substitute for the name *Dutch* with which to refer to the people living to the south and east of the Netherlands, the English had somehow or other hit upon a name of mysterious origin and controversial meaning, namely the very name *German*. Julius Caesar in his *De Bello Gallico* and Tacitus in his *Germania* had been among the very first to use the name *Germani* and had applied it to a group of tribes occupying the left bank of the Rhine, and chiefly the neighborhood of the old city of Aachen. William Shakespeare was among the very first to use the new name in the English language. In his *Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act 4, sc. 5) he mentions "three German devils, three Doctor Faustuses."

The adoption of the name *German* by the English and the Anglo-Americans was, however, by no means universal, let alone exclusive. More particularly, in America the old name *Dutch* has persisted beside *German*, especially in popular speech. When

the first sizable body of German-speaking Europeans came to America in 1683 and settled in Pennsylvania, they were called Pennsylvania Dutch as a rule. Most of them had come from the city of Krefeld in Germany, certainly not from Holland. Down to our own days the designation Pennsylvania Dutch has perhaps remained more frequent than Pennsylvania Germans. Similar statements may be made with regard to the many German settlements in Texas and elsewhere in the United States. Let me give a typical example for the use of *Dutchman* instead of *German* with reference to a German national. In the time of the Republic of Texas, a young German from the Rhineland, who later became the first German consul in the Lone Star State, relates in his diary how he once organized a rather original New Year's Eve frolic in the Montgomery neighborhood near Houston at the successful conclusion of which his companions called him "a hell of a Dutchman" (*Gustav Dresel's Houston Journal*, trans. and ed. Max Freund [Austin, Texas, 1954], p. 92).

For the sake of clarification it might be pointed out that in the German language the name *Deutsche* refers to only one nation or people whereas the name *Germanen* denotes that race or group of peoples to which the Germans belong and which also chiefly comprises the ancient Goths, the English, the Hollanders, and the Scandinavians. It is worth noting that the English language does not possess any corresponding and unobjectionable racial noun at the present time. There is, however, the racial adjective *Germanic*, obviously a scholarly Anglicization of the German adjective *germanisch*, a derivation from the noun *Germanen*. By the way, this English adjective *Germanic*, which has been used very much indeed owing to the absence of any English noun with racial meaning, has itself recently produced a new noun, namely *Germanics*, meaning Germanic philology. It is an American creation which I find listed for the first time in the 1957 issue of Webster's *International Dictionary*. The formation of this new term is in keeping with such well established terms as *phonetics*, *linguistics*, *semantics*, etc. In my opinion *Germanics* is a rather fortunate invention and a welcome simplification for Germanic philology. It is the equivalent of the German term *Germanistik* and less clumsy than *Germanistics*, the literal English translation of *Germanistik*. The University of Washington and Rice University have already adopted the expressions "Honors in Germanics" and "Department of Germanics" respectively in their catalogs. Incidentally, in line with *Germanics*, I venture to coin and recommend the terms

Romanics and *Slavics* for the neighboring disciplines of Romance (or Romanic) philology and Slavic philology.

III

The word *Teutons* first appears in ancient history in close connection with the word *Cimbrians*. The Cimbrians and Teutons were roaming about in Europe and sometimes fighting together against the Romans during the last couple of centuries before our Christian era. Both are generally described as West Germanic tribes. Only a very few scholars have had doubts about the latter description and have expressed with more or less assurance their belief that they were probably Kelts. I unhesitatingly join the ranks of these dissenters because I have to offer a clinching argument for my conviction that the Cimbrians were of Keltic race. It is based on facts which surprisingly have been completely overlooked hitherto, so far as I know.

The Cimbrians, called *Cimbri* by the Romans and *Cimbern* by the Germans, at one time occupied Jutland, also called Cimbrian Peninsula. It lies opposite Great Britain across the North Sea and is now divided between Denmark and Germany. In the northern part of Jutland there is a district named *Himmerland* which apparently means Cimbriland and is also a present reminder of the fact that once the Cimbrians were there. There was a lot of seafaring traffic between Great Britain and the Cimbrian Peninsula in ancient and medieval times. The Principality of Wales on the west coast of Great Britain has the largest number of Keltic-speaking inhabitants nowadays. The English refer to all the people living in the principality as Welsh. This word, like the German word *welsch*, now means strangers or foreigners. Long ago it designated the small Keltic tribe of the Volcae. The Keltic-speaking inhabitants of Wales, however, call themselves *Cymry* or *Kymry*, meaning fellow countrymen. This word is contained in the name of the county of Cumberland, adjoining Wales in the north. This name is apparently a variant equivalent of the above mentioned name *Himmerland*. Surely now, the continental Cimbrians are obviously closely related to or more probably part of the insular Keltic *Cymry*! There can hardly be any doubt about it.

It is not equally easy to determine the race to which the Teutons belong. True, the Keltic Cimbrians would have hardly made common cause against the Romans and fought side by side with any but another Keltic tribe. But that is not a compelling argument for proving that the Teutons were Kelts. If we pass from political his-

tory to the domain of language, we have to state first of all that not a single word of the Teutonic language is known, except possibly the word *Teuton* in case it was used by the Teutons themselves. The similarity of the sounds of its stem *teut-* with the word *deutsch* makes it appear likely that they both have the same origin. You may perhaps have been able to gather from the introduction to this address that the word *deutsch*, in its early history, shows the characteristic consonant shifting by which Germanic had diverged from the other Aryan language groups two or three millenia before the Christian era. This sound change is the only criterion by which we can decide whether languages or peoples are Germanic or not. The word *Teutons* (*Teutones* or *Teutoni* in Latin and *Teutonen* in German) does not show any sound shifting at any time. Its initial consonant *t*, like that of Irish Gaelic *tuath*, meaning people, and Latin *tota*, has remained unaltered throughout. The words *Teuton* and *Teutonic* are consequently not Germanic but probably Keltic!

As stated before, the English language has no suitable and entirely satisfactory noun at its disposal for denoting, corresponding to the German noun *Germanen*, the entire Germanic race. This terminological difficulty is acknowledged by the *Oxford Dictionary* toward the end of its article on the word *Teutonic* as follows:

In English there is an awkwardness and sometimes ambiguity in using Germanic beside German (in its ordinary political sense), which does not arise in German or French, where *germanisch* and *germanique* are entirely distinct from *deutsch* and *allemand*. To avoid this, many English scholars prefer 'Teutonic' as the term for the linguistic family, and it is commonly so used in this dictionary.

Due to the strong influence of this important and excellent dictionary the use of *Teutons* and *Teutonic* has spread widely all over the British Commonwealth. I am afraid the expedient has not solved the dilemma but rather added to the existing confusion. I venture to declare it most unfortunate and regrettable that words of such, to say the least, problematic and doubtful meaning and origin should be used as scholarly terms. I have reason to speak with a certain amount of personal feeling on the matter. During the last five years preceding the First World War, I enjoyed the privilege of teaching German literature and Germanic philology in a British university, the Queen's University of Belfast, but had to put up with as awkward an official name of my department as "German and Teutonic Philology"! The terms *Teutonen* and *teutonisch* are not used by philologists in Germany.

Conclusions

It will be readily granted that in philology, as well as in natural science, terminology in general and nomenclature in particular should become as internationally uniform as possible. In order to contribute to progress in this regard and to reduce existing confusion, the following conclusions are drawn from the foregoing observations. I submit these recommendations to consideration and, hopefully, adoption by my fellow philologists :

The words *Teutons* and *Teutonic* to be discarded from philological usage once and for all.

The Netherlanders or Hollanders to be called by these their own appellations, and not by the name *Dutch* any more.

The name *Dutch* to be applied henceforth exclusively with its original meaning and as the equivalent of the word *deutsch*. *Dutchland*, for example, is to replace *Germany*.

The noun *Germans*, like the adjective *Germanic*, to be used only with reference to the Germanic race.