

A THEOLOGY OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

Edited by
Joseph Pungur

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*“Fear not little flock,
for its is your Father’s good pleasure
to give to you the kingdom”.*
(Luke 12,32)

“Gloria Victis!”

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FOREWORD

Among the difficult and grave problems of our world the questions related to national minorities occupy an important place. National or ethnic minorities are national groups living under the authority of ruling majority nations as the consequence of either ancient settlement, territorial occupation or peace treaties. In most cases the ethnic minorities feel themselves threatened by the majority nation in language, in heritage, in culture and in many cases in their very existence.

The world is full of ethnic minorities living under the rule of majority nations. In Africa, in Asia, in the former Soviet Union, even in the Western Europe and North America. The ethnic minorities, usually linguistically distinct communities within greater nations, stand up for their autonomy, self determination or even for secession. To mention some: the Kurds are ethnic minority in Turkey, in Syria and in Iraq. Tamils are a national minority in Sri-Lanka. The Czechs are in deadly secessionist fight from Russia. The Indians, the Puerto Ricans and the Latin Americans are ethnic minorities living in the U.S.A. In Canada the Indians and even the French in Quebec consider themselves ethnic minorities and almost a half of it in serious quest for their independence, although the French entered into confederation with the English speaking Canadians in 1867. However Europe is the continent where the problem of national minorities has become most acute.

In some countries in Western Europe this problem can be regarded as solved, as for instance the German ethnic minority in Belgium, the Austrian minority in South Tyrol and the Swedish minority in Finland. Not long ago the British parliament granted the right to the Scots to set up their own parliament, what they did, and the Welsh now have the same right. In other places there are still growing problems. Northern Ireland's IRA is still in fight for independence from Great Britain. The Basques and the Catalans in Spain, the Bretons and the Corsicans in France organizing themselves. Yugoslavia fell apart in a tragic civil war in the last decade. Its ethnic minorities – the Croats, Slovenes and Bosnians won freedom from the domination of the Serbs and now have their own country. The ethnic Albanians of Kosovo in Serbia, constituting the majority in that province, were involved in a deadly fight for its independence or at least autonomy. In Eastern Europe quite a few national minorities live under the rule of majority nations: Germans in the Czech Republic and in Poland. Poles in Belarus and in Ukraine. Hungarians in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, in Southern-Slovakia, in Voivodina of Northern Serbia and in Transylvania of Western Romania – to mention only a few.

So far Christian Theology ignored the problem of ethnic minorities. Probably because the question of national minorities is a sensitive issue. Furthermore, this theme is taboo, since it is related to the controversial issue of nationalism. However theologians forget to consider that there are at least two basic forms of nationalism: one is the offensive-aggressive type which culminated in nazism the other is its defensive type applied rightfully by oppressed national minorities as a shield and protection for their own survival in the threat of the aggressive nationalism of the majority nation.

While Christian Theology had dealt in depth with the social problems of our time in the meantime it completely neglected the problem of national-ethnic minorities. Since this problem has come up once more, the time has arrived for Christian Theology to deal with the critical problem of the national-ethnic minorities.

The purpose of this book is to analyze the problem from the point of view of Christian Theology; to put it in the light of Christian Theology; to tell about it its own terms and put this issue in the forefront of theologians' reflection. Like other theologies this is also a political theology, since it occurs in the "polis" the human society, and it reflect upon its miseries and offer its own solutions. It also provides case studies of minority problems of the Carpathian basin in East-Central Europe.

I also draw attention to the ecumenical character of the book, to which valued contributions have been made by Reformed, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Roman Catholic Theologians from various countries.

I express my gratitude to the contributors. Their excellent essays prove the complexity of the problem and they shed lights for its deeper understanding and they offer possible solutions for this excruciating problem. I especially thankful to Dr. Iain F. Clayre for his valuable suggestions in editing the text, and to Rev. Dr. Thomas Nyárády, Éva Kossuth, Rev. Szilvia Tóth, Martin M. Robb for translating some of the essays and Rev. Károly Gödöllei for essential technical woks. I am grateful to Rev. Béla Pungur for his valuable remarks and the Illyés Foundation for its generous help. Without their significant assistance this book, the enlarged and updated English version of a work which first appeared in Hungarian in Budapest last fall, would have never have seen the light of day in its present form.

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Joseph Pungur
editor

Chapter 1

OUTLINES OF A THEOLOGY OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

Joseph Pungur

The theology of national minorities originates from a sense of Christian responsibility, which recognizes the tragic situation of national minority under the rule of a foreign majority, how they are oppressed, exploited, treated inhumanely and subjected to literal or cultural genocide, and analyses their situation with the help of Christian Theology and tries to point out possible solutions. This kind of theology grew out of the fertile soil of Christian Theology surprisingly late, and basically belongs to that group known as Liberation Theologies.¹

It is almost incomprehensible that so far this increasingly burning and acute question has not been treated thoroughly by Christian Theology and its challenge has not been recognized. Instead of polished propositions and definitively pronounced solutions, this work's aim is to awaken a theological reflection on a topic which is so painfully passed over by contemporary theology.

Although a few chapters of this book treat in depth with the theological basis of our theme, we still need to draw attention to some of its outlines.

The creation story in the Book of Genesis unambiguously emphasizes the fact that with the creation of Adam and Eve, the first human couple, God brought up mankind from an ancient parent, and so He created humanity from one blood (Gen 2.2). Consequently each human is a brother to the others and sister to the others, and on this basis each human is equal to one another. Originally none of them has any kind of rights over the others.

The story of the confused tongues of Babel (Gen 11.1-10) tries to give an explanation for the differences among peoples. This explains the differences as a divine judgement upon the ambitious pride of humans. Seen in this light, should we view the development of ethnic groups along language borders and the development of nations as a result of a divine judgement? Reading the bloody and tragic pages of human history, which almost exclusively tells of how nation attacks nation and State attacks State, and how each brings another under its own yoke and domination, we incline to see the ancient and the present nations as groaning under the divine curse. But the division of humanity into clans, tribes and nations hides in itself blessings as well. Just think about the variety of languages and cultures, customs and talents which are represented by different people, nations and ethnic groups. As a prism breaks light into the different colors of the rainbow, so we may see mankind, although it is one, wonderfully divided in various ways.

The blessing and the curse are but a hand's stretch from each; the big question is, which one are we going to choose, the blessing or the curse? The tragedy is that we have chosen the curse, so that instead of one nation valuing and esteeming the differences in the other, they hate one another instead, attacking the other, wanting its extermination or at least its subjugation or to destroy it with more subtle instruments.

What is the reason for all this? Historians, politicians and psychologists have tried to give us some answers over the course of history. They have tried to explain man's desire for conquest as a process of natural selection, when the strong wins over the weak, by the repayment of grudges in the ancient temper of revenge, by the theory of *lebensraum*, needing space for the life of the nation. Theologically the following explanation is possible. From the Biblical creation narratives, the story of The Fall is of the utmost importance (Gen 3). The Tempter promised the first couple that when they trespass God's prohibitive commandment, they "will be like God, knowing good and evil" (v.5). They broke that commandment, but instead of becoming God their lot was punishment. They did not become God, but "small g god". Practically this meant that an eternal battle was joined for who could become lord over the other. Whoever had the upper hand, almost without any restraint, ruled over those who were under him. The lord over others became the lord of life and death; in other words, he became a small god. The constant battle for dominance over the other dictates the life of individuals, families, communities and nations. This is the most enormous power forming the history of the human race. Behind the wars, the conquest of nations, genocides, deprivation of civil rights of ethnic minorities and their exploitation and annihilation, one can find this theological, and within it, the hamartological motive.

Confusing the languages of the world's nations and scattering the nations all over the Earth (Gen 11.9) can be an explanation for the nationalism that formed slowly during our history, which gained strength in the 19th and the 20th Centuries, culminating in world wars and local wars. Its tragic and harmful consequences can be felt in many regions of the world even today - particularly in the case of national

minorities under the power of a ruling majority. In this respect the most sorrowful events of present times are the ‘ethnic-cleansing’ of the Balkans in the first half of the 1990s and the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, in which eight hundred thousand people were massacred.

We have to ask whether the division of humanity into nations, peoples and races is really the divine judgement on human pride? Is it nationalism of the devil? The answer of the elite of our age is that nationalism is a curse which has brought about and still brings about a vast amount of suffering for humanity. But we also have to realize that the division of humanity into peoples, nations and races is a reality which we cannot stop with the stroke of a pen. But this division of humanity can contain blessing in itself. We have thought about the variety of languages, cultures and customs, which are represented by different people, nations and ethnic groups, each of them a common treasure of all humanity. If there would be even one less, humanity would be the poorer. I have emphasized above that, as a prism breaks light into all the colors of the rainbow, so mankind, although one, is divided in various ways.

On the bases of these it is important to distinguish between two kinds of nationalism: *aggressive nationalism* and *defensive nationalism*. Aggressive nationalism, which in its extreme form was represented by nazism, is disastrous and deadly, and that is why it is unacceptable. Its ideology has been the mixture of Darwinism, the ‘*ubermensch*’ idea of Friedrich Nietzsche and a kind of racial theory which supposed the superiority of one nation, race and culture over others until it reached the point of imagining that it had right to subjugate or even to commit to genocide other ‘inferior’ races, nations and cultures. This kind of nationalism is under the judgement of God. Defensive nationalism, on the other hand, which adopts a defensive position for saving an existentially threatened nation, ethnic group, national minority and its culture, is fully justified and rightful – such as the self-defense of the person who is attacked and who tries to save his own life. It is to be regretted that between the two kinds of nationalism the dividing lines are rather blurred, and there are powers which did not even want to recognize differences between the unlawful and lawful nationalism. If a national minority living under a majority tries to protect itself against unlawful attack by the majority, it is immediately accused by the majority of harmful nationalism, if not with irredentism or even with separatism. This behavior is similar to a highwayman in front of the court complaining that the self-defense of his victim was basically an attack on him, and it is not his acts but the defense of the one attacked which ought to be condemned.

In order that life not be an incessant battle, everybody’s battle against everybody else, among the Mosaic laws there are quite unique provisions – about ‘*the year of release*’ (Deut 15) and about ‘*the year of jubilee*’ (Lev 25). The first is about granting remission of debts in every seventh year, and the latter is about the fiftieth year – the year of trumpets – about the redemption of the land held as property. These laws, beside religious values, have far reaching positive political consequences. These were ignored and with many other laws of Moses, are now considered outdated and they are not taken into consideration in our society today. How different would have been the history of the so called Christian nations, if consideration would have been given these two laws of Moses in the writing of their own laws of mutual respect, and if they had been considered in the writing of international laws. But the examples to follow were the Corpus Juris Romani and the Dutchman Hugo Grotius’ legal system. Of course neither of these actually endorsed the Mosaic laws because they did not recognize their importance to the times they lived in, that without the application of these basic principles the polarization of society increases, the gap between the rich and poor widens, and there is no bridge – as there would have been with the laws of Moses – and necessarily disaster strikes: the differences became leveled out by the cataclysm of revolutions and wars. This is what happens when conditions are formed by violence between nations. Conquests or wrongful peace treaties cannot be maintained for ever. These laws of Moses offer a safety valve. After a time it would be a good thing to check and if need be correct the wrong contracts or the peace dictates in order to get to a full or partial restoration of the *status quo ante*. Without that there could be a new or even a more serious conflict. This is exactly what happened with the Versailles peace treaty which ended the First World War. At the signing it was already clear (and later on it was openly admitted) that these peace terms were fatally wrong, for many different reasons but mainly because they completely ignored President Woodrow Wilson’s principle of the right of nations to self-determination. The new State boundaries were drawn arbitrarily by the victorious powers. As a consequence, for instance, the Sudeten Land with 3 million Germans was annexed to Czechoslovakia, and 4.5 million Hungarians transferred to the neighboring States – and this was done just with the stroke of a pen. But in spite of these flagrant injustices, the oppression, the cheating and exploitation of national minorities, the League of Nations (which was set up for just this purpose) did nothing to get rid of these terrible mistakes or reconsider the peace treaties.

Two times seven years passed - but the impossible *status quo* remained. And then came Adolf Hitler, with his national-socialist politics of revenge, and after seven years the world was again in flames and the Second World War brought even more terrible destruction than the First. In the peace treaties following this one the defeated nations again received a Versailles type judgement – but with a few modifications. Instead of the Jubilee law of Moses, the barbaric ‘*Vae victis*’ law ruled again, in a civilized world, and to this day whole nations and ethnic groups are suffering the terrible consequences of those decisions. Against this dark background Moses’ two forgotten laws shine as beacons of hope. The national laws based on the ‘*Vae victis*’ principle have pushed the world from one cataclysm to another. During the era of thermonuclear and chemical weapons, a world system based on the pagan international law practiced for thousands of years leads humankind down the path of destruction. Has the time not yet arrived for mankind to take a radical new turn in regard to possible reconsideration of those defective peace treaties, setting the national problems right by starting in the spirit of Moses’ laws and by rewriting the national and international laws? Even the Dark Ages had a higher ethical level of humane treatment of one another in war than our modern “enlightened” age, in that it was compulsory for the belligerents to keep the ‘*Treuga Dei*’ – an armistice observed during the great Church festivals.

The miraculous escape of the Jews from slavery in Egypt - the great exodus under the leadership of Moses – is a magnificent page of human history. Eternal hope is there for each conquered nation or minority with the message that the slavery, the oppression, the exploitation will not last for ever, the time of liberation will come because a Savior comes.

The historical background is well known, partly from the Bible, partly from secular history. Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt to escape from the famine in Canaan, and they settled there with Joseph’s help. All this happened during the time of the Hyksos pharaohs, who came as invaders and conquerors from Asia Minor and ruled between 1670 and 1552 BC. They were overthrown by the rebellion of the Princes of Thebes. The pharaohs of the New Empire made the Jews slaves, since they were a foreigner people settled in the rule of Hyksos, and they were thus suspect and unreliable. Their sad fate is described in the Bible (Gen 46, Ex 1.*ff.*). After many trials, finally under Moses’ leadership – amidst many miracles – the people were able to escape from Egypt about 1,300 BC, probably during the reign of Ramses the Second.

The exodus of the Jews from Egypt remains an eternal example for oppressed peoples and national minorities desiring freedom from that impossible and intolerable situation into which they have fallen during their history by misfortune, and from which they try to escape and get free at any price. This kind of endeavor, desire and plan received the divine endorsement and seal, and the laws of human rights of our age which were formed by international forums – among them, the United Nations Organization – support their rightful effort for freedom when the dominating majority does not improve the situation of the oppressed minority deprived of basic human rights.

One of the determining features of the Christian theology of the last quarter of the last century has been the appearance and spread of the Liberation Theologies, which grew out of the ‘Theologies of Hope’. First they appeared in Latin America and then in South Africa. The branches of this new theology have been growing, and among them is the Eastern European Liberation Theology.² The central thesis of these theologies is that God is a liberating God who sooner or later breaks the chains of every kind of slavery, and brings freedom to the oppressed, to the conquered and to the exploited. The bondage, the slavery, the trampling cannot last for ever - God is the God of liberation.

During the reign of David and Solomon Israel flourished, not due just to the wisdom of their talented rulers, but also due to the fact that at that time neither Assyria to the East nor Egypt to the West was in a position to think about the extension of their power, or even about defeating the other. But all this soon changed. The national disaster started with the split of the country into two – the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah – in 932 BC, and thus began the period of the unfortunate fight between the two of them. The second national tragedy is connected with the unfolding of the Syro-Ephraimite war. Rezin, the Syrian ruler, persuaded Pekah, the king of Israel, to form a coalition against Assyria into which they invited Ahaz, the king of Judah (Isa 7). Despite the prophet Isaiah’s protest, the king asked help from Assyria. The help came, the Assyrians captured Damascus, the Syrian capital, and Sargon II occupied Samaria, the Israelite capital, and he then took ten tribes of the Northern State into captivity in 722 BC. This was the first, or the Assyrian captivity. Judah escaped, but became the vassal of Assyria. Next came the destruction of Jerusalem and the Southern part of the country in 586 BC by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon’s new ruler, who carried the people of the Southern State into captivity. This was the second, the Babylonian captivity.

The deportation and settlement of the conquered people in the midst of the Assyrian-Babylonian Empire was the consequence of a well thought-out policy. If they left the conquered people along the border of the empire, they could grasp a favorable opportunity and rebel against the empire, and thus regain their independence. The settlement of a foreign population among an accepting people was a well established practice. Hungarians admitted into their country the Cumanians and Jazygians and settled them down in the middle of the State, because they wanted to feel themselves secure in case of war.

In their captivity the Jews were allowed to live according to their tradition, religion and culture. They were able to introduce the synagogue form of worship, and their theologians could write the ‘Babylonian Talmud’ – the commentary of the Law. The ordinary people were able to live their own accustomed everyday life, pursuing a path to prosperity and success. There is no information about forcible assimilation or attempts to scatter the people. Attempts are recorded for alienation of their ancient religion, from the cult of Yahweh but these were unsuccessful (Dan 1-6). The people in captivity kept their own religion, and the religion kept the people – keeping them from assimilation and from losing their national identity.

Their story justifies the thesis that for people in a minority historical situation religion is the most important instrument of preserving them, assuring their survival and maintaining their strength. The eleven hundred years of Hungarian history underline this thesis with many shining examples. In the Carpathian basin, if settled Hungarians did not embrace Christianity, the rest of Christian Europe would not tolerate them for long, and sooner or later they would disappear, just like bigger nations who lived there earlier, as for example their relative the mighty Huns. After the Hungarian defeat by the Turks at the field of Mohács in 1526, the Turks occupied the middle of the country and remained there for a hundred and fifty years, raiding and ravaging the rest of Hungary. The Turkish occupation was followed by four hundred years of Austrian colonization. Hungarians would not have survived if the ministers of the Reformation had not kept their spirits up. What would have happened to the Hungarians in the Highlands (now Slovakia), to the Southern Hungarians in the Vajdaság (now Voivodina in Northern Yugoslavia) and to the Transylvanian Hungarians (now in Romania) after the Trianon-Versailles Peace Accord (1920) if the ministers had not kept them together, proclaiming God’s saving and preserving word. For the Hungarian minority in the successor States, the Church was the last bastion of defense during the Communist era. In a minority existence, a visible ethnic group can survive as long as they keep their religion. This proposition is true in the broader context as well: the Hungarian people will survive just as long as they have their Church. Without their Church they will disintegrate like an unbound sheaf of corn.

The prophets poured out their thunderous judgements against the oppressive empires of Assyria and Babylon, nor did they spare Egypt and the neighboring nations, predicting their destruction as a result of divine judgement (*eg*: Isa 13, 17, 19, 21, 27, 47; Jer 46-50). The prophets’ judgement, today as ever before, stands against the powers exploiting, oppressing and withholding the civil rights of national minorities and small nations, wherever and in whatever political system they may live. The prophets’ encouraging words are comforting today also for each oppressed small nation and national minority, reminding them that their tragic situation will not last forever and the time of liberation will certainly come.

Neither did the Jewish captivity last for ever. The promised time of liberation arrived for them. As quickly as it had arisen, the New Babylonian Empire broke up after the Persian attack. Cyrus, the Persian ruler, gave permission for the Jews to return from captivity to their ancient homeland, an event which happened in two parts in 538 and 458 BC. The last to return came under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and, once home again, rebuilt the ruined Jerusalem and the Temple and restored the worship of Yahweh. They did not have total independence under the Persians, since a Persian governor was imposed upon them.

Behind Cyrus’ generosity stood a singular philosophy. He might have considered that the towns and countries that fell into his hands along the empire’s borders, ravaged and ruined by war, did not have much value as they stood. But if he allowed the captive people to return to their homes from their deportation, they would gladly rebuild their ruined homes and towns, which would then be of benefit to the Persians. Moreover, the gratitude of the released people would prove to be the strongest bond which would faithfully bind them to the Persian Empire.

The Persian rule lasted until 333 BC, and was overthrown by Alexander the Great. In the Battle of Issos, even the Jews fell under his rule. After his premature death his generals divided his colossal empire among themselves. The Jews first fell under the House of Ptolemy – who also ruled in Egypt. Later the Seleucides ruled over them, and ruled Syria as well. Rulers from this dynasty meant a new danger to the Jews: “Hellenization”, an aggressive process of turning all nations into Greeks, including the Jews. This meant not just the adoption of the Greek language, tradition, habit, fashion and culture, but also Greek

religion. When Antiochus Epiphanes IV wanted the temple in Jerusalem converted into a sanctuary for Zeus, this was too much for the Jews and they revolted; under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus they won independence in 165 BC. (1 - 2 Maccabees).

Hellenism constituted a new danger for the Jews. A new and more dangerous enemy, it attacked their spirit, their soul and their religion. This Hellenism wanted to cosmopolitize all the nations of the then known world. Anybody could be Greek – so let everybody be Greek. Let them forget their old barbarian language, their ancient customs and obsolete laws, let them turn away from their tribal religions and accept the modern fashion in dressing, in architecture and customs. Let them adopt the great Greek style of life. In short, the nations had to lose their national identity, culture and religion, and they had to assimilate into the great Hellenic society. The spiritual leaders of the Jewish people – scribes, and the priests – saw the fatal danger embedded in this movement, and they tried everything they could do to preserve the customs, religion and identity of their people – so as to save their people from the destruction of the great fiery furnace of Hellenism. It is no accident that the Book of Esther and the Book of Daniel were written at that time.

As to the Book of Esther, the traditional view is that the reason it is among the writings of the Old Testament is because it gives a basis for the celebration of the Purim festival. In Jewish communities it was quite popular, although later Martin Luther wanted to leave it out of the Old Testament canon. The story takes place at the time of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, but it really became relevant during the Hellenistic period, when the Hellenistic rulers of the Seleucid dynasty wanted the Jews to give up their ancient religion, the worship of Yahweh. The message of the book is that although the Jews are adaptable to their social situation, if they were forced to give up their own religion they would remain faithful to it until death. The behavior of Mordecai, who would not bend his knee before Haman, the mighty counselor of the king, was to serve as an example for the earlier Jews to follow, and for the present Jews as well. The wonderful rescue of the Jews by Esther from the pogrom planned against them was to strengthen their faith in God's providence. 3

The message of the Book of Esther is unambiguous: for people living in minority situations and in endangered situations, faithfulness to their religion results in preserving their identity. Therefore, giving up their religion would be a fatal step, because it certainly would very soon result in the total disappearance of the ethnic group.

According to Biblical scholars, the Book of Daniel is the youngest book of the Old Testament, and came into being in the middle of the 2nd century BC, round about the time of the Maccabean war of independence. But its riddle is that the stories of the first six chapters happened long before, during the Babylonian captivity. One of the possible explanations of this is that into the Babylonian captivity were carried young nobles, Daniel and his three companion's story about their unshakable faithfulness to their beliefs and religion – handed down through oral tradition - suddenly became timely, and was written down and circulated among the people as an encouraging example to dispel the temptations and dangers of Hellenism, pressed hard by the pagan rulers. Chapters 7-12, predicting the downfall of the Empire, were meant to nourish a hope for the people under political pressure, a hope that the days of the oppressive Empire were numbered and its downfall was near. The Book of Daniel is no more than a religious-political treatise with the purpose of keeping the faith, the spirit of the people, and strengthening their adherence to the religion of their fathers, with undiminished faithfulness to Yahweh among the Jews threatened in their identity. In the light of these events we can understand the outbreak and the success of Maccabean war of independence. Its consequence was that the Jews could live in freedom under the rulers of the Hasmonean dynasty for over a hundred years, a period that ended in 63 BC when the Roman general Pompey extended the authority of the Roman Empire over the Jewish State. It is no accident that in Jesus' time the Book of Daniel was the most popular prophetic book of all. From it, this tiny nation under the foreign power received encouragement and reassurance. The Book of Daniel even today carries a valid message to each conquered nation or to those threatened ethnic groups living in a minority existence. And this is the message: if any ethnic group under a foreign power wants remain alive, it has to keep its identity and religion at any cost, even though they might get into existential danger on that account, because giving up their own identity would mean irretrievable renunciation of themselves, equal to the signing of their own death warrant. And this means that they would bear responsibility of their own disappearance without trace by assimilation into the nation ruling over them, into their language, their customs, religion, morality, culture and blood. Theologically speaking, all this is nothing other than an open rebellion against the divine predestinational will, which created and formed each nation, setting their way, their destiny and mission,

which had to include those separated groups which presently live in a minority existence under a foreign nation. Rebellion against the divine will carries a judgement in itself.

The hundred years and more of the Maccabean era were followed by the Roman conquest, starting in 63 BC. It happened that two pretenders of the Hasmonean house, Aristobulos and John Hyrcanus, asked the Roman general Pompey, who was just then staying in Egypt, to be the arbitrator. He came with a huge military escort and made John Hyrcanus king. Pompey soon returned to Egypt, but he left his soldiers in Jerusalem to help the new ruler. In practical terms it was the beginning of Roman rule in that region. Those Jews who had experienced their freedom in the Maccabean era now incessantly inspired the Jews to retrieve the lost freedom and led them to renewed rebellion against the Romans. Beside the two popular Jewish parties of Jesus' time, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, there was a smaller patriotic party, the Zealots, and its splinter group of the radical Sicari. Their members carried a dagger hidden in the pleats of their clothes, and they would kill the hated Romans whenever and wherever they reached them.

At that time the expectation of the Messiah, a savior similar to Judas Maccabeus, has reached its highest point. Then there were also false, failed messiahs, who lead the Jews into renewed rebellions against the Roman Empire, which were always put down and revenged by Rome, until finally they resulted in the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish State. In the 1st Century AD first Theudas and then Judas rebelled (Acts 5.37) The most serious uprising started in 66 and its defeat resulted in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the Massada tragedy in 73 AD. In 130 AD began the Bar Kochba rebellion, and its defeat sealed the fate of the Jews. The name of Jerusalem was abolished, the new name of the capital became Aelia Capitolina, the name of the province of Judah was changed into Palestine and the Jews, under penalty of death, were expelled from their own land. Thus started the great scattering of the Jews – the Diaspora.

With the desire of regaining their lost freedom, with a longing to regain the independence of the Maccabean era, with the hope of the God-sent Messiah, with rebellions against the Romans, filled to the brim with all these longings and aspirations was world into which Jesus was born.

When we are trying to see how Jesus reacted to the historical events of his time, then of the two methods used in Christology we choose to follow the method of 'Christology from below' and not 'Christology from above'. This, according to John's theology, follows the way of the divine Logos descending from heaven, but we are not in the position of God, and consequently we cannot follow the way of the descending Christ. For us only the first possibility is open, to follow the development of Jesus' Messianic consciousness. We have to follow the way of the ascending Christ.⁴ This does not mean we lessen Jesus' full deity, but we just want to study how Christ's divine character became step by step apparent in his human being.

It is undeniable that the historical events of his era had an effect on the development of Jesus' Messiah consciousness. As every contemporary Jew, Jesus also saw clearly and felt sorry for the conquered, exploited, enslaved condition of his people, and he was very much aware of an impatient and burning Messianic expectation. Like his contemporaries, he also found himself face-to-face with the fateful question: how would it be possible to change the situation of his people – God's chosen people? He, like his contemporaries, expected the appearance of a God sent Messiah, a new Moses, or David or a Judas Maccabee, who would assume the leadership of a new movement and would lead God's people to victory. Finally, through a long, secret inner spiritual development, Jesus came to realize that he was the promised God-sent Messiah, and he accepted the Messianic service after as he received divine confirmation at his baptism (Matt 3.15-17).

But before he started his Messianic work, Jesus had to clarify what type of Messiah he was going to be. This became clear to him during his temptation, forty days fasting in the desert (Matt 4.1-10). Three kinds of messianic type appeared before him in the form of temptation. The first was a Messiah changing stones into bread, a Messiah who gives bread to the people, so that the problem of famine, hunger for food, would be solved for ever. Expressing it in modern terms, he could have become a kind of social revolutionary. But Jesus was convinced that solving the question of bread is a task for humans; it does not need divine intervention, and so he rejected this kind of Messiahs. In the second temptation Jesus was prompted to jump from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and to land uninjured. This way he would have appeared as a wonder-worker, enchanting credulous people with his wonders and producing unbelievable spectacles, who works by continuously tempting God. But Jesus was convinced that people do not need this kind of spectacle, they need something more solid, so he rejected that kind of Messianism too. In the third temptation the concept of the political Messiah appeared before him. The Tempter showed him the countries of the world, and all were promised to Jesus provided he was willing to adore him, that is, if Jesus would make a covenant with Satan. Here there appeared before Jesus an easy performance of his Messianic

service, the possibility of a short cut; the world could easily belong to him. But was it possible to bring about the kingdom of God as an ally of Satan? He knew that to be impossible. And he knew also that what his people and the world need is not a new ruler in the fashion of the world, because there have been plenty of them in all ages, but a new kind of Messiah, one of a spiritual type. He decided in favor of the latter, and so defeated the Tempter, telling him: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; serve only him" (v.10)5.

This meant that Jesus has changed the pattern of earlier "messiahs". Until this time – and from then on to the present day – messiahs worked "from outside to inside", always starting from outside. They wanted to make their people or ethnic group physically free: free from their oppressors, the robbers, exploiters and rulers who lorded it over them. They thought that a people made politically free will then make themselves free inside, spiritually. Each old and new revolution and war of independence has followed the same model – and each of them ended in failure. It was always exactly the opposite that happened: instead of spiritual growth, what really occurred was spiritual and moral corruption, which later on undermined the freedom so painfully obtained. In this way freedom lead into anarchy, which was a sure presage of final destruction of the people or ethnic group.6

Jesus' method was quite different. He wanted first of all to make his people spiritually free, free from the enslaving and destructive power of sin. He knew that a spiritually free nation cannot be held in slavery forever, because sooner or later they will achieve political independence, and they will be able to hold on to it. This was a new pattern, a completely new messianic concept. Jesus' message also began with conversion, as the direct continuation of John the Baptist's prophetic message and in harmony with the classical theology of the prophets. But he would go further, all the way to external freedom. At the start of his ministry Jesus announced his messianic program, which we find in Luke 4.16-21. Carefully reading this pericopa, it is evident that Jesus' program is a political program as well, because he who proclaims the release of the prisoners and the tortured has political goals. Without a political aim, even a hidden one, Jesus' movement barely could survive a single day. Theologians of later times have overspiritualized, or simply left out of consideration, this aspect of Jesus' message. For all these mistakes Christian nations have paid and continue to pay a heavy price.

To achieve his goal, as a first step Jesus called on all people to repent. In this he was following the prophetic tradition. In the Sermon on the Mount he proclaimed a radical ethics to show what it really meant to repent and be converted. When this kind of conversion of the people took place, then the conditions for the total coming of God's kingdom would have arrived, and with the help of a heavenly army the people would be externally free again. In this context it is understandable that Jesus did not come to bring peace, but a sword (Matt 10.34). Jesus supported his messianic claim with miracles. After the initial results, Israel's conversion did not occur. Even the words of reproach in his speeches did not help much. Soon after, he decided to perform a radical act: he offered himself to God as the sacrifice of reconciliation on behalf of his unrepentant people. Jesus confidently accepted the cross, in that certain conviction that God would accept his sacrifice for sin, the kingdom of God would be established and he would gloriously return from death, and with this, at the same time, the spiritual and political liberation of his people would take place. According to Albert Schweitzer, Jesus, with his sacrificial death, was trying to force the coming of God's kingdom. But at that time this did not happen. With his last words on the cross – as Matthew recorded in its original: Jesus cried out "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27.46). This apparent fiasco was turned around by God for the benefit of the whole of mankind. Jesus' vicarious sacrifice was not just for the sins of Israel, but for the whole mankind. And all this was in fulfillment of the prophetic prediction (Isa 60).

Jesus' human tragedy was that his contemporaries did not understand his messianic concept and plan, because they always had expected a political messiah who was to liberate them first of all from the hated Roman rule. Nowhere could this be seen more clearly than in Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. At this time the exultant people celebrated the arrival of their promised Messiah – albeit the political one – who is "David's Son" and descendant. Immediately afterwards they turned away from him, when Jesus did not contend against the Roman fortress Antonia, but against the Temple - cleansing it of merchants and bankers. The disappointed people, who first exalted him and rejoiced by singing Hosanna and throwing palm-branches and their robes into his way, a few days later cried before Pontius Pilate: "Let him be crucified!" – rejecting the spiritual type of messiah, sealing Jesus' destiny and their own at the same time.

Jesus guessed in advance that the people would not accept his messianic idea and would reject him in disappointment. So suffering and death lay in wait for him. Three times he predicted this. But he had foreseen what consequences it would have for the people. He predicted the destruction of the Temple in

Jerusalem and the people, when the old fashioned, political type of false messiahs to their liking would appear, who would call the people to an uprising and to fight against the Romans, and all that would end in the final tragedy of his people (Matt 23.37-38). This is exactly what happened in 70 and in 135 AD.

Jesus wanted to be a Messiah – a Savior – of his people. But his theology, his plan and his method were different than the theology, plan and method of other messiahs both before and after Him. He believed without doubt that political liberation would follow their spiritual liberation, but his nation did not understand this and rejected him, and his kind of solution with him. Only the small group of his followers, who founded the Church, stood with him. Yet Christianity grew rapidly, and in spite of persecution it spread like wildfire. After barely three hundred years the pagan Roman Empire, an empire dependant on slavery, had already entered the phase of its decline. By the edict of Constantin the Great, in 312 AD, step by step it gave place to the first Christian State .

For any conquered small nation or any ethnic group living under the rule of foreign power, it is an essential, important and decisive prerequisite to use Jesus' liberating method for their survival. Here we immediately see the primary and specific service of the Church. It becoming evident that, in spite of every external oppression, wretched destiny or despised condition, that nation could be free in its spirit. This can happen through the faithful and pure preaching of the Church, which declares freedom from sins, relieves their hopelessness, keeps awake their faith in a better future, helps to carry the crosses of their everyday life which others are laying on their shoulders, gives faith and nourishes during the general disbelief, keeps an ethical backbone in the people in a basically immoral society, offers a way when there is no other way, encourages with the promise of life when life has almost died out, keeps awake the truth in a world in which injustice rules, creates an inner, spiritual freedom in a people living in external slavery and under oppression.

The "Jesus" liberation model was perhaps never so timely than currently in our age. Jesus Christ's message is as real today as it was always, but today it has an existential importance, not just with respect to the survival and liberation of small nations, ethnic groups and national minorities, but also for people languishing under a foreign power. But our age, in a shortsighted way, narrows down the freedom exclusively to external, physical, political dimensions, and almost ignores the dimension of inner freedom and its importance - not just concerning the individual's personal life, but concerning the life and future of that nation, ethnic group or national minority to which he or she belongs. Jesus' teaching stands in both respects: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

If Jesus had political goals with respect to the life of his people as a second step, goals beyond an immediate inner and spiritual freedom, why are these not recorded in the gospels? They must have serious reasons for being silent about this.

One of the reasons is political. Even Jesus did not speak directly about this, because it would have been dangerous, as witness the tragic example of John the Baptist, who openly criticized king Herod for his immorality, and was beheaded (Matt 14.1-12). For people under the rule of Rome, even the slightest criticism counted as a capital crime. Jesus' enemies would have liked it if he spoke directly against the Romans. Had he done so, it would have been easy to silence him once and for all, getting him the same fate as John the Baptist. The question of paying taxes was designed to ensnare him: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" (Matt 22.17). If Jesus answered "No" and it was reported to the Romans, he would find himself in prison the next day, charged with incitement. If Jesus answered "Yes", they had to pay taxes, then, charged with being the friend of the Roman oppressors, he would lose the sympathy of the people, considered as a traitor of the people. But with his diplomatic answer Jesus gave a response everyone had to accept, and his enemies could not accuse him. Finally, they succeed in bringing political charges against him before Pilate, the Roman governor: "this man is perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king" (Luke 23.2). This sealed Jesus' fate.

The second reason was theological. The writers of the gospels edited their work according to their own theological understanding, and according to this they arranged the events and sayings of Jesus. At the time of writing the gospels it would be dangerous for the developing Christian Church, which was persecuted from its very beginning, to provide more material for a more serious persecution by directly mentioning Jesus' political goal – the liberation of his people. From this kind of reasons has come the spiritualization of Jesus' political message, and thus developed the Christ image that we are using even today: whose exclusive concern is making his people spiritually free, who saves them by salvation from sin and its deadly consequences.

The manipulated Christ-image has resulted in a Christian theology that has given up its political dimension. It is true that Christian emperors and kings have ruled over Christian nations for a thousand years. But these had very little to do with the principles of theology, except that they reigned “by the grace of God”. The principles of their reign fell far short of Christian theology; they were closer to Machiavelli’s ideas. The early and medieval Popes tried to form a strong Church-State, but in the end this did not succeed. In Christian countries theology and politics have separated from each other. Theology, religion, the Church moved into the sphere of private life. At most they try to pour social oil drops into the wounds of society. The State, though, has kept some formal Christian symbols, but basically denied Christian principles.

A similar cleavage happened at the end of the Middle Ages between theology and philosophy. One result of this separation was that its very denial was born in Christian soil – agnosticism and atheism.⁷ With this has started the age of neo-paganism, an age of terrible wars and unjust peace, in which ancient Rome’s “*Vae victis*” principle has succeeded with a total disregard of Christian principles, among them, the truth. Thus the 20th Century has become a tragic century, with two world wars and more than hundred local wars.

Of course, like his Jewish contemporaries, Jesus had very definite political ideas. But about these he was not able to talk openly without endangering his mission and movement. So he spoke about them indirectly, in pictures and parables and riddles. He used the same technique as the opposition to all dictatorship has used in our age: the kind of pictures and parables that have two meanings, one direct and one indirect.

In Mark, the oldest gospel, Jesus called himself the “Son of Man” (eg: Mk 8.38), not the Messiah who he really was, because that would be immediately dangerous for him and for his movement. The name “Son of Man” was an everyday expression for uninitiated hearers, in which there was nothing dangerous. But for the Jews the name “Son of Man” had an apocalyptic meaning derived from the Book of Daniel (7.13). We also see Jesus’ cautiousness at Caesarea Philippi, a territory did not fall under the Roman authority, when he asked his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” Here we get Peter’s answer: “You are the Christ” – “and he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him” (Mark 8.29-30).

The following saying of Jesus has a political tendency, the one in which he complaining that: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt 8:20). The direct – primary – meaning of this saying is Jesus’ justified warning about his homelessness to a man wanted to become his disciple. But according some interpreters the saying has an indirect – hidden – political meaning, too. The foxes here would mean the cunning and – supposedly – the red-haired Herod, his family and entourage. The birds refer to the Romans, the top of their military standards were decorated with the symbol of eagle. Both, Herod’s family and the Roman military and officials’ families had luxurious or at least decent homes to live in.

In an other saying Jesus warns his disciples: “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod” (Mark 8:15). For the outsiders this saying did not carry any kind of dangerous idea. They may suppose that this rebus-like saying has some kind of liturgical meaning. But for the Jews which were familiar with the expressions of the rabbinical literature, the yeast was a symbol of corruption and satanic. These might understand Jesus saying that they have to protect themselves from the spiritual corruption of the Pharisees and from the life-destruction of Herod. Jesus could not say these warnings in direct, open-speech without grave consequences.

For example Jesus’ parable about the Good Samaritan has also a kind of twofold message (Luke 10.30-35.). The primary or direct message is on the surface: the victimized fellow man must be helped unsparing time, effort, energy, and finances. The message of this parable for Christian generations of ages had been interpreted correctly. From this sprang the institution of the Christian charity. But this parable has an indirect, deeply laying, symbolical and hidden message also which was well understood by the early Jewish audience, however it remained hidden from the strangers outside the community. And this is the following: the robbed, beaten almost to death, bleeding, in the dust helplessly struggling victim is none else than the Jewish people itself which is expecting death, the unavoidable end. The robbers who robbed and deadly wounded the Jewish nation, are no others than the Roman conquerors. The priest and levite who saw the victim but walked uninterestedly by are no one else, than the leaders of the people: the priests and the clergy which would have obliged to help, but they did not. This was understood by the adversaries of Jesus, too, but they were unable to conceptualize a charge against him because Jesus did not name *expressis verbis* neither the people nor the Romans, just the clergy was mentioned but this it was not capital crime in the eyes of the Romans.

The parable's Good Samaritan is Jesus – about this there was a same understanding among the theologians. He was, who went all over, consoled, encouraged people and did good things, forgave sins, cleansed spirits and healed the sick. But he offered help not only the individuals needing his help, Jesus wanted to serve his whole nation, God's elect people now is in slavery, in exploitation, robbed out systematically and who was about to die. He wanted to liberate his people by his own way that is “from inside to outside” – to set free his people in their spirits by conversion from their sins, rebirth and sanctification whereby to make suitable and ready his people to God's direct intervention to regain the external, political freedom and independence as well. All this spiritual preparation would be needed in order that the liberation could occur again, in other form, what happened at the time of Moses: the marvelous exodus from Egypt and by God's helping intervention let the people repossesses the promise land, Canaan. In Jesus' theology his people's sins formed that kind of obstacles, without its removing God will not help his people in getting back their political independence. The sin of his nation preventing God's intervention, liberation. In this Jesus followed the theology of the prophets and John the Baptist. Finally his nation rejected Jesus' way and model – they did not want to convert. Jesus seeing this offered the utmost sacrifice: himself, his suffering and death as an expiatory sacrifice for his people's sins. He offered himself to God as a ransom in their place. But his people did not accept this, neither did they repent – and the gates of heaven remained closed; God's armies did not descend from heaven to liberate the chosen people from the bondage of Rome. The people's response to Jesus' messianic activity was passive and negative, certainly the result of their memory of the Maccabees' successful war of independence, which was not preceded by any religious repentance in accordance with the prophets' understanding and interpretation. The people and the false prophets were looking for a repetition of the sword-wielding cavalymen of the Maccabees' rebellion – forget about repentance and spiritual cleansing – and the result was the same in each new rebellion: national tragedy, in 70, 73 and in 135 AD.

Jesus' method of proclaiming his message was mostly through parables, metaphors and riddles rather than through plain talk (Matt 13.34). However, he talked plainly to his disciples when they were among themselves (Mark 9.31, Matt 15.15). Not much was recorded of the secret teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, and this was the case of his teaching when the resurrected Lord was with his disciples for forty days, “speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Acts 1.3). Only the Gnostic Gospels knew – allegedly – more about it (eg: The Gospel of Thomas, The Secret Book of James). The reason for this hiatus is, on the one hand, that Jesus “charged them to tell no one” (Mark 8.30); on the other hand, it is probable that the secret teaching of Jesus could have been dangerous to the existence of the early Church, for it would certainly triggered severe persecution by the Romans. What did Jesus' secret talk contain? It centered around the following main issues: the secrets of the Kingdom (Acts 1:3); presumably his plan of redemption and *liberation*; the role of the disciples; and the things to come. Judas' treason might not only have been the “kiss” at the arrest of Jesus (Matt 14.24), but also his reporting to the priests Jesus' secret teaching to his disciples. This could have created the basis for Jesus' arrest and accusation before Pilate: “this man...misleading our people, telling them not to pay taxes to the Emperor and claiming that he himself is the Messiah a king (Luke 23.2, Good News Bible). This was enough to seal the fate of Jesus.

For the followers of Jesus – the people of the Church – the example of the Master is compulsory to follow. Without the commitment towards its people and nation, the Church degrades into a cultic community, falsely believing that continuous and constantly presented formal liturgical worship is the service that God wants, or into a religious community whose main goal is itself, and its main task is polishing the religious-ethical perfection of its members. In this case the Church degrades into a religious community peering introspectively inside itself and rotating around its own existence, not having any kind of responsibility whatsoever towards non-members, its own people and the nation. In both cases the Church could rather be called a modern-day Qumran Sect than the Church of Jesus Christ.

From the Apostle Paul's speech in Athens, one sentence is especially significant to the topic under discussion. “He (God) made from one every nation...determined...the boundaries of inhabitation of nations” (Acts 17.26). From this is clear that ignoring this divine order and in an arbitrarily way rearranging and redrawing a nation's boundaries in a manner that leads to dismembering that nation, is a sin against the will of God. That is exactly what was done twice with the Hungarian nation. This resulted that 4.5 m. ethnic Hungarians being cut off from their own nation against their will, and submitted to foreign and hostile nations of different language, religion and culture who humiliated, oppressed and exploited them and made them second class citizens on their own land of birth.

Concerning the Hungarian Churches, we can say that in this respect mainly the Protestant Churches tried to follow Christ's example, and to stay next to their nation in need, in the time of trouble and national tragedies. Above we spoke of their service in nation's survival and maintaining its identity in the distant past. They continued this kind of service in the past century, too. After the First World War the Churches helped the people to regain their consciousness from the shock of the peace treaty of Versailles-Trianon. It was a great shock to lose two thirds of their historic country of more than a thousand years, and to have four 4.5 million ethnic Hungarians turned over, by the stroke of a pen, to a minority existence by throwing them under the rule of foreign powers. In the broken state that existed between the two world wars the Churches became stronger in spirit, in material resources and in their organizations. A spiritual awakening had started, which reached its highest point after the Second World War and at the beginning of the forty five years long Soviet occupation. This was a stroke of providence, preparing the Churches as it did for the long decades of the militant atheism of Communism, and for faithfulness and service to their people. In this period the Church survived a time of impoverishment and persecution, and walked on the way leading toward the utmost destruction. Yet it still remained faithful to its mission: it proclaimed the Word of God, by which consolation, encouragement and hope could be raised, sustaining the life and strength of the people.

Churches living on the detached territories: in Romanian Transylvania, in the Slovak upper Hungary (Highlands), in Sub-Carpathia and the Southern territory (Vajdaság-Voivodina) attached to Yugoslavia, rendered a very important service in the spiritual strengthening of the ethnic Hungarians now forced to become a national minority, and keeping their language, culture and identity. The majority despised them and robbed them, regarding them as non-essential second-class citizens, treating them like enemies. For the Hungarian national minority – destined to liquidation – the Church remained as the last bastion. Had they not been able to have their Church, the Hungarian minority in the successor States would have been destroyed a long time ago: without trace they would have been assimilated by the majority nation ruling over them. In Transylvania the Church not only rendered the Hungarians saving service, but the spark which ignited the fire of revolution against the Communist system in Romania sparked from the Reformed congregation in Temesvár at the end of 1989.

The 20th Century was not just the century of the world's great conflagrations – the century of two World Wars with 80 millions victims, and the century of more than a hundred local wars – but also the century of the national minorities' tragedy. On account of many reasons, but mainly that of irresponsible and wrong peace treaties, they fell under the rule of a foreign majority which grossly abused them. National minorities have been exploited, deprived of their rights, of their communal institutions, schools, properties, culture and language, and finally the majority wanted to deprive them of their religion and identity. This kind of policy has created tension, not just among the rulers but also within the ethnic minority which were forcibly detached from their own national body, language, culture and history, all against their will. Many attempts have been made to correct this absurd and unnatural situation, but so far none of them has succeeded and these even turned out to be a source of newer troubles and tensions. At the present time the world organizations, such as United Nations Organizations, the European Council and the Committee of Human Rights, are trying to create a more acceptable and more human situation for these national minorities. But the question remains: Will their decisions and recommendations be put into practice by the interested majority nations? If we look at the conflicts in the Balkan in the '90s, it is no wonder that we remain pessimistic. So far we still have not seen the successful assurance of the collective rights of national minorities in Eastern Europe. Without a civilized solution of the problem of national minorities the world should hardly expect a peaceful and prosperous future.

Until now Christian theology has remained painfully silent on the issue of national minorities; it has acted as if this problem did not even exist. The time has come for theologians to make their voices heard on this important question.

Translation by Szilvia Tóth

NOTES

1. "Liberation theologies" demand the liberation of humanity from the different restrictions placed upon it, such as oppression, deprivation of civil rights and exploitation.
2. Pungur, Joseph, *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, Calgary, Angelus. 1994.

3. Baldwin, Joyce C., *Esther, an Introduction and Commentary*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity, 1984, p.3 f.
4. Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *Jesus – God and Man*, London, SCM Press, 1968, p.34 f.
5. Pungur, Joseph, *Theology Interpreted, Vol.2.*, Lanham, University Press of America. 1993, p.20 f.
6. *ibid.* p.41.
7. Tillich, Paul, *Dynamics of Faith*, New York, Harper and Row, 1957, p.124.

Chapter 2

A THEOLOGY OF MINORITY

Loránt Hegedűs

Theology, as the most universal and most personal science of God's according "Whole", includes in itself the theology of wholeness, of majority, of minority and of particularity. Among these, it is the theology of minority that we intend to study in this essay.

God's Eternal Fullness

(as the Beginning, the Essence and the End of all Theology)

This fullness means God's "ubiquity" – his ever and everywhere presence: "Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!" (1 Kings 8.27) – says King Solomon in his prayer of temple dedication. "The fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph 1.23). "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17.28). God is not in the world but the world is in God. According to a related parallel: let us cut an apple in two and from it try to take out the sun that ripened it! It is obvious that the apple could be born on a tree and ripened only in the rays of the sun, and in all atoms and particles of the apple the sun's life-generating effect can naturally be found. In a similar way, God's creating, life-giving and caring, all-permeating presence upholds our world and preserves our life, and this wholeness of God which is in this world "is clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom 1.20) to the impartial intellect's believing openness, recognizing that only the infinite could contain the finite, and not *vice versa*. God's ever and everywhere presence is the beginning, the central essence and the end, both for our world and for our life as well.

God's eternal fullness as *beginning* is spelled out in the Gospel of John 1.1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made". Everything in our world came into existence by his out-of-nothing creating Word (Genesis 1.3). Between God and the world, the only real direct link is the Word: the unity of God's thought, word and deed. We have to bring back every question to this origin if, in the case of the deepest problem-seeing and ultimate origin-searching, we want to draw from a "pure source". The lack of a primary source makes primary trust impossible. Its self-deifying contempt leads to utter rootlessness in every field, and this is what Simone Weil called "the chief misery of the 20th *Century". The steering up of the life-giving source by alien sources and irresponsible tempers leads to chaos, and without becoming clear it leads to ultimate anarchy which results in irresistible destruction.

God's eternal fullness as *central essence* for our world, life and person means that "in the fullness of time" God's creating Word, who from the beginning of the creation has been "upholding the universe" (Heb 1.3), "became flesh" in Jesus Christ (John 1.14). "In him the whole fullness of the deity dwells bodily" (Col 2.9). Therefore God without Jesus Christ is beggarly¹ but in Christ our life was impacted directly and is being

changed into his likeness (2 Cor 3.18), therefore in truth he is infinitely rich, the true life-giving Lord. Consequently, the universe is functioning as the thought of the Word, as the consequence of its mighty works, overcoming all that opposes the Word, judging and conquering and fulfilling every promise: “Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3.11). The decisive divine act of world-redemption is the conquering of sin – which through God’s great risk of giving the choice of freedom, corrupted the whole creation – by Christ’s death on the cross and his resurrection. In its two-in-one act the work of redemption was completed. All life-processes, issues and life-and-death problem-complexes of the individual man, as well as of mankind as a whole, can be fully disclosed and treated in time and in eternity only if their need and ability for redemption is understood. Conquering pseudo-redemptions, false antichrists, have falsely claimed to be ultimate, but actually their effect in all fields is no more than temporary, can bring only unspeakable suffering, genocide for the losers, and to the victors comes a self-defeating overall triumph carrying within itself the seeds of its own ultimate destruction. Godless solutions to the minority question are in no way different.

God’s eternal fullness as *end* means that the ultimate last word is God’s – even if he chooses to keep silent. Redemption was achieved by a decisive God-man’s act: Christ’s death and resurrection. It launched the Church’s history, inspired cultural, spiritual and civilized world history, and now proclaims God’s ultimate salvation and rule over history itself. In this way Christ, who – as creating Word – completed the creation of world out of nothing by the will of the Father and with the help of the Spirit, at the end of the world as the recreating Word brings out of annihilation the “new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3.13). Then “the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone” (1 Cor 15.28).

God’s eternal fullness as *the beginning of all*, as the central essence and as the end which is the all-including infinite, is given to us by the grace in Christ, and in this way “the God of grace” can be ours. In Christ the infinite God concentrates himself into a finite human being, and in its exclusive act of merciful miracle the finite can include the infinite. “*Finite non capax infiniti nisi per infinitum ipsum finitum capax infiniti*”. (The finite cannot contain infinite unless, by means of the infinite, the finite will be enabled to contain the infinite).

The exclusive goal of this miracle of mercy is that we should seek to solve all our life’s questions in light of the most universal and most personal understanding of eternity. Let us strive, therefore, to bring eternity to bear on the transitory, by the help of the grace of God, by the Word of Christ and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because “from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom 11.36).

The Fullness of God’s Created World

(its Universal, Majority, Minority and Personal Features)

a) The *universal* character of God’s created word stands foremost in its createdness. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1.1). What a magnificent inscription is this over the gate of the Bible’s eternal spiritual building! “The book which begins with this will never be flattened out” wrote Renan, amidst the last century’s scepticisms which began to eat away and to cast aside everything in its path.

The createdness universally means givenness by God and dependence upon God, which is valid to the whole as it is to the parts. Because of the infinite qualitative difference between the Creator and the creation, creation is not infinite but only boundless, not eternally existing and not eternal; its existence spans only from the creation to the fulfillment in God's time. Its foundation is not in itself but it is in God, in his creating, preserving and recreating will. There is no logical answer at all to the question: why does anything exist; why not rather only nothingness? The world is not necessary, its universal feature is given only in its contingency which, according to the interpretation of our limited knowledge, is "*less than necessary*", which indicates an accidental existence – while faith, with resounding life-knowledge, looks upon the God-created universe as "*more than necessary*".

The universality of the created world has its continuation in the lawful order of the physical world (Ps 19.2). This reaches its peak in the consciousness of the physical world: in the need for a moral world-order of man and his world (Matt 7.12). Without the lawful order of the physical world, without the universal demand for good, the moral-spiritual world could not survive in its general life-function amidst the dynamics of positive-negative changes to which it is subjected.* This is the origin of Immanuel Kant's existential awe: "There are two things which fill me with awe: the starry sky above and the moral law within".ⁱⁱ

Beyond all this there is a universal lavish outpouring of God's bountiful beauty in the world itself which are present in the demonstrative ontological values (Matt 6.29). "Here are worlds being born,/ There are decaying millions,/ A warning word to the vain,/ A comfort to the despairing".ⁱⁱⁱ In this non-eternal world there are starting, unfolding, dying and restarting processes of dynamic reality: the starting and unfolding processes in the ascending branch of overflowing energies as seen in the fantastic variety: in the splendid displays of stars and snowflakes, in the worlds of red giants and white dwarfs, and in panorama of flower-spangled fields. In the meantime the birds sing much sweeter, the trees bloom much richer than they would if derived only from the notion of the "struggle for survival". This abundance is which makes human life worth living. "If we spent all we have on our daily life, what would be left over for that which is the most noble and the best?" – asks Beethoven.^{iv} Under the hallmark of the universality of the beauty it is never the living *out* of life but only living *through* life that leads to the all-fulfilling goal in the universality of the created world.

The great turning point and reversal in the universal perfection of the created world were caused by the all-consuming flood of the consequences of the satanic rebellion and, as a consequence of sin, the Fall. In the spiritual world of God, disobedience is the exception and obedience is the rule; in the life of mankind obedience is exception and disobedience is the rule. Death, that overwhelms everything, is the wage of the self-deifying atheism and dehumanizing inhumanity of the sin of the "turning-in-upon-itself heart"^v. But "God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all" (Rom 11.32). So there is the universality of sinful mankind's need for redemption, and its ability for redemption by mercy from the deluge (Gen 6.6-8, 8.21-22) to the final conflagration (2 Pet 3.9), from the rainbow over Mount Ararat to the overarching love of Christ's death on the mount of Golgotha, and to the individual and universal resurrection which flows from it (Gen 9; 1 Cor 15).

b) Between the universality of the godly good and the satanic evil, in the dialectics of a self-caused need for redemption and the ability to receive redemption – the gift of divine mercy – this is where we meet the phenomena of *majority* and *minority* in our world.

In the universality of godly good, the phenomena and realities of majority and minority, that is, their appearance, mean first and foremost the liberty of creation, the variety of evolution, the richness of life, the innumerable possibilities of value-orders and the unfolding wonders of unfathomable love. Instead of the carefully calculated achievements of man's industry we see the irresistible zest of divine creation, a broad cheerfulness, an outpouring of bountiful miracles manifested from heaven to earth in creation of the boundless *majority*, its coming into existence, its maintain itself in life. From its comes, as a consequence, the ordering of a wonderful unfolding according to the will of God, who is "Glorified as the great heavenly Creator/ by the holy song of the Universe, / The sky, the earth, the seas,/ And the prayers of faithful hearts,/ Who speaks and the heavenly wonders tremble,/ Lightning followed by sunshine,/The Lord's order is announced / and blessing fills our land".^{vi} All this is a testament to the work of creation by God, in Psalm 90.

The majestic tide of majority is being accentuated in the opposite category by the exceptionality of *minority's* value and treasure, much as the multitude of majority focuses attention on the rarity of minority. The highest summits and the deepest chasms, the brightest stars and the most radiant diamonds, are all in a minority in comparison to the average. The rarity of value and the value of rarity conceal and indicate, at the same time, the love and the care of the merciful preserving of the Creator of minority. In the immense world of stars there are two glaring golden flames: Antares and Orion. On our earth the Grand Canyon and the Niagara Falls give the sightseers pause to wonder. Exceptional figures of colossal geniuses, with their Shakespearean and Handelian life-achievements: the angelic heroes of suffering (*Stabat mater dolorosa*), the self-sacrifice of those who save lives (Father Kolbe) are all demonstrators of individual personalities of the sacred exceptional minority. The star-shaped snowflake, trembling dew on a blade of grass in the morning light, refreshing the smallest and mirroring the Greatest, represent the exceptionality of the minority. In the pure spiritual world, true strength cannot be found in the confines of majority, but in that of the minority. Because progress is made when we are oriented not towards an average greyness but in the direction of the singular personality. As the Scripture says: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 20.16;22.14).

However, it is in the universal combination of satanic evil and human wickedness that the interaction of majority and minority results in inequalities, in corruption, in the spread what is inferior at the expense of withering away of the superior qualities, in the tyranny of the overwhelming oppressor over the defenselessness of the oppressed. The oppressor gets all the chances, which are uses at will, while the oppressed gets no chances at all, perhaps minimal tolerance from the oppressor. This is all they have to live with, and it is like the life of a pine tree trying to cling on to the side of a rocky mountain many thousands of feet in the air. Frequently, in the final outcome, although the majority cannot manage to sustain its life, the minority still refuses to die.

In this evil, satanic-human condition, the *majority* always gains more and more, but yet it does not realize the limits of growing and thus chooses, forces, hastens and

eventually finalizes its own fatal result of overgrowth. These might come about in cosmic explosions and in devastating atom or thermonuclear bursts in the microworld, in star showers, in falling towards thermo-death: in demographic explosions and in deaths from starvation: in global economic-financial conquest and in exploitation: in pollution of the environment and in final destruction of the conditions that make life possible. Forgotten is the wise aphorism: “he loses pleasure who for amusement chases many pleasures”, and puts total libertinism onto his ideological flag: “Everything is permissible that is in opposition to everything”. Assuming the deceptive guise of democracy the majority make everything permissible for themselves and nothing to the other side. It denies the rights of the minority, first its collective rights, then its personal rights, and finally its rights to self-identity and even the right to life. It does not stop until it has amassed a surfeit of the pseudo-absolutes of ungodliness and inhumanity. It could mobilize and to put into action huge natural and historical forces but always temporally and tentatively. Out of theological necessity it will collapse owing to its cosmic, natural and historical imbalance of self-deification. “Though you soar aloft like eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, thence I will bring you down, says the Lord” (Obadiah 1.4). This 2,500 year old word has become really timely in today’s self-deifying cosmic age.

In the disorderly order of evil spirituality, the *minority*, being in a constantly down-trodden state, is not able to put itself into perspective and therefore cannot fulfill its historical role – it can merely become hysterical, thereby inviting sudden danger upon others, even upon everybody, but chiefly upon itself. It may even become depressively self-destroying, becoming thereby nothing more than a pause in the music of life – fulfilling the wish for disappearance of the cruel majority; either sinking into the dread greyness of everyday, or melting away like the last winter’s snow. All these will come about, moreover, because – beyond the conscious and merciless destruction of life, culture, soul, people and nation – the minority, having forgotten its creation-mandate, does not feel obliged to save itself as a community, either to God or to the world.

The other danger comes when the behavior of passive resignation turns into active hysteria. With the help of the technical tools of our age, even a tiny minority has the ability to start a chain reaction of fateful events leading to catastrophe in regions, countries, continents and even in the cosmos. The events of the Last Judgement, described in Revelation Ch 6-16, can be initiated by mankind, and – this is dreadful – can be many times overachieved by today’s level of knowledge. It is precisely put forward in a book by B. Philbert entitled: “Christian Prophecy and Nuclear Energy”. Since man with “the power of heavens in his hands, and emptiness in his heart” stands at the peak of turning of the millenium.

c) From the givenness of the created world through the categories of majority and minority we have to reach its *personal character* in the meaning of revealed truth and in respect of the facts.

In the world without God and his revelation, something more universal is more abstract and at the same time more impersonal. Thus schizophrenia is a characteristic of the modern world: on one hand there are universal natural laws which are entirely impersonal, on the other hand there are the most personal obsessions and beat-shoutings which are without any universal objectivity.

In living by faith in God, however, our most universal life-truths are the more impersonal ones. According to John 3.16: “*God so loved the world* (infinite universal) that *he gave his only Son* (divine personal), so that whoever *believes in him* (human personal) should not perish but *have eternal life* (eternal universal)”. So in the universal world of God, the personal is not exception but paradigm: anything is replaceable but nothing is exchangeable. The decisive question is this: whether we are determined by positive personal faith in God or, in contradicting him, by negative personal unbelief, blind, false and fake credulousness? The former means salvation, the latter condemnation here and in the eternity.

After having put the theme onto the theological coordinate system, the definitions have come to the light. Now it is the turn *to explore the positive theses of the theology of minority*.

Minority: the Bearer of Merciful Election of God

This merciful election is foremost a pre-creational divine pre-knowledge determined by personal pre-destination and not by fateful mechanisms (Rom 8.29). God does not plan and create complete tyrannical uniformity but a sumptuous variety, a multifold and multicolored invisible spiritual and visible material world. The pre-knowledge of God’s creative fantasy and the acutely creative Word create everything; the providential and authoritative Word that saves us from falling into nothingness, preserves, upholds and unfolds all, then receives us back into itself at death “each according its kind” (Gen 1.11-12; 21/b and c, 24/a,b and c). The word *lōminah* at its first appearance (Gen 1.11,12) does not mean separation according to gender, as it does later in the case of cultic discrimination between clean and unclean foods and animals. Here, what stands before us in the priestly document, in the separation of plants and their main classes, is the systematization of creaturely existence *in se* – as C. Westerman writes in his Genesis Commentary (p.173.3, 1983). Thus here unmistakably appears the concept of nature (*natura*) “but conditioned by the concept of creature (*creatura*)” (Westerman quotes G. von Rad)^{vii}. Here God is not the immediate subject of the happening. He calls upon the earth to bring forth living things according to their own kind. “These differ from each other according to their kind. Vegetation – according to the ruling of God – is Whole in an articulate way, and not a melt-together mass. As the world’s createdness is articulated and a definite Whole, so is the earth’s vegetation cover. So long as the earth stands, there will not be a single one among the billions of plants which would not accommodate according to its kind into the organized Whole, because the almost invisible piece of grass and a thread of moss are the parts of the God’s organized, separated world. Everyone according to its kind belongs to and points to the organized Whole”^{viii}.

This organized order is valid in itself for the origin of the various levels of life according to their own kind, and it is valid at the higher levels of life as well. However, the anthropomorphic viewpoint is dominant in the revelation history of the Holy Scripture, which deals chiefly with the relationship between God and Man.

From all these, obviously, derives the existence of minority within the Whole, each according to its kind beside the majority. This means, in the case of the piece of grass and the thread of moss we mentioned above, that the smaller a piece of reality is within the creation, the more important is the way it underlines the greatness and the health of the

Whole. In turn the Whole, by building into itself the most tiny parts, is able to live out beyond all shapeless masses its own orderly living existence.

In this way minority becomes the bearer of God's merciful election, even in the subhuman world of atoms, molecules, cells, plants and animals. It will be obvious, however, that in the human sphere of life God never does his creating, preserving and redeeming work "superficially", but He completes it with regard to the tiniest part. The majority of the souls who receive the sowing of the good seed of the Word are roadside souls, with hard hearts; stony, superficial souls; selfish souls, with thorny soil. Only a few, after ploughing, weeding and cultivating, become thirty, sixty and hundredfold fruit-bearing lives (Matt 13.1-9). In this wicked world sometimes the pious men so disappear (Psalm 12.2), that only Noah, Daniel and Job can be found on the earth (Ezek 14.14). It was revealed to the elect people of Izrael: "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers..." (Deut 7.7-8).

In the all-encompassing time of the Ba'al, the prophet Elijah, in his deadly tiredness, thought that he alone remained. But God's word comforted him with the reality of a minority bearing the merciful election, which means more: "Yet I have still seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Ba'al..." (1 Kgs 19.18). Bethlehem Ephratah were little among the clans of Judah, but out of it comes forth the Savior (Micah 5:2). The Apostle Paul considered himself all alone in Corinth, but he got encouragement from the Lord about the multitude of the minority: "I have many people in this city". (Acts 18.10). All this is capped by the description of the elect of the New Testament: "Consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth...Yet God chose what is lowly and despised in the world...as it is written, let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" (1 Cor 1.26-31).

Minority as the Remnant of God's Judgement

The majority which does not accept the merciful election goes to judgement. Even the minority which accepts election can only have an inner assurance of the wonder of mercy, but can never have 100% outward assurance. If it remains inwardly faithful to mercy, "no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10.29/b). But if, amidst the pressing outer circumstances, it believes not in the Lord God himself but in *its faith in God*: in that case, even inadvertently, it steps into the place of God – and falls immediately from the high ground of mercy (Gal 5.4/b). This is when "the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God" (1 Pet 4.17).

This is how the purifying judgement of God reaches the minority, cleansing it from the majority and even from itself. This is how minority, even in multiple way, is the remnant of God's judgement. This is why the son of Isaiah is Shear-jashub, which means: "Remnant, repent!", because even a part of the people which remains after the coming judgements can hope for life and future if it exchanges the mercy of sparing for the mercy of repentance (Isa 7.3). So far no minority could survive from a passive sparing; only active repentance can help to tame the blows and trials and be able to endure them. But if

trials aggravate into blows as a result of not bearing them, out of reckless cowardice, this *brings about its own end.

The prophecy of Zechariah tells of how God puts a third of his people into fire in order to refine them “as one refines silver, to test them as gold is tested” (Zech 13:9). Here the question is not about saving the quantity, but qualitative purifying. Minority must become more distinguished, more pure, more holy and more qualitative than the majority. Otherwise it is not a precious minority, but just a scum, not a remnant but trash. Without qualitative purification, it will decline and will be lost. But as purifying quality, it will experience “quality, just by being, is victorious!”⁹ The essence and fullness of this kind of quality is to settle relations with regard to God. In it, all judgements reach their end and all minorities find the foundation of their life. “...they will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say: ‘they are my people’ and they will say: ‘the Lord is my God’” (Zech 13:9).

The qualitative behavior of minority as the remnant of God’s judgement is made it bearable for itself and for the majority as well. The members of minority are the pillars of trustworthiness, the representatives of unbribable ethics; they did not mingle the temporary with the eternal. In the time of judgement they triumphantly harmonize between possibility and self-sacrificing honesty. In their proximity the time of judgement becomes bearable, which otherwise appears as endless. In their presence, because of cleansing, God brings in a time of clemency: “And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened” (Matt 24.22).

In the judgement this minority may well shrink to a mustard seed but it will not perish, and always it carries about in itself the miracle of growing to the highest tree, offering a home for the nestless (Matt 13.32, Mark 4.31). This is the most beautiful hope of the minority that has passed through God’s judgement.

Minority as the Apple of Eyes of God’s Providence

God’s elect minority, purified through judgement, is the apple of God’s providential eye. In his persecuted minority state, in the pressing encirclement of mighty and rich enemies, the psalmist stands alone and cries out to God: “Keep me as the apple of thine eye; hide me in the shadow of thy wings.” (Ps 17.8) – and God’s encouragement comes through the prophet to the people, devastated as they are by enemy: “for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye” (Zech 2.8).

In the possession of such godly promises, the minority has to see itself as one who is looking at not its own but, literally speaking, the apple of God’s own eye. This is the meaning of the decisive life-order, even in the most painful state of servitude: according to God the minority could not be less but multiple, like his people in Egypt; when it is rejected, death comes. (In our case also: instead of murderous abortionists we badly need midwives, with such personality, faith and activity as Siphrah and Puah in Egypt). Despite officially sanctioned murder, the people were multiplying! (Ex 1.15). In Babylon too, this is the order of God: “Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives to your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; *multiply there and do not decrease!*” (Jer 29.6). By obeying this command they receive the promise: “Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who

make merry. I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small” (Jer 30.19).

Within the people of God, even outside of it, the number is not indifferent. A country is not made up of those who die for it, but of who make it full by birth. And no one can have rebirth who was not born. On this basis, according to God: “To the large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; every tribe shall be given its inheritance according to its numbers” (Num 26.54). Also, because it would lessen the inheritance of the apple of his eye, God forbids his people to decrease. The survival and unfolding is a must despite all difficulties – which can be done with a victorious will to live; demanding, undertaking and accepting the rightful smaller part. In all this, the shelter and the stronghold are God’s self-identification with the minority, with the idea of the last judgement of eternity always in view, according to Christ’s own word: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matt 25.40). And those who did not do a good deed to the least, sinned against God (Matt 25.45).

“But even the hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matt 10.30). We are also accountable as to how many are born from the “apple of the eye” people of God, the elect people in Christ on the earth, and how many shall appear before God in heaven.

Minority as the Exceptional Representative of Quality-life According to God

If the minority sees itself as the apple of God’s eye, and by the help of God’s power of providence does not decrease, then God initiates it as the representative of his quality of life. Woe to the minority if it wants to reach for a higher standard of life, either by the suicidal policy of one child only, or because they want to clothe the only child in garments more splendid and beautiful than those of the children of the majority, and for this reason they do not accept more children. This quality of life is the quality of the devil who “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8.44), and it is not the way of God. God blesses the multiplying quantity of earthly life in the circle of a people with the quality of eternal life according to the promise of Jesus.

Then ten of this people shall make thousand flee, one hundred shall do the same to ten thousand. Gideon, with three-hundred men, was triumphant over one hundred thousand Midianites (Jud 7.8). “Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few” (1 Sam 14.6). It would have been sufficient to find ten righteous men in Sodom (Gen 18.32). The repentance of the king and his house was all it took for saving Niniveh (Jonah 3.5-6). Only the few elect who enter by the narrow gate and follow the narrow way can call the many who have turned to the easy way (Matt 7.13-14; 22.14).

On this quality level, the minority people of God belongs to the grateful one in ten, if the nine tenths of the people would be ungrateful (Luke 17.17). The people of God wants to become first in service (Matt 20.26-28) with Christ-like love. It is living the life-style of the sheep in the midst of the wolves, but its wisdom and meekness keep it by the Spirit (Matt 10.16), shining by the word of life “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”(Phil 2.14-16). This is what Goethe talks about with a validity that lasts through centuries: “The exaltedness and moral culture of Christians, as they are shining and radiating in the Gospel, cannot be

surpassed by the spirit of mankind”. To this reality-level fits perfectly the above-quoted axiom of László Németh: “quality just by being is victorious”.

Its guarantee is the last paragraph.

Minority as the Inheritor of God’s Promises

At the peaks of the Sermon on the Mount, it became crystal clear: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”. Those with a pure heart shall see God. The peacemakers are called the sons of God. Those who are persecuted shall receive salvation (Matt 5.3-12). The promises, both that of the Old Testament and of the New, are joined in the encouragement of Jesus: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12.32).

If a historian would have been asked who would have the historic future among these three: the Roman Empire, the Protectorate of Jerusalem or the community of twelve members of the Golgotha cult, could he possibly have answered the third one? In his farewell speech Jesus told to his disciples: “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16.33). The disciple, however, is convinced “the victory that overcomes the world is our faith” (1 John 5.4). The utmost vision of all this is the great multitude of the redeemed: “These are they who come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7.14).

Therefore, in the name of God and for Christ’s sake, we cannot let slip out from our hands the fate of the minority, which are tied to us by personal bonds, family bonds, nationally and by fellowship, a shared fate we undertook by the power of the Holy Spirit – unless we tear ourselves with reckless cowardice out of the hand of God! Surely, we were called by him in Christ and were sent as Christians; in Christ we were created and preserved Hungarians.

Let, therefore, sound our song:

1. Do not despair, you little flock,
stands.

When overcome by evil men
Who crush you like a ton of rock
Desire to wipe you from earth’s ken.
Him.

Why should you worry, fear this shock?
It is not everlasting!

2. Have faith; your case is in God’s hands:
fast;

He ne’er has let His people fail:
He certainly will make amends,
Raise Gideon to your avail
lame

And bring him to your sure defense,
His sacred word proclaiming.

3. God lives, His promise ever

All tricks of Devil, world and sin
Will touch us not, safe in his hands.
God stands with us and we with

Tied to his might with iron bands
We’re surely overcoming!

4. Christ, help us yet and hold us

Uphold us by your holy name.
Protector, succor to the last.
Then cheerfully, though halt and

We’ll sing your praises, raise a blast
Of grateful, glad thanksgiving.¹⁰

Translation by the
editor

NOTES

1. Reference to the theological view of Hungarian Reformed Bishop Péter Méliusz Juhász (?1536-1572).
2. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), leading German idealist philosopher and natural scientist.
3. From a poem of the renowned Hungarian poet Imre Madách (1823-1864).
4. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1627), world renowned musician and composer.
5. Reference to Martin Luther's favorite expression for the essence of sin: "*cor incurvatus*".
6. From the song by Ludwig van Beethoven.
7. Claus Westermann, *Creation* (trans: J.J. Scullion) Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1974, pp. 5-11.
8. *ibid.*
9. From the influential Hungarian writer László Németh (1905-1975).
10. Hymn No. 393 in *The Reformed Hymnbook, ad notam* Geneva Psalm LXVIII, translated by the editor and reformatted by I. F. Clayre to make its rhythms more acceptable to an English-speaking person.

Notes compiled by the

editor

Chapter 3

THE NATIONAL MINORITY EXISTENCE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Lajos Tóth

Introduction

A national minority existence is vividly described in the Old Testament – in the history of the chosen people, the people of Israel. However, there are more historical-political aspects than religious-theological in the background of this minority life, which Israel had to endure so many times and in different ways – and mainly in critical situations, in dangers and ravages of war, in devastating deportation into captivity. If it has theological or even religious dimension, the analysis of the real historical situations is more instructive for us than trying to find some kind of theological-political basis.^{ix} How to survive, how to exist in a minority situation – this is the lesson of the life of the chosen people in the Old Testament. However, this is not a necessarily a pattern to be followed.

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Israel experienced the existence of national minority when, after a period of prosperity, disaster struck as foreseen by the prophets: the land was split into two parts. The Northern part, Israel, was occupied by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The Southern part, Judah, was occupied in two successive campaigns by the Babylonians, first in 598 and again in 587 BC.^x In each case great destruction was visited upon the people and the land. At the end of the conquest in 587 Jerusalem was plundered and the Temple was burned down.^{xi} All the three cases resulted in deportation of the people, the inhabitants being carried off into captivity.^{xii} Deportation into captivity was part of the policy of conquering Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, apparently executed as a deliberate exchange of inhabitants. This happened in the case of Israel in 722 : a large part of the inhabitants were removed to another part of the empire and different ethnic groups were resettled in their place. *"Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it. In the ninth year of Hosea the king of Assyria captured Samaria. He carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ... The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel..."* (2 Kings 17.5-6, 24).

One of the Deuterocanonical Books, the Book of Tobit, also speaks about this historical situation. This didactical writing tells us the story of a God-fearing man who was carried away with his family by the Assyrians after the occupation of the Northern part of the country in 722 BC. From this time on his family lived in a diaspora, among people of a different religion. He often got into situations when he had to decide whether to stay faithful to his fathers' faith and to the customs of his people or to adapt to the new environment and its customs. God did not make these decisions easy for Tobit. On the contrary, blow after blow fell upon Tobit, yet he still remained faithful to God. Therefore his faithfulness carries conviction, his faith is steady. At the end of the story,

through his faithfulness he experienced in the events of his life that God is also faithful. This didactical story which took place “in the past” was kept alive and retold later in the Jewish diaspora. Its teaching is clear, and definitely related to their situation. They lived in a similar situation, they often had to face similar decisions with personal responsibility and often to pass similar tests.

The conquerors’ goal was clear: to uproot and dismantle their awareness of nation and religion in order to make them merely intermingled inhabitants of the State, living a characterless existence in total dependence on the ruling class. The exchange of the population by the Assyrians, it seems, was successful: the divided deportees assimilated in time and there came into being in place of the historical Israel a people and religion called “Samaritan”.

The people of Judah deported into Babylon were relatively fortunate. First of all they were settled in a bloc. Then the Babylonian captivity didn’t last so long, no more than half a century. After the conquest of Babylon in 538 BC King Cyrus of Persia gave the Jews permission to return to their homeland. *“In the first year of King Cyrus, in the seventieth year that our people were carried from home to Babylon. God had mercy upon the captivity and misery which the poor people had to endure, as was foretold by Jeremiah the prophet,^{xiii} before the city was destroyed: that after being slaves of Nebuchadnezzar and his descendants, and this captivity was endured for seventy years, they should return to their homeland to rebuilt the temple and to reclaim their happy life as of old. Faithful to this prediction, God made Cyrus declare a proclamation with a similar content in the whole of Asia: ‘King Cyrus declares: Because the great God made me a king over all the world, I am convinced that He is the same God whom the Israelites worship. By the prophets He foretold my name and proclaimed that I should rebuild His temple in Jerusalem in Judah.’” (J. Flavius, Book XI, Chapter 1).*

Furthermore, this captive nation had two great prophets: Ezekiel and the great anonymous second Isaiah, the so-called "Deutero-Isaiah". They had an important role, to uphold and strengthen the mind and soul of their people, and they protected them against the danger of assimilation.^{xiv} In spite of their better situation, they were exposed to serious trials as a deported minority in a strange land, as we shall see.

We should know that the Babylonian captivity did not mean imprisonment and slavery. Simply, the Israelites were not permitted to leave their designated dwelling place.^{xv} But later more freedom of movement was allowed. They could find work, they could make efforts to live a more successful life. The famous letter of Jeremiah^{xvi} written to the first deportees in Babylon after they were taken into captivity in 598 BC adequately reflects this situation: “Build houses, plant gardens, get married, have children” the prophet advised them, and he added: “...seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf!” Thus was given a program for life over the long haul. But in this difficult situation, during the seeking and finding of the *modus vivendi* in the life of the people, some substantial changes took place which later become typical of the diaspora-condition in the life of the Jews as a minority people all over the world.

As to their financial situation, the Jewish people in captivity succeed in overcoming their initial problems. Even if we do not know in detail in which sphere of labor they found the source of their living in the minority life, we can recognize a conspicuous phenomenon: while at home their principal occupation was agriculture, animal husbandry

and a rather simple cottage industry, they did not deal with systematic, commissional trade. Yet this is what they started to practice in Babylon. It is an archeologically documented fact that the Jews at this time started to deal with finance, the "banking business". All this created for them, in their minority life, the basis of material welfare. It may be that because of this commercial interest, which was encouraged by Jeremiah's letter, they took their business so seriously that when in 538 BC there was an opportunity to return to their homeland, many of them stayed on in Babylon. *"When Cyrus gave permission to the Israelites, the leaders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites and the priests, immediately set out for Jerusalem. But many of them stayed in Babylon because they did not want to leave their property"* (J. Flavius, *op. cit.*).

In their captivity, or rather later for the Jews voluntarily living in diaspora, the "cosmopolitan" situation and life came into being when, as we shall see, through their work, diligence and unity, this nation everywhere could feel themselves at home (even if they were considered foreigners and felt themselves foreigners). Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and after the Bar-Kochba uprising was suppressed (135 AD), prohibitive decrees put enormous pressure on the lives of Jews living in the diaspora (Hebrew: *galut*). God's chosen people sometimes had to accept promoting the culture of their adopted nation as well as their own, even building it up. Yet at another time they were cast aside, amidst torture and anguish, but nonetheless confessing that *"The redeemer will come to Zion"* (Isa 59.20).

Another very important feature of the Jews who were forced into diaspora was that a positive feeling took shape and grew in them which became an exemplary feature of the Jews from that time on, the willingness to help each other, a feeling which sprang from their interdependence. A Biblical story illustrates this: when the people returned to Judah and they were struggling with serious difficulties, devoting all their efforts to rebuilding the Temple, those who stayed in Babylon sent their contribution to the work in gold and silver (Zech 6.9 f.). *"When these Jews arrived in Jerusalem, all the king's friends came to help them, and for the building of the Temple some of them carried gold, some of them silver, some of them horses and many other animals. And then they gave thanks to God and according to the ancient law they slaughtered the sacrificial animals, as if the city were rebuilt and the old traditions of their worship were revived"* (J. Flavius, *op.cit.*).

So, even in a strange country, they did not give up either their voluntarily accepted minority existence or their national and religious self-awareness and identity. Their inner unity and their economic situation were compensating them for the animosity towards them so often experienced, springing as it did from their minority situation. The Biblical Book of Esther and the writings of Flavius so many times quoted already show that they were continuously persecuted and hated because, in spite of adapting themselves, they still remained "Jews" – in their religion, culture and national unity, they still retained their unique identity.^{xvii}

In fact, the situation of those who came home from the captivity was not easy either. They had to buy back the land that had fallen into foreign hands or sue for their return. The land that had run wild had to be ploughed again to break it up. In the retrieved homeland they had to start everything anew if they wanted their homeland to be their home again. Meanwhile they met with much malice from the settled foreigners or from "Samaritans" we have mentioned above. The determination to survive dominated the life

of the returned people, who found themselves again existing as a national minority in their own ancestral homeland.

Next to making an adequate living in captivity, the biggest problem was *the question of language*, and this actually led to a special development. Although the Jews kept their national and religious identity, they were forced to give up their linguistic identity – their own language – as a necessary way of protecting their independence in another country. Those who wanted to succeed in trade or in public life had to learn the language of the Babylonians; it was unavoidable for those who lived in the diaspora. From this point of view the Jews in their minority existence could provide to us a valuable lesson.

The learning and use of the foreign language did not necessarily mean they abandoned their own or denied of their national identity. Among the Jews of that time a language change began: their national language, Hebrew, was gradually replaced by a related semitic language, Aramaic. In the Persian empire the Aramaic language first became a language of international diplomacy and the language of official administrative correspondence. It was not only the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Samaria who corresponded with the Persian authority in Aramaic (eg: Ezra 4.7-22, 5.5-17, 6.3-12) but also, for example, the Jewish community in Elephantine in Southern Egypt. In the end Aramaic squeezed out Hebrew as the language of everyday life. In the time of Jesus Aramaic was spoken by the Jews not just in Jerusalem but also in Babylon. In spite of this remarkable strange exchange of their language, their awareness of national identity continued unchanged and this, as we shall see, had an important role to play in their religion also. The Old Testament was also translated into the Aramaic language.

The Jews in Babylon experienced the biggest shock with regard their *religion*. To understand this we have to know something of the mind set of that time. Each nation had its own god or gods, and the people credited their national gods with the well-being of their country. These deities and these deities alone could be worshiped.

One of the consequences of the lost independence of a transplanted people was that the religious aspects of their life became more import to them. For the Jews, their minority existence as deportees meant that they were living in “an unclean land” in whose pagan environment they could not even talk about their own religious cult in its real meaning. Up to this time in the religious life of the Jews the *sacrifice* was the central part of worship, which had to be offered exclusively in the Temple at Jerusalem if it was not to lose its effectiveness. The quotation above from J. Flavius makes this clear. In Babylon it was impossible to keep the customs and rules of the great pilgrimages. The practices of their worship had to be changed as well as the mentality and spirituality of the captive people, in keeping with their minority existence and to other circumstances which stemmed from it. This had both a positive and a negative influence. First the negative: they learned to swear and curse like their heathen captors (Psalm 137.5-6). The positive benefit was that they learned also to understand the interpretation of history as seen by the prophets: not without good reason had this disaster come upon God’s people (Isa 42.24-25).

In the midst of these changes the Eastern diaspora (Jews in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities) avoided national disintegration because their community life was strengthened by the prophets.

The Western diaspora also was established, first of all in Egypt where Jewish groups arrived not by deportation but by the voluntary migration, although the indirect reason of

this immigration could well have been a war. Judah's mercenaries served in numbers of foreign countries, for example, in Elephantine in Egypt. 2 Kings 25.25-2 gives an example: at the end of the Babylonian war, as an aftermath of an act of terrorism, the Jews emigrated to Egypt (Jer 41- 44). The reason for this removal could also have been commercial business; an ancient example is related in 1 Kings 20.34, the foundation of a Jewish commercial colony in Damascus. This last motive became very meaningful in the Persian and Greek era. The city of Alexandria in Egypt was founded by Alexander the Great, and from the very beginning it had Jewish inhabitants. At the time of Jesus' birth it had many more Jewish inhabitants than Jerusalem had. Finally, the Jews learned in the captivity that God is not a localized "provincial" god, just one among many, but He is the Lord of history, whom they could find anywhere and everywhere if they would seek Him in prayer.

As long as they lived at home in one bloc, the Old Testament people of God did not feel that they lived "in the world". Their belief in God has its basis in history: God had led them to their dwelling place, the promised land, which, despite its pagan beliefs, was the kingdom of the Lord. They made their home there in a closed community. The diaspora state, that is, experiencing that they were living in a foreign world amidst foreign, pagan people, had its beginnings at that time, with the deportations which came as the consequence of wars. In Assyria as in Babylon, in consequence of resettlement in a strange land far from the homeland given by the Lord – there started the minority existence, the scattered state of life, the Jewish diaspora.

In the great crises the prophets helped their people by showing not just a ray of hope in the new situation, but also the means of surviving and a possible way of life. Through the prophets' preaching it was increasingly recognized that the fall of Judah and Jerusalem should be regarded as God's judgement on His people. Only as this recognition was accepted could they think about the future, a future where the living conditions were completely changed. Thus the era from 598/7 to 539/8 BC – in the captivity and in a minority existence – was very significant for Judah in many respects. In this we have to emphasize that Judah, in its role as representative of the whole historic Israel, survived the catastrophe of 587/586. While other nations completely disappeared, wholly or partly deported and losing their political independence just as Judah did, Judah (and thus historic Israel) was able to keep its identity. As well as the influence of the prophets, this development is due to something else. At that time there started a meaningful theological reflection and a literary activity. (H. Jagersma, *op.cit.* chapter 16, p. 144.)

This reflection and religious awareness resulted in two important consequences. One of them was that the Jews were able to distance themselves from the temptations of the Babylonian religion. In keeping with to the understanding of the era, they had to listen incessantly to assertions that the gods of Babylon were stronger than God of Israel; after all, they had triumphed. Moreover, they saw the magnificent temples of the Babylonian gods, the gold and silver idols carried in procession through the cities. In the midst of such ebullient and spectacular worship it is difficult to remain in a puritan simplicity. God's people were exposed to this pressure in their minority existence. Deutero-Isaiah had good reason to point out – with considerable irony – that it is mere stupidity to venerate idols made of wood and metal, which in truth are deaf, blind and unable to help their worshipers (Isa 40.18-20, 44.9-20).

The second consequence was much more important. Seemingly, as the price of the compromise with the religion that surrounded them, a form of worship developed significantly different from the cult of ritual sacrifice. It was a big step towards the adoration of God “in spirit and in truth”. Prayer came to the forefront, and singing of older and newer Psalms. The historical tradition was given much more importance. What they successfully kept and reproduced from the past memories, starting with the patriarchs, now strengthened the thoughts of election and covenant. Even if they did not give much thought to the great prophets before the captivity, now the revived Word of God became a much more precious spiritual nourishment. Instead of the ceremonial cult, the main task of the priests became the teaching of the Torah, direction in religious questions, warning of the differences between “clean” and “unclean” things, and encouragement for the holy life according to Old Testament ideals. In this way sacrificial acts were replaced by reading (and occasional explanation) of the holy writings, in other words – the Word, be it the law, the prophets, historical passages or the psalms.

The biggest strength of the collective mind in the diaspora situation was the *Holy Scripture*, which they recognized always and everywhere as to The Word of God. The influence of the diaspora on the spiritual life of Jews was very great. So many apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings came into existence in the diaspora, among them the Septuagint (*LXX*) and the Babylonian Talmud. Among the Jews two different tendencies emerged. The immigrant Jews from Jerusalem to Jamnia drew a strict circle around the canonical holy writings, stressing the authority of the Torah and the Books of Moses and their role in the life of the nation. The situation in Egypt was different. Here the Jews, mainly in Alexandria under the influence of Greek philosophy, became more open minded. In Egypt there was an almost heretical deviation: they built temples, disregarding the unique position of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. In the 500s BC the Jewish military community in Elephantine constructed their own temple, and in the 2nd Century the banished high priest Onias built a temple in Leontopolis which was still in use in 73 AD. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, was too liberal for orthodox Jews; even the Apocryphal Books appeared in it. Besides this, other products of the Apocalyptic Literature were continuously appearing, but the orthodox Jewish community in Jamnia distanced themselves from these. However, the era was full of vivid expectations of the end of the world, with its attendant desire for Messiah and the arrival of His era. Readings from the Torah and the puritan writings of the prophets were not favored in the presence of such abundant fantastic and symbolic writings.

But they accepted the Talmud, in which the different explanations, even quite contradictory ones, peacefully coexisted side by side. With this they demonstrated considerable tolerance in theological controversy, which exerted a considerable power in holding them together, even if the Old Testament canon remained the main cohesive element in national life. The Word, “doctrine”, played a great role in keeping their “identity-consciousness”. For the Jews, clinging to the Torah even in their minority existence was one of their main moral bases, and they lived their lives accordingly. Whatever minutiae casuistry could elicit from the content of the laws of the Torah, it is indisputable that it provided a solid moral basis for life in the surrounding pagan world. The Law in its own objective reality, as a counselling and prohibitive commandment given by God, originally had good intentions. The Jews appreciated this aspect, and

some of its important laws were considered as of essential importance, which became the guardian and promoter of their minority identity.

This brought a positive change in the captivity, a change which lived on even in the new life after the captivity when they had rebuilt the temple. It now became possible, in Palestine and beyond, for the local Jewish community to come together in houses of prayer apart from the central sanctuary, in the synagogues – mainly on Saturday, the weekly rest day – to be edified through the reading of the Scriptures and prayer.

In their minority existence the people of Israel never tried to adopt syncretism of their faith with that of the larger community as a way of survival in their separation. The strict laws of the Book of Ezra show this direction a century after the return from captivity. Ezra the Priest claimed a radical split with the foreigners, even in family life (Ezra 10.2ff). There is no doubt that this was intended to be an assurance of faithfulness to the One true God and a protection against the temptations of strange religious influences.

But at the same time we may note another tendency. In contrast to this strict separation from their immediate neighbors was an openness and a readiness for mission. In spite of what Roman authors wrote deprecatingly about the Jews living in their surroundings, many pagans, mainly women, were strongly influenced by the simplicity of the Jewish religion.^{xviii} Deutero-Isaiah recognized and proclaimed that God's purpose was not just that Israel should find its spiritual peace in its own conversion; God's saving love was to be known by the whole world (Isa 49.6). We do not know how and to what extent the mission worked in the Old Testament era – The Book of Jonah is almost a negative example – but mainly after the scattering of the Jews in the diaspora, there is no doubt that their puritan living and the simplicity of their worship had an attractive influence on those around them. Through the Jewish outreach mission "Proselytes" joined the Jewish communities, and their descendants were regarded as Jews with full rights.^{xix}

As it turned out, the common destiny of the Jews in their minority situation, their way of life in keeping with the Law, the unifying effect of their religious holidays and so forth, strengthened their national consciousness and sense of togetherness. Under the pressure of a foreign ruling power, amidst violence and restrictive laws there came into being in the minority life the ability to cling to one another, which immediately and vigorously became apparent after their survival of these critical times. Pressures do not always creates an inferiority complex in the minority: on the contrary, often a defiant self-consciousness emerges, but it needs a firm identity-consciousness to get it started. The Old Testament prophets nourished this in God's people. First of all we may point to Deutero-Isaiah, who in the so-called "don't be afraid" texts (Isa 41.8ff, 49.14ff, 51.11ff etc.) was awakening self consciousness as a nation and hope in the people. From this point of view John Bright points out Deutero-Isaiah's extremely important role: "*His destiny was to apply Israel's faith to the new world situation*".

Indeed, a few conceptual changes amply illustrate the attitude of the Jews to their whole minority existence. The biblical Hebrew expression *'am ha'arec* (people of the land, or people of the country) indicated the dominant, majority group of people of Canaan (now Palestine). Before the conquest of Canaan by Israel this social stratum was largely made up of the Canaanites (Gen 23.7ff), later by the Jews themselves (2 Kings 11.19ff), and after the captivity it denotes the majority of foreigners who lived round about the returned Jews (Ezra 3.3). At that time Nehemiah sadly observed: "*we are as slaves in the land that you gave to our fathers*" (Nehemiah 9.36), a minority Jewish

population counted in thousands which returned from their captivity to its own former home. The deported Jews and the majority of their descendants created a livelihood for themselves in Babylon and in their case the situation of their compulsory deportation turned into a voluntary life as emigrants. The word *gola* (the people of the captivity), originally meant the deported community (Jer 29.4), but the returned Jews took it upon themselves (Ezra 6.19ff).

If we were to summarize the characteristic features of the national existence as a minority, we can say that many changes occurred in many aspects of the life of the nation during the Babylonian captivity when the chosen people lived as a minority in a foreign land. They had to adjust to their new circumstances, but this happened in a positive – we might even say progressive – way and in the meantime they kept their national and religious identity in their minority state. They did not assimilate to the surrounding world: rather, adaptation was the characteristic feature of the diaspora. They were good citizens who grasped the opportunities offered by the new life. In this way, keeping the Torah, they assured their religious identity. And when they became a minority in their own land during the Babylonian, Persian and Seleucid era, we note a huge difference: instead of assimilation, they took up arms against the conqueror, as particularly typified in the time of Maccabees.

The reason for the armed fight is that they fought for their nation's life in its own homeland, and for its independence. They were able to achieve this right and they managed to hold onto it even at the time of Jesus (for example, at the time of Herod). After the Jewish wars (in 70 and in 134 AD.) they lost the right of self-determination, since when, even in their own homeland, they have lived a form of minority existence. But that leads us to another chapter of this book.

Epilogue

During the course of history, for a host of different reasons, the Jews became scattered all over the globe. In this world-wide diaspora, some of their members remained believers, others non-believers. For them, even today, the consciousness of belonging to each other is relevant in many ways, and this is how they have maintained their identity in a minority status. In this way they have been able to preserve their traditions and to adjust to real life, even as they have strengthened their national identity.

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NOTES

1. The theme of the two writings (in *Confessio, Theological Review*) constitute the basis of this essay originally concerned with the topic of the "Remnant Church", which served as an introduction to the analysis of the situation of ethnic minority life. Consequently we can relate it to the subject of "national minority existence in the Old Testament".
2. It is difficult to undervalue those consequences, which were brought about by the fall of Jerusalem and by the downfall of the kingdom of Judah, upon the further history of Israel. First of all it meant the end of the dynasty of David in Judah, which had survived for 400 years. We can rightly regard the time of captivity as the turning point in the history and in the religious life of Israel and Judah – as stated by H. Jagersma.
3. We find a reference in Book XI of Josephus Flavius: *The History of Jews*.
4. We have to distinguish between *exile* and *diaspora*. The *exile* in ancient times meant a forced deportation of a closed ethnic group to a certain territory; *diaspora* is used where, for example, outside the Holy Land Jews lived in smaller or bigger numbers, without forced by a foreign power. Particular diasporas came into being as a result of massive deportations when Jews were resettled into Assyria (2 Kings 15.29), Mesopotamia, Media (2 Kings 17.6) and Babylon (2 Kings 24.14-16, 25.11, Jer 52.28-30). Only a small part of the deportees returned to their homeland by permission of Persian authority (Cyrus). For the majority, the forced deportation changed into a voluntary diaspora situation (see also note 7). For example: the number of the Egyptian diaspora increased significantly by the group which escaped from Judah (Jer 42). In the chaotic conditions that existed between the 3rd and 2nd centuries, very many Jews moved to Egypt (Isa 19.18-20).
5. See: Jeremiah ch. 30.
6. "Providentially, just before the fall of Babylon, there was among the exiles yet another great prophet, in many respects the greatest of all. Since his name is unknown, and since his prophecies are found in the latter chapters of the Book of Isaiah, he is conventionally called the Deutero-Isaiah or Babylonian Isaiah. *His destiny was to apply Israel's faith to the new world situation*" (John Bright, p. 342.)
7. The Babylonians – differently from the Assyrians - brought the deported people of Judah to the same territory of Babylon. Evidently this was particularly favorable to the fostering of mutual relations and ties. Mainly this group of deportees to Babylon contributed, in the passing of the time, to the development and improvement of the later Jewry. When in about 539 BC the Babylonian captives were granted permission to return to Judah, relatively few of them took advantage of returning. Later – mainly in the Roman era – this group was further strengthened by newer immigrants from Judah (H.Jagersma, *op.cit.* p. 144).
8. Jeremiah ch. 29.
9. "After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the officials who were with him. And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and did obeisance to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. *But Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance*. Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, 'Why do you disobey the king's command?' When they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would avail, for *he had told them that he was a Jew*. When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance to him, Haman was filled with fury. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, *as they had*

made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus” (Esther 3.1-6).

“At that time the custom was that Amadathas’ son, before Haman, who was born an Amalekite, went at any time to the king, it was obligatory for the Persians and the foreigners to bow down as a sign of their homage. This happened according to Artaxerxes’ order ... Because Mordecai was a wise man he respected his nation’s laws, but he did not like to pay homage to any man. Haman recognized this behavior, and asked him where he came from. When he heard that Mordecai was a Jew, he lost his temper and said to himself that the free Persians paid him homage and this slave denied it. So, to revenge himself on Mordecai he did not satisfied himself with the punishment of this man alone, but decided that he would exterminate the whole nation of the Jews, whom he hated because the Amalekites, from which he also came, at one time were defeated by the Jews. So he went to the king and made complaint that in his empire there was living at large a shameful nation, isolated from others, which did not adore their gods as the other subjects did and did not obey their laws, because their morals and their institutions were the enemies of Persians and other nations.” (J. Flavius: *op.cit.*.Book XII ch. 6).

These two quotations show well how in many times and for many different reasons such as long gone events, individual grudges could lurk behind the animosity of those in authority against their minority subjects.

10. in RGG II. Jüdische Diaspora, p. 174.

11. *ibid.*

editor

Translation by the

Chapter 4

NATIONAL MINORITIES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

István Tóké

Introductory Observations

It is important to keep in mind throughout this review that the problem of national minorities will not be examined on the basis of the books of the New Testament *per se*, but on the basis of the theology of the New Testament, that is in the light of the New Testament message.

The New Testament as a historical document relates only to its own age, the first century BC, but the theology of the New Testament is authoritative for all ages, translated into the context of our present era and living conditions. Consequently the problem we need to examine here is not what actually happened in older times, but – and above all – what the message of God's word (θεου λογος) might be – and indeed really is – for our present situation.

It must also be borne in mind that, in the sense of our contemporary circumstances, the concept of national minorities and the majorities that prevailed in their national States is nowhere to be found in the New Testament record. The ideal State of the Epicurean and Stoic teachers (Acts 17.18) was not a national State but a cosmopolitan one. According to their belief “the State is not the living space of a historically determined people” but a “world State”– which makes the structure of what we now think of as a nation State disappear altogether.^{xx}

In such circumstances the current problem of ethnic discrimination is different from that of the 1st Century. The “here and now” (*hic et nunc*) of our days cannot be identified with the “there and then” of the biblical age of the New Testament. Nevertheless the teaching of the New Testament concerning the historical situations of ancient times is as valid for the end of the 20th Century and for the third millennium as it was when it was written.

Notion of Minorities and the Majority

As has been noted above, minorities in today's sense of the word do not occur in the New Testament. We find there names of particular peoples, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians and others (Acts 2.9) but they cannot be considered as separate ethnicities with their special national characteristics. Only the Jews and the Greeks appear as real nations, but even they are not “national minorities” as we know them because they maintain their autonomous life within the frame work of the Roman Empire.

No numbers for these regional populations are given anywhere in the New Testament, nor is there mention of the existence of other homogeneous nations with their own sovereign State organization. Consequently, as we said before, the New Testament knows nothing of national minorities and their dominant majorities in the actual modern sense of the expression. This is confirmed, moreover, by the linguistic material of the

New Testament, namely on the basis of different equivalents of “nation” and “people”: λαος, εθνος, οχλος and δημοσ.^{xxi}

If in the New Testament neither national minorities nor majorities are ever mentioned, it is necessary to search and find the essential equivalents of these notions. In conformity with biblical hermeneutics we may substitute the notion of a majority of the 20th Century for the ruling Roman State of the 1st Century as regard its provincial unities, and similarly the notion of minorities for all the subjugated peoples of the Roman Empire. In this way the numerical aspect in the concept of minority disappears, giving place to the terminology of national subordination (minority) and superiority (majority).

Theological View

According to the spirit of the New Testament and on the basis of a two thousand year old Christian “Word theology”, the problems of national minorities are examined in the following study within the limits and the possibilities of the *libertas christiana* – Christian liberty.

The possibility of Christian liberty means that our theological investigation has full liberty to analyze – without human limitation – the problems of all national minorities, and to look for their best solutions. This liberty is motivated by the fact that minority problems belong in principle to the *adiaphora*, that is, to such questions that are indifferent to the Christian faith. On the other hand, Christian liberty has its limits as well. This means that all of our investigations must be carried out under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14.6). Thus all the burning problems of national minorities must be examined in light of the Spirit of our almighty Lord.

Regarding the method of our inquiry, the rule of objectivity will be respected according to the axiom of Gollwitzer: “The norm of my inquiring is not the German Federal Republic, not the United States of America, not my own judgement, not my family or my race, but exclusively Jesus as my supreme commander”.^{xxii} This bi-axial (free, but also limited) obedience of Christian liberty makes it possible that all national minorities, wherever they live, can be regarded within the same conceptual unity and examined in the spirit of the hermeneutic method and theological thinking discussed above.

Considering that all national minorities under discussion are living under the rule of some majority national State, it is necessary to make a biblical survey of the concept of State order and the political system described in the New Testament. In other words, our task is to ask ourselves what is the duty of all State authorities having national minorities under their rule? There must be clarification of the regulating measure of the duty of the State, in the sense and inner meaning of “good” and “evil” used in Ch.13 of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in the knowledge that all State authority is appointed by God for securing a social order in accordance with the principle of its peoples' well-being.

In accordance with the teaching of the German theologian Wilckens: “The criterion of distinction and definition of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ is not the authority of the State; their application cannot be regulated by the State, but only through the measure of God”.^{xxiii} State authorities are obliged to keep the life of society free from chaos, to be a deterrent to evildoers and to be rewarders of those who do what is right.^{xxiv} In this connection the

meaning of the apostolic message ought to be kept in view: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5.29, 4.19), yet without losing sight of Jesus’ teaching: “Pay to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Mk 12.17). Whether the authority is a Caesar, a congress representing the will of the people or a tyrant such as Nero, all magistrates have the proper task of upholding what is right and suppressing evil, with respect to majorities and minorities alike. They have a God-given duty to approve of all doings that are in accordance with the will of God and to set limits on all things that are against it. The New Testament does not recognize a dual set of standards, one for majorities and one for minorities – as is often observed in many national States.

The Practical Approach

Thus far we have examined our theme only in its general aspect. We have analyzed the task of New Testament theology, the difference of national minority problems in the 1st Century and the 20th, the significance of “minority” and “majority” and, lastly, the method of our investigation within the scope of the “*libertas christiana*”. Now we turn from generalities to the practical aspects of our theme as they appear in everyday life. In other words, how can the problem be approached under conditions of the “*hic et nunc*” – here and now?

The liberty of our investigation is especially important as regards its confrontation with the realities of life. This must be emphasized because of the spiritual infirmity of habitual thinking: namely, we hear day by day that “the problem of minorities is a delicate one”; it is “undesirable” to speak or write about it. The sensibilities of the majority people should not be offended, since the fate of minorities depends on their goodwill. Only so much and in such a way can the problem be addressed so as not to disturb the majority nation. And as the same time it is not right to disturb the political ideas of the “great powers” who want to have silence, without minority complaints, unrest and agitation. The established *status quo* resulting from two World Wars is more important for them than the deplorable situation of minority groups. The taboo problem of territorial *status quo* must not even be discussed. The minorities must show understanding and acquiescence with their political and social conditions of existence.

Such a standpoint is unacceptable to a serious New Testament Theology. If it were otherwise, that theology would be unworthy of its name: θευ λογος. There is no Christian theology without the Christian courage to represent the cause of truth according to the will of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In the spirit of “*libertas christiana*” it is indispensable to set forth as a fundamental axiom: The existence of national minorities as we now experience them is totally unacceptable. The existence of minorities is incompatible with New Testament teaching. It is regrettable that Christian Churches have not the will and obedience to express the evangelical attitude of the New Testament. They must know that the mere existence of such minorities is a refutation of all our Christian values. Individually, everyone can accept it as a test of his faith, but according to sound theological thinking we must protest against all and any degradation of *Dei imago* – and that relates to national minorities as well. Consequently, as an ultimate goal, the minority problems are not to be simply regulated or manipulated; they must be totally removed and liquidated. The notion of second-class nations is not admitted by God. Numerical differences among peoples are a

fact of nature, but the existence of oppressed nations or national groups is forbidden. There are no “valuable” and “worthless” people in the sight of God, no superior and inferior nations.

It is true that the apostle Paul recognized the advantage of having the right to Roman citizenship, and even used it to his own benefit (Acts 25.10, 16.37, 22.25-29). It is also true that he admitted slavery to be a fact of the life of his times (1Cor 7.20,21). But the existence of national minorities cannot be justified on the basis of these realities. Similarly it is true that, according to Jesus' teaching, we must “render to Caesar what is Caesar's” (Mk 12.13-17), but this teaching does not thereby justify rights to oppressors. The same Jesus who reminds us of the obedience due to Caesar also openly refers to King Herod as a fox, a cunning animal (Lk 13.31,32). In the same way, our prayers for magistrates (1Tim 2.2) do not imply the superiority of the majority people. The message of equality in the New Testament (2 Cor 3.13, Col 4.1, Gal 3.20, Acts 1.17, Lk 10.37) must break in pieces all shackles of a minority's inferiority, in accordance with the supreme commandment of Christian love (Mt 22.36-40). The message of love may have in view the variety of human characteristics, but it does not allow us to be complicit in the ruthlessness and heartlessness of mankind. The members of Jesus' body on earth are joined together with the chains of equality.^{xxv} That equality does not exclude the diversity of nations (German, Romanian, Hungarian *etc.*) any more than the diversity of professions or other differences among peoples; under its power all ideas of inferiority and superiority of persons created and loved by God must disappear.

The Struggle for Existence

Until the inhuman and unchristian attitudes we witness towards national minorities are liquidated and totally disappear, there is full justification for a powerful and permanent struggle against all factors that disturb and even make unsupportable conditions of living for national minorities. This command is not found directly in the New Testament, but in an indirect way the entire New Testament enjoins a struggle for human rights. This is not a distortion of the New Testament's attitude but a fundamental manifestation of its spirit. Christians are not only people of meditation and prayer; they are a militant people, who must put on the armor of God in order to take their stand against the stratagems of the devil (Eph 6.11). If anyone cares to think of this only as defensive armor, let him ponder the apostle's teaching about active warfare as well, the fight against the world rulers of this dark age, against spirit forces of evil, quenching the fire-tipped darts of the Evil One (Eph 6.13-17). The apostle was fighting in his own way and in his own time – the 1st Century – in such an unusual manner (2 Cor *etc.*) that it seems almost shocking to us. Christians of the 21st Century ought to fight in ways appropriate to the conditions of our lives and times against the same forces of evil. Such a struggle is not merely a political action; it is the obedience of faith in the spirit of, for example, the great Reformed witness Steven Bocskai of Transylvania, whose historical monument is to be seen in the center of Calvin's Geneva.

It may sound unusual, but it is certain that minority problems are to be regarded and judged on the basis of Ch. 13 of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, a passage which gives us on the one hand an interpretation of Jesus' teaching about Christian obedience towards Caesar (the majority State) while on the other it is a commentary on Peter's witness (1Pet

2.12-17) to the authority of the State. Accordingly it must be stated that the basic criterion for the solution to national minority problems is set out in Ch. 13 of Romans, the apostolic explanation of normative “good” and “evil” in an ordered society.

The explanation and application of “good” and “evil” in democratic States surely takes priority over totalitarian or post-Communist States. However even in democratic States it can be observed that minority problems are regulated without consideration for the best interests of the minorities. National minorities have only a restricted possibility to try to influence the majority's authoritarian decisions by putting forth the objective sense of “good” and “evil”. If the apostle Paul, as a member of the Jewish minority, enjoyed the right to protest against his illegal detention and flogging, and thus could appeal to Caesar's judgement (Acts 25.10-11, 16.38-40), though on other occasions he endured a host of illegalities (2 Cor 11.13-27), likewise the national minorities have a similar liberty to turn with their requests, complaints and protests to today's “Caesars” and international organizations. In his commentary on Romans, Ulrich Wilckens says: “It is reasonable (*sinnvoll*) that we apply the ideas of Rom 3.1-7 to our contemporary situation”.^{xxvi} At any rate we must know that the democratic State in our times does not view itself as God's servant, but outspokenly proclaims its secular greatness. Thus the important task of Churches generally is to make evident that responsibility before God is a constituent part of a people's consciousness (*volksbewusstsein*) which, even in the case of secular States, must not be neglected; rulers are responsible, directly or indirectly, to those who elected them to office.⁸

On this basis and with reference to a people's consciousness the Churches have the real responsibility of expressing and making known the biblical notion of “good” to all secular democratic State leaders, who are obliged to have respect for the peoples' will and obligatory obedience to God. In this respect Calvin's words are very significant: “God puts authorities above us, but without abandoning his own proper rights. While we have to obey our superiors, it is on condition that the power of God will not be violated”.⁹

In New Testament theology it is evident that God does not have two different wills, one for minority peoples and another for the majorities. His single good will ought to be applied everywhere, by and to everyone. The decisive and difficult question for us here is: How can we rightly express the content of “good” and “evil” for the authorities of the State who are responsible for national minorities.

We have noted above that secular authorities do not view themselves as being God's servants, even though they are executors of God's will – whether they realize it or not. The apostle says: “They are serving God for your good.” (Rom 13.3), that is, for the good of majorities and minorities alike. They are, *volens nolens*, providential executors of the will of God, of the “good” spoken of in Rom 13.3-4. The standard condition of all constitutional States is expressed through three essential components of the “good” vector: *truth, liberty and peace*. These must all be analyzed in theoretical and practical terms to obtain a right understanding of the problems of national minorities.

The *first* essential element of “good” is *truth*, of which *justice* is an integral adjunct. We certainly find in the New Testament no comprehensive doctrine of truth, but Jesus' words: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14.6) encompass its fullest content. We regard as truth what Jesus says not only about himself but about all problems of our human existence, including those that relate to national minorities. There is particular

significance here in the message of John's gospel: "He who does righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous" (1 Jn 3:7).

The opposite of truth is injustice, an evident "evil". Where justice and truth hold sway, it can confidently be affirmed that all individuals enjoy their beneficial rule. That is the collective truthfulness of which Paul spoke: "Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor 13:6). Truth and happiness form an organic unity as component parts of the common "good". Indeed, truth as a common treasure is repeatedly found in the New Testament. Here, however, we are concerned only with its bearing on the vexed question of national minorities, and this means that all State orders, wherever they are, must be obedient to the truth, avoiding the sanction of all things that are contrary to it. Democratic constitutional States are characterized by their political order being based on equality according to the general obligation to truth, and in this respect State order accords with the "good" of the New Testament.

The application of the truth is everywhere regulated in the constitution of each individual State. The status of national minorities depends on special regulations prescribed in their several constitutions. If the constitution of any particular State declares that the foundation of all laws and regulations can be nothing other than "the unitary national and sovereign State", complete with its national language, then the legal status of minorities, their truthful situation, has no humane foundation as afforded by the Declaration of Human Rights. In our modern times the mere existence of such generally recognized States is almost unimaginable. Even more amazing is the realization that such States appear acceptable to evangelical Christian Churches and even to World Alliances too. They have not the will or the courage to stand up for the truth. An observation by J. Moltmann is very instructive here: "The Christian Churches have lost their freedom of action. They are saying what people want to hear from them, and they are doing what people require from them. They everywhere proclaim the need to accommodate to the times we live in".¹⁰

As an illustration of this very real and deplorable situation, let us consider the worldwide campaign of the World Council of Churches against brute force, named "Peace for the Cities". As the nucleus of this propaganda campaign, seven large towns were symbolically nominated to be examples of the significance of peace, truth and reconciliation in the battle against seven types of violence: Durban, for political violence, Belfast for religious violence, Colombo for ethnic violence, Boston for violence against young people and women, Rio de Janeiro for brutal force undertaken in secret, Suava for violence against aboriginal peoples, and Kingston for the violence of social tension.¹¹ All these struggles ought to be regarded with great appreciation, but they raise the question of why the World Council of Churches does not make a similar appeal against the force and violence exercised against national minority people, as for example in Central and Eastern Europe, where all the characteristic evils listed above are certainly to be found collectively.

No matter how widespread we find these forces to be, the theology of the New Testament, the basis of Christian hope, teaches us to fight against the humiliating power of violence in the name of Jesus, who said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it in overflowing measure." We are called on to say *no* all the forces of poverty, slavery, exploitation, despair and grief.¹² And all that is to be done in the spirit of the truth! Without such action not only the proclamation of democracy, but love itself

becomes “a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal”, a demonstration of men caught in their own trap. Without social and biblical truth it is impossible to find a proper solution to the national minority problem. Secular magistrates and governments are not at liberty to rid themselves of the providential will of God, manifested in the message of “truth”. The theology of the New Testament is obliged to declare without fear or favor that whatever the Lord of history does through his truth is, and always will be, “good”.

The *second* component of “good” as a criterion of the ordering principle in the problems of national minorities is *liberty*, or *freedom*. Without this, nothing can exist but servitude and slavery. New Testament theology knows nothing of a dual notion of liberty. On the one hand it shows us the liberty of faith: individually everyone has the freedom to serve the Lord in his own special way. Everyone has the possibility of considering himself totally free, even though he may be living in miserable social conditions or even slavery (1 Cor 7.22). Consequently I as an individual can be free in faith (Mt 17.26) despite possible adverse social conditions such as poverty, illness, servitude and so on. That is the personal liberty of all believers; in the words of Martin Luther: “The Christian is the free lord of all things to the extent that he can freely accept even his own servitude”. This freedom is exclusively the result of faith.

Another kind of freedom is *political freedom*. It can be gained or lost according to the conditions of social life; as such it belongs within the realm of the social order, and is not a matter of faith.¹³

It is generally recognized that, in New Testament times, miserable slavery (*δουλου*) existed side by side with free citizenry in the social order of the Roman Empire. The metaphor of slavery is often used in the Gospels and in the apostolic epistles. The New Testament has no record of opposition or revolt against this unjust social order. The eschatological mind set of believers in the Early Church presupposed the apostolic message of 1Cor 7.20-21, that everyone must “remain in the state in which he was called”. Applying this historical situation would mean that all minorities in our times are called on to endure their subordination and other disadvantages that mirror so closely the examples of 1st Century Christians. It is a very serious challenge for New Testament theology to answer this question.

It would be simplistic to say that in our day and age the social attitude of believers ought to imitate that of the Early Church, that social misery such as ethnic subordination ought to be endured. Such a simplistic attitude would indicate an uncritical slavery to “the written code”. On the contrary, we must understand the message of the New Testament in the conditions in which we live in the here and now (*hic et nunc*). In other words, theologians of our century should not think of themselves as “searching subjects” or free investigators of the New Testament as the “historical object” of their inquiry. This “subject-object” hermeneutical dichotomy belongs to the past – both philosophically (Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur) and theologically (Fuchs, Ebeling). Today’s theologian is no longer a searching “subject”, but on the contrary must be the living and receiving “object”, acknowledging the power of the biblical “subject”. On this hermeneutical basis the conditions of contemporary life may not be equated with those of the New Testament. We should not imagine that in our day we must have the same clothing, customs, social or ecclesiastical order as existed in the 1st Century. Within the limits of Christian liberty, and keeping in view the teachings of Church history, we must live and think in the realities of our times. As the apostle says: “To the weak I became weak, to the Jews I

became a Jew I have become all things to all men”(1Cor 9:20-22). Similarly our theological thinking must be transferred into our current conditions and the conditions in which national minorities actually live.

Updating the application of New Testament doctrine to our own times must be done in the spirit of the assertion that all national minorities have the right to fight, both in word and in writing, for their multilateral liberty. In cases of dire necessity that are permitted to put up active resistance. However, while “the righteousness of resistance depends on the concrete circumstances”, it is always important to stress that, both in principle and in practice, Jesus himself recognized the use of the means of force in the cause of righteousness (Macht)¹⁴ as seen in Lk 22.35-38, Jn 18.22-27. Following the Old Testament pattern, he fought for the cause of liberty, saying: “ The Lord has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send the oppressed away free, to proclaim the year of The Lord’s favor” (Lk 4.18-19). This freedom relates just as much to the subjugated national minorities.

The third constituent of the “ good and evil” criterion *is peace*. In the 1st Century “ according to the political and economical regulations of Augustus, all peoples of the Empire, some 54 million citizens, disregarding the unimportant wars along the borders, had been living in an almost undisturbed peace” – the well-known “ *Pax Romana*” . “ The different nationalities lived with their own special customs, enjoying the assured general peace of the Roman world” .¹⁵ This social reality was known by the author of the Second Helvetic Confession, where we read: “ All State authorities are sent by God in order to assure the peace and public order of human society. The special obligation of all authorities is the control and maintenance of public peace and tranquility” .¹⁶ This is the spirit of the New Testament.

Biblical peace is not only the opposite of war (Lk 14.32). Much more it is identified with all sorts of restlessness and other disorders (1Cor 14.33, Acts 7.26). It is certain that personal inner peace can exist in turbulent times as well (Jn 14.27), but the inner peace may not be placed in conflict with the public peace of the society. Where discord and litigation are troubling the communal life of a society, that peace is lacking. The authorities of the State have a duty to assure the just peace of minority peoples as of the majority.

Within the scope of such broad spiritual issues the question arises: *What is and who is disturbing the peace and tranquility of national minorities?* Because of the inexhaustible diversity of disturbing factors, we shall try to set forth only the most striking ones.

The *first* and most important factor endangering the peace of national minorities is their mere existence. As a result of political vengeance after World War I and II, millions of minority people are obliged to live, against

their will, under the rule of a hostile majority national power. This situation has little to do with the "Pax Romana" we have spoken of above or the spirit of the New Testament. The idea of different nationalities living together peacefully and the spiritualization of boundaries are no more than utopian notions as long as national States exist.

National States are using a variety of different methods to bring about the eradication of minorities. One such method is the well known plan of *resettlement*. Hundreds and thousands of individuals and families of majority peoples have been and are being resettled in the historic villages and towns of the national minorities in order to transform their demographic structure. This is the method known as "demographic metamorphosis" in the service of "ethnic cleansing" directed against national minorities. In this way the populations of many villages and towns are changed to such a degree that minorities no longer represent more than a small fraction of the population. The problem in the way of peace is: How to stop such manipulations by national States from serving the selfish goals and interests of the majority people, whose deliberate policy is aimed at artificially altering the ethnic composition of the places where the minorities have historically lived. The New Testament message could – indeed can – offer a "good" solution, but chauvinistic nationalism does not accept such an evangelical settlement of the problem.

The *second* hostile action to the peace of minorities is the misuse of *mixed marriages*. Although in our times we naturally ask ourselves whether mixed marriages between minority and majority persons are admissible or not, the New Testament is very familiar with the practice (Acts 16.1-3, 1Cor 7.12-13). But at the same time there is no question that mixed marriages ought not to be used as the means of forced assimilation, following the model of Alexander the Great's hellenization programs. In such situations minority peoples are forced, *volens nolens*, into mixed marriages. In the spirit of the New Testament such deliberate evil action is totally unacceptable.

The *third* factor violating the peace of minorities is *the language problem*. According to the majority, what constitutes the official language of a national country can be nothing but the mother tongue of the majority people. As a consequence minority children are not allowed to use their own language and can not participate in State administration, institutes of justice *etc.*: This practice is completely contrary to that of the Roman Empire in New Testament times, when all cultured Roman citizens were bilingual, knowing both Greek and Latin.¹⁷ Bilingualism was characteristic for Galilee also; the people of Galilee spoke both Greek and Aramaic. The same bilingualism, albeit to a lesser extent, was found in Judea, particularly in Jerusalem.¹⁸ The pressure of the majority State language was not enforced.

Complete freedom in using several languages was more the norm than a heavy-handed mono-lingualism. The inscription over Jesus' cross, for instance, was written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin and Greek (Jn 19.20), with the language of the ruling power only taking second place. In New Testament times we do not find the majority language

being made into an idol. On the basis of this practice, the 20th Century use of bilingual inscriptions in some countries for street names and public notices are as natural as the bilingualism practiced in offices, institutions and everywhere in a State's administration. If in the European Union the use of many languages can be practiced without any difficulty, the same bilingualism or even polylingualism ought to be practiced in States with a national majority which has within it a recognizable minority population.

Mutatis mutandis, a similar situation may be observed in relation to the national symbols (flags, hymns, coats of arms) of minorities. It is certain that the New Testament does not recognize today's notion of nationalities. According to theologians Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, for example, it is certain that no national or historical interpretation of people¹⁹ is known in the New Testament. However it may vary from this theological concept, according to the New Testament the nations are God's creation, albeit they are corrupted by sin. They are living realities, and we must acknowledge this biblical fact as well as the symbols of nationhood we have mentioned.

In New Testament literature we find "Caesar's likeness and inscription" on the coinage regarded as symbolic of the Roman Empire (Mk 12.16). Similarly in the religious life one can find the picture of fish, lamb, star *etc.*: as inherited Christian symbols. By analogy, national symbols ought to be recognized as expressions of the national entity.

The Roman Empire was "indulgent and tolerant ... towards its subjugated peoples." As a sign of its indulgence it may be noted that Caesar's image was not applied in Palestine on the State coinage or the flags of the troops.²⁰ In this fact the document of the national autonomy of Jewish people must be recognized. Within the scope of this autonomy "all important questions were decided by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Only in the case of the death sentence it did not have the power to make up its own mind, needing the approval of the Roman procurator".²¹ In the Roman political order, "autonomy was given... for Jews of the *diaspora* as well, within their synagogue community".²² In such peaceful conditions the free use of national symbols was normally guaranteed.

It is evident that in New Testament times we do not find today's system of schools (kindergarten, elementary and middle schools, universities *etc.*) and other institutions, but the State system of the 1st Century had not excluded the existence of such institutions in principle. That is very important in connection with the situation of national minorities in our day.

In the economic sphere all people had property rights (Acts 4.32-5.4). The State was only interested in the collection of tribute and tax (Rom 13.7). In such circumstances national minorities would not have been compelled to fight for their economic rights to get back, for example, the material and cultural goods expropriated from them.

To summarize: In the spirit of New Testament theology the existence of national minorities as second class citizens cannot be tolerated. However, as long as they continue to exist, their conditions of life must be ordered on the basis of the criteria of "good" and "evil" described in Ch. 13 of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and explained through the notions of truth, liberty and peace as we find them in New Testament theology.

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Chapter 5

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN HUNGARIAN PREACHERS

Géza Boross

Introduction

The distinguished Hungarian Church historian Mihály Bucsay illustrates the historical background of the problem as follows: “After the Turks were driven out of Hungary (after 1686), it was necessary to repopulate the seriously depopulated regions of the Great Plain and Southern Hungary... During the reign of king Matthias I (1458-1490), the population of the country was four million. Over the course of the next two hundred years, by the beginning of the 18th Century that number fell to three and a half million. Masses of Serbs, Romanians and Bulgarians migrated or fled northward from the war ravaged Lower Danube regions to the already liberated territories. Louis of Baden gave permission to no less than 30,000 Serbian families to settle in Southern Hungary... New landowners, who either bought or were granted large tracts of land in the liberated regions, also created resettlements. The colonization process can be divided into three stages: by Charles III; by Empress Maria Theresa, lasting until 1780; and a third, associated with Joseph II...The new landowners – among them General Merdy, as well as Johann Harrucken and his son, who were unable to cultivate the lands without laborers – consequently brought in Slovak and German Protestant settlers in great numbers...”^{xxvii}

Another highly esteemed Hungarian historian, Antal Balla, gives a similar background account of the ethnic question. He writes: “During the 18th Century, the ethnic face of Hungary changed...Large areas were laid waste, or turned into either marshland or desert during the Turkish occupation. Thousands of villages were destroyed, cities became depopulated. After the Peace of Szatmár (in 1711), during the reign of Charles III, there began another quasi-migration period, which continued until the reign of Maria Theresa; with it commenced the colonization of the depopulated areas of the country. From Northern Hungary former residents started to filter back and settle in the Trans-Tisza region. A German Army Catering Corp officer, Johann Georg Harrucken, secured the county of Bihar, as well as large tracts of land in the surrounding counties, for a pittance, and settled the area around the town of Csaba with ethnic Slovaks...”^{xxviii}

In Hungary, ethnic minorities began to pose a psychological problem – in today’s jargon, a challenge – in the first part of the 19th Century. In his great work on Church history Mihály Zsilinszky tells us that ethnic problems became acute when a stronger assertion of the Hungarian national ideal – perhaps somewhat lacking in tact in its manifestations – roused the fears and enmity of the various minority groups, especially those of the Slovaks. At the General Synod Meeting the Hungarian Evangelical Lutheran Church declared that no one would be entitled to an education who was not able to demonstrate, within five years, an acceptable level of fluency in Hungarian. As a direct result, Pal Stranko, a minister at Klenóc – who offered to the General Synod the Slovak translation of his Biblical Encyclopaedia for publication – said in a deposition: “...do not be ashamed of the Slovak language, for most of us are of Slovak origin, and most of you praise God in Slovak. Do not be intimidated by the current Hungarian fever which

attempts to turn Slovaks into Hungarians. We are the inheritors of this land, the Hungarians are only latecomers. The Slovaks are the soul of the country, without them the Hungarians would know nothing, would never achieve anything”.^{xxix}

Not only the Churches and Synods, but also the Hungarian Parliament was obliged to occupy itself more and more with minority problems, precisely because of its attempt to make Hungarian the official language. Statute No. II, promulgated in 1844, decreed that in Hungarian Crown Territories, Hungarian would replace the hitherto official Latin as the language of legislation, administration, adjudication and education. However, by 1840 the various minority groups made up more than 50% of the population of the country. Although separately each was just a small minority (Germans 10%, Romanians 18%, Slovaks 14%, Serbs and Croats 5%, Carpatho-Ukrainians 4%, and others 1%), collectively they made up 52%. Baron Miklós Wesselényi was right when he urged an amicable accord with the minorities. He even published a special book (*Declaration*) on the subject.^{xxx}

In this respect, the Minority Law of 1868 was of special importance, being the first step toward enacting minority rights legislation in Europe. The spiritual father of the legislation was Baron József Eötvös. Had it been up to him, ethnic minorities would have had the chance there and then for urban and regional autonomy. In the first decade of the 20th Century, of a population of 18.5 million, 9.95 million was Hungarian. At the same time, there were 1.9 million Germans, 1.95 million Romanians, 2.29 million Serbians, 0.45 million Ukrainians, 0.20 million Croats, and 0.31 others.

After the First World War, the map of Hungary underwent a radical transformation. As a result of the Trianon Peace Treaty signed at Versailles on June 4, 1920, the borders of Hungary changed considerably and Hungarians found themselves now minorities in the neighboring countries. Bishop László Ravasz gives an accurate description of this entirely new circumstance in an address published first in German, then in English and finally in Hungarian. He writes, among other things: “The country had lost more than two thirds of its territory, and two thirds of its population (of the 283,870 sq km of its previous territory only 91,44 sq km were left, and of a population of 18,264,533, only 7,481,954). With the lost territories went the best agricultural lands, forests, mines and industrial districts, as well as Transylvania, where 3.300,000 Hungarians came under foreign rule... The new countries wanted to obliterate all traces of Hungarian history, and attempted to turn the *gens tolerata*, the Hungarians, into second class citizens overnight”.^{xxxi}

Only by becoming familiar with the background can we fully understand the attitudes, teachings and directives of our most distinguished clerics on this painful question.

However, before going into further detail, let us put the title of our essay into its proper perspective. Without it, the title would raise levels of interest and expectations in the readers that the present essay is not able to satisfy. From its title, our readers could justifiably expect a colorful picture of the subject as it appears in the preaching of clergy of the historical Churches in Hungary. Also, an exposition of how the ethnic minority question was viewed from the standpoint of the Hungarian Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran and Unitarian ministers, by preachers of the smaller denominational groups, and by Jewish rabbis of patriotic persuasion. Unfortunately, we are unable to satisfy (in this instance) all of the above expectations. Firstly, because the presentation of the subject matter would require a dissertation of several hundred pages, and secondly, it would

require the labors of a research team for several years. Therefore, we were able to undertake merely a narrowed down, more modest venture to examine the preaching of Hungarian Reformed ministers, restricted to the period between the two World Wars. All the more so, since this period occupied most vividly the interests of our most representative, most influential and best known missionary figures such as László Ravasz, Gyula Muraközy, Imre Szabó, János Vásárhelyi, Sándor Makkai, Lajos Gönczy and János Victor. Let us see how the problems of ethnic minorities are represented in the preaching and teaching of our clerics.

László Ravasz

In 1907, László Ravasz (1882-1975) became professor of practical theology at the Reformed Theological Academy in Kolozsvár (today Cluj-Napoca, Romania.). In 1918, he was elected Chief Clerk of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District, then in 1921 minister of the Kálvin Square congregation in Budapest and Bishop of the Danubian Church District. In 1948 he was forced by the Communist regime to resign as Bishop. In 1951 he retired from the pulpit as well. Before World War II he was awarded the prestigious Corvin chain by the Government. For several years he was President of the Hungarian Protestant Literary Society and the Reformed Ministerial Association, for three years Vice-President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as well as honorary doctor of the Universities of Debrecen, Pécs-Sopron, Lancaster (England) and St. Andrews (Scotland). The most outstanding works of his rich literary output are *Introduction to Practical Theology* (Bevezetés a gyakorlati teológiába. Kolozsvár, 1907), *The Theory of Congregational Preaching* (A gyülekezeti igehirdetés elmélete. Pápa, 1915), *Alpha and Omega*, in 2 volumes (Alfa és Omega. Budapest, 1933), *Let There be Light*, 3 vols. (Legyen világosság. Budapest, 1938), *In God's Sieve*, 3 vols. (Budapest, 1941), *Korbán*, 2 vols. (Korbán. Budapest, 1943), *Agenda*, ed. (Ágenda. Budapest, 1927), *The Order of Congregational Service*, ed. (Istentiszteleti rendtartás. Budapest, 1930) and the posthumous *Memoirs* (Budapest, 1992).

The ethnic minority problem is best illustrated on the highest theological, as well as literary level by the preaching of László Ravasz, the most outstanding preacher of the Hungarian Reformed Church (established 1567). His exhortations are not “direct” sermons from the pulpit, but rather indirect sermons, lectures, statements delivered at the most varied secular forums (meetings, conferences, reports, etc.). The secret of the matter is that László Ravasz’s teachings or statements at these forums (*agoras*) were, in fact, sermons in disguise. They are sermons without being tied to specific Biblical texts, to a living part of the Scriptures. They are dialogues reflecting the spirit, the message, the attitude of the Bible, and through them its Calvinistic Reformed interpretation, the Reformed Biblical theology, can be heard.

How is it demonstrated?

1. First of all, through that Biblical radicalism with which he diagnoses the ethnic minority problem. He accomplishes it through a prophetic seriousness, with which he attempts to awaken his audience to the significance of the problem. This sobering, realistic diagnosis – as mentioned above – is already present in his study *Hungary after*

the War, published in 1924 in several languages. It is more directly present in his paper entitled *The Spiritual Unity of the Nation*, delivered in 1928. In it he postulates, among other things, the following: “It is all of one, how we consider the situation: either the way our adversaries do...(namely) that they existed here for a thousand years within an established and flourishing State. Then they were swept away as if by a whirlwind, and consequently enslaved by this Hungarian race that ruled over them for the next thousand years, until the hour of freedom struck with the Peace Treaty of Trianon... Or, conversely, we can be of the mind that in this land... no other people could establish a State, but the Hungarians... Into this unity came diverse ethnic fragments from the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, fleeing from a series of massive waves of turbulent migrating and conquering forces. These ethnic groups then settled in the uninhabited areas, and proliferated within the homogeneous Hungarian State... For us, it is enough to establish the fact that the thousand year old Hungary disintegrated into ethnic minorities and groups of opposing spheres of interest, separated by an ever widening, immeasurably deep chasm...”^{xxxii}

This is the reason why Ravasz considers ethnic division as the number one obstacle to the spiritual unity of the nation. A sobering outline of the situation can be found in his study *Whose is the Country?* Here are a few sample lines: “...Every land will belong to the people who populate it. No foreign power was able to overthrow Hungary in a thousand years. However, by the fact that in some parts of the country certain groups of people were more prolific and at the same time less demanding in their needs, larger tracts of Hungarian soil came under foreign occupation than during the Turkish occupation. A sign of the Hungarian tragedy is that while during the second half of the 19th Century, a hundred thousand true Hungarians emigrated every year, Romanians, Slavs, Germans and, above all, Jews, filtered quietly into the country”^{xxxiii}

We meet with this radical diagnosis in the same lecture. He said the following: “Distinguished Guests! For us to move forward... it is necessary to point out the obstacles that imperil the spiritual unity of the nation... The most intriguing, the deepest, the most radical conflict in the life of a nation is ethnic conflict, which can result in racial, cultural, linguistic, historical, *ie*: psychological as well as existential confrontation. The tragedy of Hungary was the circumstance that ethnic divisions became more and more deep and total. When the great catastrophe (of the First World War) finally struck, the country, afflicted with ethnic strife, fell apart by itself, because the country’s population was only 50% pure Hungarian stock...”^{xxxiv}

2. That László Ravasz spreads the Word of God even in the *agora* is evident from the fact that he not only establishes the sobering diagnosis of the problem, but prescribes the necessary therapy as well. In his aforementioned work he shows the road to recovery thus: “Our task is to attempt to resolve these (ethnic) differences not by way of revolution, but rather *through a national education program*. The fact that there are differences does not bode ill in itself, for in these differences lies the diversity, the richness of the nation’s soul. In fact, to achieve national uniformity by taking away its colorful diversity, is to impoverish it...”^{xxxv} Look at 1 Corinthians 12! Behold the application of the Bible’s teachings of one body, in a “non-pious manner” (anticipating Bonhoeffer), as viewed from the standpoint of the nation’s spiritual unity! Herewith is an attitude toward ethnic unity in a form comprehensible in the *agora*, as nourished by the teaching the Scriptures, based on Reformed principles.

He similarly emphasizes the Biblical therapy in *The Re-annexation of the Hungarian Highland*, a homily he delivered in 1938 before the Upper House of Parliament. That this presentation before a political forum was an indirect sermon is demonstrated by the following sentence at the end of his address: “I wish to speak to those who came over to us, who belong to a different race and have a different language. I wish to tell them that the moral code of Hungarian chivalry obliges us to grant them the same freedoms that we are demanding for our own flesh and blood on the other side of the border”^{xxxvi}.

Also worthy of notice from the standpoint of therapy are his views on the much discussed assimilation question. We quote from a 1939 indirect sermon entitled *Assimilation and Dissimilation*: “There is nothing worse than hindering the progress of assimilation by constantly revising the process ...It is similar to the child who pulls up the new plant every day to see if it has any new roots. This way we turn assimilation into dissimilation, and tear away those with whom we have become one body and one soul, and that is self-mutilation...Who would insist that János Hunyadi, Péter Pázmány, Miklós Zrínyi were not Hungarians? Who would say that Petőfi, Gárdonyi, István Tömörkény were not Hungarian writers? Who would expel from the pantheon of Hungarian scientists Mátyás Bél and Semmelweis? Branding as foreigners all Hungarian intellectuals whose ancestors seventy generations back brought with them a drop of foreign blood, is nothing less than atomizing the Hungarian nation. What we need is cement...”^{xxxvii} Although not spelled out, who can fail to recognize, that by cement he means the Gospels?

3. A responsible Biblical Reformed way of exposing the ethnic minority problem, as reflected in his sermons, is evident also from his defense of the Hungarian Diaspora. Herewith a few excerpts from an interview he gave in the 1920s under the title *Hungary after the War*: “The situation of Hungarians annexed to the Successor States is different in each instance, and their fate cannot be generalized...(The) fate of the Hungarian minorities became a matter of ‘prestige’ for the Great Powers, and claims arising from it cannot be dismissed by saying that the Successor States treat the Hungarian minorities better than the former Hungarian State treated its ethnic groups. Even the precept, in itself, is arguable. Earnest and serious representatives of Hungarian minorities could not wish for better treatment of their people, even as a Utopian dream, than the minorities enjoyed in Hungary. However, the main point of the issue does not lie here... Above all, it is of paramount importance that the protection of minorities does not remain an empty phrase on a piece of paper, but rather becomes an active right...”^{xxxviii}

Similar defense of the Hungarian Diaspora is echoed in *The Hungarian Diaspora-Consciousness*, an address he delivered in 1935: “...Since (the Peace Treaty of Trianon), Hungarians too, have to a large extent become a nation in Diaspora. Not quite two thirds of the world’s Hungarians make up the truncated State of Hungary. Almost one third of them have become an ethnic minority within the respective Successor States’ large, alien and hostile majority. As well, a large number of Hungarians live scattered around in European and American cities; even the port cities of Asia and the Pacific Islands have their share of them. Hungarians exist therefore in three specific forms: as a nation, as a minority and as a diaspora. If we take a closer look at the situation of the Hungarian minorities, we are bound to see that they, too, are slowly breaking up...”^{xxxix}

That László Ravasz was spreading the Word of God in the *agora* is well illustrated in a declaration he addressed to the *Hungarians in the Diaspora* in 1939. Its message, based

on James 1.1, is revealed in the first sentence, which fortifies, comforts and motivates the Hungarians in dispersion: "... precious to us are our American (-Hungarian) brothers, for in an alien world they are the representatives of Hungarian justice, Hungarian life – in short, the embodiment of the Hungarian soul. They are pioneers and models, sent by God as examples..."^{xi} At the conclusion of a radio message addressed to the Hungarians of Sao Paulo (Brazil), that also included a message from Jenő Balog, Chief Curator of the Danubian Diocese, he refers to Revelations 3.11: "Remain true to your ancient faith, nourish your souls with the Word of God, sing our psalms and listen to Hungarian sermons. Remember the eternal love that called and chose you for redemption, even before the Creation, in the name of Christ. You were also given the gift of receiving the light of Christ within the Hungarian Reformed Church. Here at home we are praying for you and loving you, we bless you all and are forever waiting for your return. We take our farewell of you with the message from the Book of Revelation 3.11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast thou hast, that no man take thy crown".^{xii} This shows how an indirect sermon can turn into a direct sermon!

4. The fourth theme documenting how the message of the Scriptures shines through his indirect sermons on behalf of ethnic minorities, is the so called "Jewish question". This question was one of the most neurotic problems in the country during his ministry and public life. In his capacity as an important and respected public figure, he made statements and took a stand on the Jewish question. From his rich legacy we wish to highlight a part of a sermon delivered at the Kálvin Square Church in 1939.

The text of the sermon was based on Gal 6.10-18, with the title "The Jewish question within the Church". At the beginning of the text he emphasizes that yes, there does exist a Jewish question within the Church. At the heart of the problem lies the fact that "The Jews want to become Christians in order to establish an alibi for themselves in a civil dispute. They talk about integration from the outside, leaving the main issue untouched..." He continues: "What is the meaning of God's Word in the Jewish question? We can continue with the missionary work – however, the problem needs more than education. Something more, something better is needed. *Besides teaching, we need an immeasurable amount of love accompanied by shining and uncompromising example.* "I don't wish to debate" – he continues – "how anyone thinks about the Jewish problem. I only want to say that Christians should see a special opportunity in the present situation and show their love towards those who are suffering..."^{xiii}

Gyula Muraközy

Gyula Muraközy (1892-1961) served as Reformed minister in Kecskemét between 1918 and 1932. During this period he spent considerable time in Montpellier (France), and in the United States. In 1932 he was called as co-minister to the Kálvin Square Church in Budapest, where he served until his death. In 1946 he served as Chief Clerk of the Danubian Church District. His more notable works are: *Life and Death* (Élet és halál, Budapest, 1915); *The Book of the Preachers* (A prédikátorok könyve, Kecskemét, 1929); *The Problems of Reformed Hungarians* (A magyar reformátusság problémái, Kecskemét, 1929); *The Triumphant Life* (A diadalmas élet, Budapest, 1933); *The Invisible Church* (A láthatatlan egyház, Budapest 1933); *Crying Voice* (Kiáltó szó, 1936), and *Resolution of*

the Crisis (A válság megoldása, Budapest, 1938). He was also chief editor for many years of the Radio Sermons series.

Next to László Ravasz, Muraközy was one of the most influential of all Hungarian Reformed preachers. His ministry, like that of Ravasz, was pastoral and prophetic, instructive and awakening. If there is something different between them, it is that while Ravasz is the master of *explication*, Muraközy is the master of *application*. Ravasz is a *theoretician*, Muraközy is a *practician*. Ravasz is a theologian and philosopher, Muraközy is an ethicist, a poet. It is not by accident that Prof. Béla Vasady had the subject *The Minister as Ethicist* treated not only by István Török, but also by Muraközy.^{xliii} Muraközy writes the following in an essay – and it can be considered the *ars poetica* of homiletics: “It is my desire and my goal that positions in offices be occupied by people with high moral standing. We need people who can work openly and self-confidently in offices, workshops and on podiums... A good human being is one who is as good as God directed him to be... a decent man will follow the straight road of God... True moral good can only grow out of the Gospels, because their motives are noble... I will go even further, and say that if my ministry does not produce lives that achieve the highest level of morality, then I have failed in my ministry; I have sowed tares instead of wheat...” This pious practicality of Muraközy’s is reflected also in his pulpit sermons on the ethnic minority question.

It is typical of Muraközy’s sermons, that they deal with the problems of Hungarian minorities in foreign lands rather than with the problems of ethnic minorities in Hungary. His most famous sermon on the subject is the one he preached on August 6, 1939 at the Kálvin Square Church in Budapest, entitled “*Message from Babylon*”, based on Jer 30.17-22. Here are a few sample thoughts: “That great Hungarian Babylon... which swallowed up almost two million people from this Land is the United States. Our people did not go into bondage, like the subjugated people of Israel to the first Babylon. These went on federally subsidized emigrant ships. However, they were driven by a more powerful tyrant than the Babylonian despot: poverty. In the two decades preceding the First World War, 1.5 million Hungarians took the boat to America, the ones who were unable to take roots at home because they could not afford to buy even a small piece of land with their labors. A Hungarian in America buys the mass products of giant department stores; his dress, his life, his home conform to those of the other 120 million. But deep in his heart he hears a voice full of pain: you are an exile here, your soul is different... this is our fate not only in America, *but also throughout the great community of people*. Yes – he concludes – we live in Babylonian captivity at home, across our borders and across the Atlantic Ocean. The only blessing is that we are all siblings of an orphan family, close to each other even when we are apart. The unity of the Hungarian soul was always like a flower which blooms in the dark... Our message to our brethren across the Ocean, and everywhere in Babylon, is: We are alive and will remain so, because we will be Christ’s Hungarian people”.^{xliv}

However, Muraközy placed the reconciliation of ethnic groups at the forefront of his ministry, as is evidenced in a sermon he preached at the Kálvin Square Church in Budapest on September 8, 1940 based on 2 Samuel 10.12. In this sermon Muraközy is citing the Pastoral Letter jointly released on November 15, 1918 by the four established Churches: Catholic, Presbyterian, Unitarian and Lutheran. The Letter was read – at their direction – in every congregation of those four Churches. Muraközy quotes the Circular

as follows: “We ask you not to confine your love within the borders of religion, denomination, language or nationality. We admonish you, my brethren, to put a stop to old distrusts, pettiness, sensitivities and alienation. Approach each other instead with brotherly love, like people who have escaped the terrible flames of suffering with a purified soul, with forgiveness toward each other. Let us forget all that once divided us, throw a veil over the memories that are mutually painful. Let us find each other in the light of eternal truth”.^{xlv} How typical this is of Muraközy’s mind set is evident from a sermon he preached as early as 1933: “I tell a stranger we cannot meet, for the earth had opened up between us; your soul is different... different are your dreams, your joys. There is, however, humility common to our souls: Christ loved your people as much as he loved mine”.^{xlvi}

Imre Szabó

Imre Szabó was born in Somorja on April 10, 1891, another shining star of the Reformed ministry between the two World Wars. Minister of the Budapest-Fasor Reformed Church, he studied at the Reformed Theological Academy of Pápa (Hungary), and Basel (Switzerland). After his years as chaplain, he was called in September of 1918 to serve as minister of the Zsuzsanna Lorántffy Society. In 1923 he organized and founded the Nagyvárad Square Church in Budapest. In 1932 he became Dean of the Budapest Diocese, in 1939 a member of the General Synod. In 1948 he was elected President of the Association of Reformed Elders. In 1950, under Communist political pressure, he resigned as the minister of his Budapest Congregation when he was forced by the pro-Communist Church leaders to accept a call to the Church at the tiny, remote village of Buj. He was a widely known and highly respected preacher of the Gospel. His better known works include: *Our Father* (Miatyánk) – ten meditations, self published, Budapest 1926; *Know Thyself* (Ismerd meg magad) – fourteen sermons and lectures on the Ten Commandments, Budapest 1931; *An Open Door* (Nytott ajtó) – lectures, sermons and explanations of the Gospel, 1927 - 1937. Imre Szabó died on January 27, 1955. István Draskóczy wrote his biography: *The first Dean of Budapest Reformed Diocese* (Szabó Imre, a Budapesti Református Egyház első esperese) Kiskunfélegyháza, Práklétosz Press, 1991.

On March 15, 1934 he was guest preacher at the Kálvin Square Church. The subject of his sermon was “*To be a Hungarian*”, based on Revelation 2.10. He begins by emphasizing the importance of the National Day – the commemoration to March 15, 1848, the beginning of the revolution and fight for freedom from the oppressive Austrian Empire. “The vital instincts of the Hungarian soul flared up on this day with a glittering beauty not seen in a long time. It is the manifestation of the nation’s soul, a nation’s that was placed by God’s special will at the crossroads of Europe, in the middle of oceans of Germans and Slavs, nurtured on the historical experiences of a thousand years... *we don’t want to melt into either ocean, but want to remain Hungarians, because Hungarians must live in this World.* Come, let us try within our borders and beyond, within social classes and beyond, within denominations and beyond, to unite in the resolve that *Hungarians must live in this World.*” Later he encourages the congregation thus: “*Love thy race unto death...* But this love does not mean that you should hate the other’s race. It means, first and foremost, *that you should not betray your own...* that the spirit of your race should

progress from the ploughs to the chairs of Universities. Otherwise, you will have to emigrate like the ones decades before, who filtered out at one end of the country, clutching but a handful of Hungarian soil, while at the other end, and from all around us, foreign elements filtered in to take roots in Hungarian soil”.^{xlvii}

János Vásárhelyi

János Vásárhelyi was born in Maroscsúcs on June 12, 1888. After completing his studies at the Reformed Theological Academy of Kolozsvár (then Hungary), Jena (Germany), and Basel (Switzerland), he served in 1911 in Beszterce, and in 1919 in Dés. In 1921 he responded to a call from the Reformed Church in Kolozsvár, where he became the minister in 1923, a post he resigned in 1927 when he was elected the Chief Secretary of the Transylvanian Reformed Diocese. Vásárhelyi was elected Bishop there in 1936, and died in Kolozsvár on December 11, 1960. Of his numerous publications, the best known are: *Mihály Tompa* (Tompa Mihály) Beszterce, 1916; *I Know Whom I Believed* (Tudom kinek hittem) – Sermons, Kolozsvár, 1927; *Our Faith* (A mi hitünk) Kolozsvár, 1935; *The Prayer Book of the Reformed Christian* (A református keresztyén imádságoskönyve) Kolozsvár, 1938; *The Reformed Woman* (A református asszony), Nagyvárad; and *The Triumphant Jesus* (A diadalmas Jézus) Nagyvárad.

The popular Reformed Bishop of Kolozsvár delivered the sermon: “*Preserving Lessons*”, based on Hebrews 12.6-9, at the Kálvin Square Church in Budapest on October 31, 1940, the anniversary of the Reformation. In a concise but clear sermon, he showed what the discovery of the verity of the Church meant to Hungarian Transylvanians suffering the hard fate of a minority. In his introduction he demonstrates the message of the Gospel: “The sons understand the rebuke of father and live by them”. Then he continues: “We Reformed People of Transylvania can learn a lot from the trials of the last twenty two years. Now that, by the Grace of God, we are released from our trials, (NB. North Transylvania was returned to Hungary by the Second Vienna Accord in 1940. ed.), I take this wonderful occasion to speak to you about the moral lessons we have drawn from that experience... The first lesson is... that not even the Gates of Hell could triumph over the Church. When it seemed that everything conspired against us, when we stood alone and defenseless in the storm, the Church remained for us the only living and all-preserving reality... Everything and everybody deserted us; the old supporting columns came crashing down. Our enemies mockingly posed the question: Where is your God? We realized then that even if we lost all our defenses, we still have our Church...” With such words as these, Vásárhelyi illuminates the importance of the Church for the minority.

However, it becomes clear from Bishop Vásárhelyi’s sermon that, beside the Church, the school also plays an indispensable role. Herewith the relevant part of his sermon: “We have identified the inseparable tie between Church and school.” He then cites an analogy drawn by the legendary Bishop of Transylvanian, Péter Nagy: “Who can define which is more important, the Church or the school? Only he that is able to define which part of the house is more dispensable: the roof, that protects the walls, or the walls, that support the roof... This is the reason why we fought our deadly serious and holy war for

our schools, for our children, for our future. This is why the cry of our aching hearts was heard throughout Transylvania: Do not give up the Church, the Church and the school.”

In closing, the third important lesson learned by the minority was the necessity of brotherly solidarity. In his words: “The third great lesson was that we understood the indispensable necessity of brotherly solidarity, of brotherly love in times of need...”^{xlviii} Therefore, according to the Bishop, the basic responsibilities of Hungarian minorities in any ethnic community are: to support the Church, support the Hungarian schools, and support each other, regardless of creed or social class.

Sándor Makkai

Sándor Makkai was one of the most highly respected spiritual leaders of the Reformed Church in Hungary, God’s blessed instrument in Hungarian Reformed congregational evangelization and awakening between the two World Wars. He was born in Nagyenyed on May 13, 1890. He finished his theological studies in Kolozsvár, where he also received a PhD in philosophy, and became a Privat Docent as well. After serving the Vajdahunyad Congregation for two years, in 1918 he was invited to teach practical theology at the Reformed Theological Academy of Sárospatak, becoming in the same year professor of methodological theology at the Reformed Theological Academy in Kolozsvár. In 1926 he was elected Bishop by the Transylvanian Reformed Diocese, and served in this capacity until 1936 when, for reasons of health, he resigned and accepted a post as professor of practical theology in Debrecen. In 1938 he was elected President of the Hungarian Protestant Literary Society. An incredibly prolific author, he published numerous works on theology, philosophy, pedagogy and literature. He was one of the rousers, organizers and inspirers of the Reformed Church, a true servant who remained vocal even in death. His most outstanding works are: *Introduction to the Pedagogy of Individualism* (Bevezetés a személyiség pedagógiájába) Kolozsvár, 1912; *The Psychology of Religion* (A vallás lélektana) 1914; *The Mystery of Death* (A halál misztériuma) Budapest, 1918; *Conscious Calvinism* (Öntudatos kálvinizmus) Budapest, 1925; *Harvest* (Aratás) Losonc, 1926; *Alone: the Spiritual Countenance of Gábor Bethlen* (Egyedül: Bethlen Gábor lelki arca) Budapest, 1929; *The Missionary Work of the Church* (Az egyház missziói munkája) Budapest, 1938; *Poimenika. The Discipline of Personal Ministry* (Poimenika. A személyes leigondozás tana) Budapest, 1947. He was the editor of our excellent but short lived (1949-1950) periodical on practical theology “The Reformed Congregation”.

In an indirect sermon at the Reformed Congress at Sepsiszentgyörgy, he expounds the minority question on the basis of Christology with the words: “The goal for the nation’s soul should always be to reflect Christ’s spiritual countenance, the nation’s life should be a channel of Christ’s life, and the country the ground of God’s Kingdom. At the same time we have to emphasize that Christianity can keep the nation’s life in its natural and necessary mould only so long as the nation desires to be a *conscious* medium of the Christian ideal. Every political deviation from Christianity can be regarded as fateful for a nation, where the balance tips not towards Christianity and the will of God, but rather towards politics and the separation of races, by setting them against each other. And the foregoing, as tragic precedents in history show us, destroys the soul of, and the piety in Christianity, turning it into a tool for racism which, in turn, destroys them both ... In

countries where, besides the ruling ethnic majority, there are diverse ethnic minorities, the Christian stance of the nation will undergo a modification, whereby the Christian ideal and lifestyle of the ruling ethnic group will take the leading role in the harmony of the nation, while all the time supporting the unique Christian ideals of the minorities who, in turn, will add their supporting harmony to the whole. The Christianity of a nation, destined to live in national unity with the Christian ideals of other ethnic minorities, will not lose its vitality, but rather will acquire richer opportunities in its relationship with them, towards a more noble development. It will conquer the dangerous one-sidedness that is now threatens the Christianity of homogenous nations. On the other hand, the Christian ideal of ethnic minorities can find its unique task by furthering and developing the cultural and spiritual character of the “nation”, while at the same time it suppresses polity in its concept. In a country where the population is made up of diverse ethnic groups, the Christian cultural ideal can become the dominating factor of the majority as well as the minority by appearing in a richer, more valuable and multifarious form, provided, of course, that it is ready to honor the minorities’ spiritual, intellectual and cultural freedom”.^{xlix} Is this, we ask, the basic principle? What is its concrete meaning? What it really means is revealed as Makkai continues: “We Reformed *Christians* living in Romania are *Hungarians*. It is neither a fault nor a virtue, but a God given opportunity to become *pure Christians* in our Hungarian identity and ethnic character. If we consider it natural that Romania can become a civilized, Christian State only through its Romanian spiritual identity, than it is equally natural that we should be able to become Christian citizens of this State, our country, by honoring our own Hungarian identity. Our race, our language, culture and spiritual characteristics do not belong to us, but to God. We cannot shed them, we do not have the right to abdicate them, and we can only offer them to the glorification of God and build them, like a pillar, into the edifice of the State. We can become valuable and loyal components of our country only if we are allowed to contribute to its stability, integrity, prosperity and growth through pure Christian development, and preservation of our God given ethnic treasures: our language, religion, culture, spirituality, character and customs, in the spirit of brotherly love and peaceful labor. Our country is a Romanian national State, as defined by its constitution. However, this must not mean a necessary unity of language. It is natural that its main goal is to Christianize and glorify the spirit of Romania for the greater glory of God. However, this task will not be thwarted and minimized by the circumstance that, within Romania, there also lives a Hungarian minority who wants to exist as such... The existence of ethnic minorities could enrich the Romanian State if it would only take the God-given chance to develop its national character by treating the minorities with patience, justice, generosity, love and fairness. And we Hungarians, by wanting to remain pure Christians through our ancient faith, language and culture, do not impoverish the richness of the Romanian national spirit, but rather enrich it with our own... We know that, as a minority, our duty is to show and practice modesty, humility, loyalty and obedience. All these we are ready to accept, for by being nourished by our own spiritual life we are in a position to ennoble others”.¹

Lajos Gönczy

Lajos Gönczy was born in Székelyudvarhely on September 29, 1889. He studied theology in Kolozsvár and Berlin and received a PhD in philosophy from the University of Kolozsvár. In 1914, he became minister at Gyulafehérvár. In 1920 he became Privat Docent in Kolozsvár where, in 1924, he received an appointment as full professor of theology at the Reformed Theological Academy in Kolozsvár. He retired in 1949. His most notable works are: *Under God's Mighty Hand* (Isten hatalmas keze alatt) – Sermons, Torda, 1927; *The Cult of the Reformed Church* (A refomártus egyház kultusza) Kolozsvár, 1928; *Eschatology and Ministry* (Eschatológia és igehírdetés) in: Kecskeméthy Commemorative Album (Kecskeméthy Emlékkönyv) Kolozsvár, 1934; *The Homilial and Sacramental Worship Service* (A homiális és sákramentumos istentisztelet) Budapest, 1941.

On February 23, 1941 he preached a sermon at the Kálvin Square Church in Budapest, on “*Before the Secretly Watching God*”, based on Matthew 6.1-6, 16-18. The ethnic minority problem appears towards the end of the sermon, as follows: “I came from Transylvania, with two decades of minority life behind me. I know that there is nothing to boast about these two decades, for only God can tell you with what strength and Grace he kept us from perishing in our sins. However, we don't need to be pitied. In those difficult times, the secretly watching God rewarded us richly and bountifully. Among his gifts, the greatest was the experience of the “secret chamber”. The Romanian State forced us out of public life. Censorship and prohibition of public assembly made keeping in contact with each other impossible... This dangerous predicament threatened our public life in Transylvania... creating a hotbed for shifty, clandestine, sinful activities, but God saved us from this danger by forcing us to the “secret chamber”...At what other time could God provide us, blustering, resisting, turbulent and agitated Hungarians, with better and more needful protection, than when our life was full of dangers, temptations, when hostile ears listened to every loud or even whispered word? When could God give us better refuge, a mightier fortress through the tranquility of his presence in a “secret chamber”, than during those decades when we were attacked day after day, in a hostile world, vocally and in writing, in private and in public, when we had to suffer these attacks with our hands tied, could have given us better shelter, a stronger castle than the “secret chamber”, the silence before his presence?...”^{li}

János Victor

Professor Victor was one of the most gifted servants of the Hungarian Reformed awakening, of student mission work, of congregational building and of scientific theology. He was also a translator of Fosdick and Calvin. He was born in Budapest on June 4, 1888, and died there on June 29, 1954. He completed his theological studies in Budapest, where he also read philosophy. He spent one year in Princeton (USA), where he received a BA in theology, and in 1924 he received a PhD in philosophy and became Privat Docent. Between 1925 and 1932 he was professor of theology at the Reformed Theological Academy in Budapest. In 1932 he was called to serve at the Szabadság Square Church in Budapest, and in 1949 he returned to his post as professor of theology.

The most outstanding works of his rich and productive literary life are: *In the Holy of Holies* (A szentek szentjében), Tahitótfalu, 1926; *Rise up, Beloved Zion* (Térj magadhoz, drága Sion) – Sermons, Budapest, 1930; *Blissful Captivity* (Boldog rabság) – an

interpretation of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, Budapest, 1933; and *The Reformed Creed* (Református Hiszekegy) Budapest, 1943. In 1932 he published, under the title: *She and us*, a collection of lectures, speeches and sermons in memory of his “precipitant” daughter Lidike, a volume which contains the speech “*The idea of patriotism*” delivered on March 10, 1929 at a national festive celebration organized by the Christian Youth Organization in Budapest (KIE). The already highly regarded young professor had this to say: “The pressures of Trianon force out of our souls the protesting cry ‘No, no, never!’ ... How many times it is merely an outburst of hate... that conceals great dangers. Through it, patriotism can be condemned to barrenness and impotence... Hate can never generate vitality... Agitating against the Trianon situation can only turn into a paralyzing curse; the nation will wallow in its own frustrated bitterness if we do not learn the patriotism of Jesus Christ...”^{lii}

RESULTS

1. The emergence of the problems of ethnic minorities from the pulpit, considered from Hungarian theologians’ point of view, teaches us the basic lesson that the shaping of public opinion is, if not the foremost task of Christian ministry, certainly not the last either. The basic task of Christian ministry, as part of pulpit service, is motivation to glorify God, to build the Church, the edification and the pastoral care of believers, and the destruction of Satan’s work in the interest of the ultimate goal – in other words, the consistent, deliberate, pneumatic crusade against satanic, anti-Christian, demonic spiritual infection. Christian ministry can fulfil its task by confronting non-Christian public mentality and public opinion, and shaping, influencing and molding them in a positive way. One of its manifestations lies in the dynamics of the sermon. The discussion of the ethnic minority problem from Hungarian Reformed pulpits is the documentation and verification of this homiletic axiom.

2. In the reflection of the foregoing literary expositions, influencing public opinion through objective presentation of data and dissemination of objective information are indispensable requirements of an effective ministry. This is why accounts of the sufferings, humiliations and temptations of Hungarians enduring the sad fate of a minority form part of the sermons of our influential preachers. However, the goal of a realistic diagnosis is not provocation, incitement and agitation. It is, rather, an attempt to awaken the majority’s sense of responsibility towards the minority, and to eliminate indifference typical of a broader public opinion. It is a demonstration of the indefensibility of widespread individualistic egocentricity. It is a call for solidarity, the application in a political sense of the Bible’s teaching of one body (1 Cor 12). It is, on the one hand, an attempt to further brotherly, neighborly and humane coexistence of ethnic groups forced to live together in one geographic location, within the boundaries of one State. On the other hand, its ultimate goal is to alert to lurking dangers, and draw attention to the spiritual obstacles to peaceful coexistence, to expose the temptations in the life of minority groups, the most common one being malevolent nationalism. There should be an attempt to anticipate the downward slide of ethnic pride into racial hatred.

3. The examination of the history of pulpit service in the light of our subject tells us that a direct or indirect opinion-shaping ministry not only establishes the diagnosis, but also provides the therapy it needs. It makes us aware that revolution, oppression and

aggressive assimilation cannot solve the problems of ethnic minorities. There is only one solution possible: national education on mutual respect, the acceptance of ethnic “otherness”. And instead of a teeth-grinding, forced acceptance it should be a theocentric acceptance, an acceptance based on the fact that God created all nations of men of one blood (Acts 17.26). A nation or an ethnicity did not come into being accidentally, but rather through God’s creative will from the beginning of time. The Lord God “determined the boundaries” of nations and ethnic groups, and not fate or history – as Paul preaches in the Athenian *agora*. God places certain minorities at times in the midst of the majority of a larger nation, as happened to the Chosen People in the Babylonian captivity. However – as shown in Jer 29 – God’s will in the fate of the oppressed minority is not passivity, pessimism, resignation, revolt or reliance on terrorism against the majority and in the end accepting martyrdom. Not at all! It is something the average person does not even consider. It is what the Prophet Jeremiah writes to his brethren in captivity: “And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives...” (Jer 29.7). The therapy is the majority’s education towards empathy, tolerance and solidarity on the one hand, on the other the minority’s motivation and inspiration towards creativity and the furthering of the welfare and security of the *polis* – the community and the State.

4. Opinion-shaping ministry culminates in its witnessing for Christ and, as a necessary conclusion, arrives at the preaching of Christ. Those chasms which *de facto* open up between races, peoples and nations, majorities and minorities, can be bridged only by and through Christ. “Christ loved your people as much as he loved mine” – to quote Gyula Muraközy. This quotation contains the essence of the Gospel, that is that Christ can not be nationalized, or use him for chauvinistic purposes. Christ can be a “Hungarian program” (László Ravasz), but not *only* a Hungarian program. What we learn from their preaching ministry is that the ethnic minority problem is ultimately not a political problem or a problem of international law, social policy, sociology and welfare. Ultimately, the ethnic minority problem is a theological-Christological problem. This is well demonstrated in the sermon of László Ravasz quoted earlier: “The Jewish question within the Church”, as well as in Sándor Makkay’s speech delivered in Sepsziszentyörgy. Therefore we can boldly say that the ethnic minority problem is a road to Christ!

5. Perhaps the most interesting part of opinion-shaping preaching is that through faith, a negative situation can also be viewed in a positive way. It can be viewed the way János Vásárhelyi and Lajos Gönczy see it in their sermons. They see, as well as show, that the fabric has a right side, not only a wrong side. Here, under the corrective whiplash of God’s justice and love, we recognize his gifts: the Church, the school and the strength of the “secret chamber”. As we have seen, Lajos Gönczy rejects out of hand the notion that anyone should pity the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. He praises God’s grace when he points out how God protected us, “blustering, turbulent, agitated Hungarians”. This God-praising sermon, displaying a radical knowledge of an ethnic minority, is a positive confirmation of the Gospel, as found in Romans 8.8: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God...”

Although his testimony is not a verbatim citation of the Biblical text, nevertheless it demonstrates, that it is not a message of a preacher from the home-country to the

minorities, but the message of the preachers in minority to the congregations in the home-country.

IMPULSES

After these expositions, there is only one last task left: to consider the homiletic impulses of our results.

The *first* such impulse is that Christian preaching has to answer the “delicate questions” too. If our preaching ministry desires to break out of the so-called “subculture ghetto”, it has to claim the attention of a wider public of the *agora*. It has to place such questions as that of the minorities under the spotlight of the Word of God. Christian preaching ministry has to accept the responsibility of influencing public opinion. It has to inform the people of the Biblical stance on any problem without compromise and fear; it has to show the advantages that lie in such a stance, and the disadvantages of neglecting it. On the one hand there is a duty to demonstrate, with the courage (*parézia*) of the Biblical Prophets, how great is the distance between the mentality of the public and the mentality of the Bible. On the other hand, however, it also needs to be shown that only through Christ and by a living Christianity can we find resolution to the unsolvable, neurological problems of society – among them, resurgent nationalism. It also means that we have to preach on the problem not only indirectly, but also directly.

The *second* homiletic impulse resulting from our examination is that we must not only understand, appreciate and respect the ethnic minorities, but also motivate both the Hungarian minorities outside Hungary and also ethnic minorities within our own country. In the light of God’s Word we have to make ethnic minorities realize that ultimately the fate of minorities is not a question of quantity, but one of quality. In Genesis 18.32, we learn that God would show mercy to Sodom and Gomorrah if ten righteous men were to be found there. According to Judges 7.6, out of ten thousand available, only three hundred were found appropriate to execute God’s deliverance. According to Ecclesiastes 9.17, one good man, through his wisdom, delivered the city from the hands of the enemy. In Matthew 13.31 ff, Jesus likens God’s Kingdom to mustard seed, saying: “...The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field... which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is greatest among herbs and becomes a tree...” It is clear therefore that it is not quantity *per se* but rather the moral quality that is decisive. Therefore, as a message (*kerygma*) for ethnic minorities, Philippians 4.8 has a significance *par excellence*: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are good to report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think of these things.”

The *third* homiletic impulse is rousing the conscience of the majority the way László Ravasz does, when he demands not only of the authorities but also of every Hungarian to ensure the same liberties for ethnic minorities living among us that we demand for Hungarian minorities living in foreign lands. The Church, through its ministry, should become the conscience of the State. It has to raise its voice in protest, precisely because mankind was created from one blood, against all oppression, discrimination and racism. The ministry of the Church must become the proclamation, explication and application of liberty, equality and fraternity. The Gospel of Christ is not only a power (*dynamis*),

creating deliverance for the soul, forgiveness of our sins and the hope of everlasting life, but also a power capable of creating new human coexistence. It is the realization of the prophetic vision, whereby “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11.6).

The *fourth* impulse for Christian ministry is the endeavor to lead the nation towards Christianity. We should turn the non-Christian nations towards Christianity – however, our first task should be to turn the nations, who are Christians in name only, into truly Christian nations. We should not for a moment forget Kirkegaard’s diagnosis: “Nothing is missing from Christianity – except Christianity itself.” We have to re-educate our contemporaries about what Christianity truly is. Why is it more important than all other world-views, philosophies and religions? Because the basis of Christianity is God’s love beyond all comprehension, and because, and because the ethics of Christianity can be summarized in the words of Paul’s epistle to the Romans: “Owe no man anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law” (13:8).

Translation by Éva Kossuth

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Chapter 6

NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE 16TH CENTURY TRANSYLVANIA

Judit Császár-Pungur

Introduction

The present problem of national minorities is the direct result of 19th Century nationalism. That was the time, when chauvinism, nationalist hatred and irredentism surfaced. This is why the history of the 20th Century was mainly the history of wars, or uprisings of minorities. It has begun with a war at the Balkan Peninsula, and – as it seems now – it might end with the present, or another war there.

When we deal with national minorities we are confronted with a multi-faced problem. Still we have to do this, because to live in minority status means oppression, unfair treatment, prejudice or tyranny.

Minorities always existed in European States. These differences might have been ethnic, religious, racial, or both. The minorities were members of the Holy Crown in their domicile States, regardless of their racial, religious or linguistic diversity – provided they belonged to the nobility and enjoyed class privileges. Those outside the nobility – majorities and minorities alike – did not have any legal status or citizenship. They were serfs, or peasants. This distinction ceased in Central Europe with the *spring of nations*: sooner or later bourgeois-democracies were born, where civic rights weren't limited to birth or ancestry any more.

Nowadays the situation has changed again. One of the most burning questions in East-Central Europe is the problem of ethnic minorities. "These linguistic differences are often, if not always, parallel with religious or denominational differences. For the State, which is usually intolerant to their minorities, religious differences are unbearable, because minority Churches strengthen national identities. Those States, which are aiming to homogenate into one-lingual status, that is to a pure one-national political system, the discontinuation of religious autonomy is a top priority, forcing the Churches thereby to use the language of the State".^{liii}

Transylvania as part of Medieval Hungarian Kingdom

In 896, the seven Magyar (Hungarian) tribes swept into the Carpathian Basin. The tribe of the Gyula (military warlord) and the tribe of the Kende (titular ruler) occupied its Eastern area which is called Transylvania. Transylvania's population consisted of Székelys,(Seklers),Saxons, and later Romanians and Cumans. Of the Székelys the Chronicles state, that they are the remnants of onece mighty empire of Attila the Hun, and they lived in the Great Plains of the Carpathian basin when the Seven Magyar tribes arrived there. In essence they are different from Hungarians, a separate ethnicity; although some chronicles hint that they have common origins. A gyepe (military frontier) defense system has been established there and in 1224 the Székely population migrated as frontier defenders from Southeastern Transylvania to its Eastern corner. Their former area has been settled by Saxons (Germans) who were guaranteed certain privileges,

autonomy, and exemptions by Letter Patent of Andreamum, King Andrew II in 1224. In 1244 the general conclave (*congregatio generalis*) of the Székelys in Eastern Transylvania is first mentioned in royal documents.

Before and after the Great Mongol (Tartar) invasion of 1241 the Cumans immigrated to Hungary and Transylvania. By 1279 they settled there permanently.

Vlachs (Romanians) arrived to this area at the end of 13th Century. In 1291, King Andrew III holds a meeting at Gyulafehérvár, (Alba Iulia, Karlsburg) where for the first time Vlachs (Rumanians) are also present besides Hungarians, Székelys and Saxons.

Slowly the social differentiation develops, which formulates the Hungarian, Székely and Saxon nations into communities, holding their own "*liberties*" that is traditions, etc. These "*liberties*" extended to the nobility only. The serfs remained under the lordship of their own masters. "The three nations' main activity was the upkeep of their privileges, and their own local self-governments. The idea of common political activities never occurred to them at this period".^{liv}

In 1437 Antal Budai Nagy leads a major peasant revolt at Bábolna (Bobîlna). In response to this social strife, the Hungarian nobility, the Saxons, and the Székelys establish the Union of Three Nations (*Unio Trium Nationum*).

The Principality of Transylvania

The further development of Transylvania has been greatly influenced by four major events of history: (1) The rise of Habsburg Dynasty; (2) The Ottoman Turkish Invasion; (3) The Reformation.

1. The Habsburg German-Austrian dynasty dominated Austria after 1282, ruled the Holy Roman Empire after 1438. In the course of history they provided kings to Bohemia, Hungary, Spain, Sicily and Naples, and the Dukes of Tuscany and Modena. The power and prestige of Habsburg Dynasty, and its resulting ability to dominate the affairs of Europe for several centuries, was to a large measure established by Maximilian's (1459-1519) shrewd marriage policy. His own marriage gave inheritance of Burgundy, Netherlands, while his son Philip's first marriage gained Aragon and Castille which included the New World."^{lv}

2. The Ottoman Turkish Empire slowly expanded into Europe. In 1456 János Hunyadi, regent of Hungary was able to stop the Turks at Nándorfehérvár (now Belgrade), but the European dynasties were more interested in Western expansions, like the colonization of the Americas (1492), and they ignored, or at least underestimated the dangers of Turkish expansion. Finally, in 1526, Suleiman II (the Magnificent) defeated the Hungarians in the Battle of Mohács. Louis II, king of Hungary, and many of the nobility and higher clergy lost their lives there. Consequently, the Hungarian kingdom was opened to Ottoman conquest and depredation. Immediately after this crushing defeat, Ferdinand I of Habsburg, who was brother-in-law to the deceased Hungarian King Louis II, claimed the Hungarian throne. His opponent was János Zápolya, voivode of Transylvania. This internal strife lasted 28 years, when finally at the treaty of Nagyvárad (now Oradea) the hostilities ceased, leaving Western Hungary under Habsburg Ferdinand while Zápolya controlled Eastern Hungary and Transylvania. Two years later, in 1540 János Zápolya died. During this strife the Ottoman invasion continued, and by 1541, that

is one year after Zápolya's death, the capital city of Buda (today Budapest) fell to the Ottomans.

The Hungarian kingdom was divided into three parts. The Ottoman Empire expanded on the Central Plains up to the North (Buda), leaving Western Hungary completely cut off from Transylvania and from some parts of the Eastern Plains. These Parts (Partium) joined Transylvania. The region under Turkish occupation became desolate. The inhabitants moved in larger communities hoping for more security there, but still, many of their children had been kidnapped and raised by the Turks as janizaries, Turk elite-soldiers.

While the Habsburgs controlled Western Hungary, Turks controlled the Central Plains, Transylvania became a semiautonomous principality under Hungarian princes, beginning with János Zsigmond, son of János Zápolya. Henceforth the rulers of Transylvania attempted to maintain their independence by accepting Ottoman supremacy. They transformed Transylvania into the main center of Hungarian culture and national development until at least 1690.

In 1686 Buda was retaken and in 1699 the whole country was regained from the Turks. In 1691 the independence of Transylvania has been abolished. But these dates are beyond our investigations.^{lvi}

3. The Reformation also was an influencing factor. Reformation often called "*a tragic necessity*". It has been necessary because the religious reforms were in sore need, but it has been tragic because it was misused by the ruling powers for their own selfish purposes. Religious rejuvenation has been misused as a pretext for political aims. Just as for example may I quote a few lines: "*After a century of fierce controversy against both Papists and Puritans, the Church of England settled down to an epoch of quiescence... A limited religious toleration pacified the dissenters... Theological disputes became unpopular.*"^{lvii} Or, the reformation in Denmark: "*Restriction against Roman Catholics were milder than in other Protestant countries, but in 1624 the death penalty was imposed by royal decree upon any Roman Catholic priest found performing their official duties; while the law of 1683 ordered that converts to "Romanism" to lose all their property.*"^{lviii} These tragic sides of otherwise necessary Reformation are well-known historical facts.

How was this in Transylvania? The Lutheran Reformation arrived there and naturally first among the Saxons. In 1545 the Saxon University in Brassó decided to embrace Luther's teachings. The same year a Saxon priest Kaspar Heltha got married and turned Lutheran; and for the sake of his Hungarian parishioners assumed a more Hungarian sounding name: Gáspár Heltai. The Diet of Torda (1550) declared Lutheranism as accepted religion. Calvinist Protestantism was embraced first by Hungarians and later by Székelys.

In 1556 The Diet of Transylvania proclaimed that every person has the right to follow the religion of choice. Transylvania thus became the first State in Europe to declare a policy of religious toleration. Furthermore: in 1567 Ferenc Dávid published "*Rövid Magyarázat*" (A Brief Exposition) at Kolozsvár (Cluj, Klausenburg) and thereby established the Hungarian version of Unitarianism.

The Romanians were traditionally of Orthodox faith. There were some attempts to convert them to Protestantism, – never forced to – but they remained Orthodox. In 1548, with the sponsorship of Prince György Rákóczi, the first complete Romanian translation

of the New Testament (Noul Testament) appeared in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, Karlsburg), and in 1657 Zsuzsanna Lorántffy, the widow of György Rákóczi, established a Romanian school in Fogaras (Fagaras).

The axiom "*cuius regio eius religio*" naturally applied here too. In opposition to the Roman Catholic Habsburg dynasty, Transylvanian Prince János Zsigmond accepted the Protestant faith. Some Catholic religious orders were banned, properties turned to Protestant use, etc. But in less than twenty years all these were settled down, and finalized peacefully.

In 1568 the Diet of Transylvania declared the "accepted" status of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist Reformed, and Unitarian faiths; declared "tolerance" for Romanian Orthodox faith (*religio tolerata*) and emphasized that: "faith is a gift of God".

Summary

It is clear from all these, that Transylvania (Erdély) was a unique "*island of religious tolerance*" in Europe of the 16th Century. Religious wars were burning all over the Continent; but here, as a shining example, religious tolerance has been achieved for Catholics and Protestants alike – including the most radical branch of Protestantism, *ie*: the Unitarian, who were persecuted everywhere else.

We were investigating the problems of national minorities. So, how did we end up with the question of religious tolerance? Simply because the author could not find even the slightest trace of ethnic minority problems in 16th Century documents. This concept, as a problem surfaced in Europe at the dawn of the 19th Century. Nationality as a problem did not exist in 16th Century Transylvania. Since the Union of Three Nations (1437), due to their mutual interdependence, one would not even try to dominate over the others. They were not enemies to each other; their outer enemy was the Turkish Ottoman Empire, and their inside problem – just like all over in Europe – has been the question of serfs or peasantry.

The spread of Reformation did not trigger any ethnic distinction. It was simply a fact or linguistic choice that the Saxons became Lutherans, the Hungarians Calvinists, and the Székelys remained Catholics, initially at least. Their main goal was to secure independence for their country, Transylvania. It was unthinkable for any religious denomination to rise above the others or just even to try to – they had a much greater duty at hand: to care about the security and the survival of their homeland. This is why the 1556 Diet proclaimed, that every person has the right to follow the religion of choice. Transylvania thus became the first State in Europe to accept the policy of religious toleration. This is how the Diet in 1568 declared "accepted" status for Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvin Reformed, and Unitarian faiths; and declared tolerance for the Romanian Orthodox faith (*religio tolerata*). This is why they accentuated, that "*faith is a gift of God*". Consequently, would have any religion tried to rule above the others, it

would have been rejected right away. The national independence and unity was much more important to them. After all they were Transylvanians first.

Is it possible that pure political interest demanded peace among nationalities and religions? Apparently, yes! Then, why was not this possible in the 20th Century? Or, why could not this be possible in the 21st Century? Were our forefathers wiser, more forward looking, more responsible for their country than we are? Or simply they have more discipline to raise above selfish particular interests for the sake of their own country own homeland?

Even if we cannot answer these somber questions, we must realize that those events, of four hundred years ago, should be exemplary to us.

Translation by Thomas

Nyárády

NOTES

1. Virth, László, "Catholic Minorities in Transylvania," Egyházfórum, Budapest-Luzern, 1991, p.11.
2. *ibid*, p.509.
3. Collier's Encyclopedia, under Habsburg.
4. *ibid*. under Hungary.
5. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, under Church of England.
6. *ibid*. under Denmark, Christianity in.

Translator's note: The author of this article is Hungarian, writing to Hungarians. Naturally she presumed detailed knowledge of Hungarian history of the readers. However, Transylvania, or Erdély is the Eastern one-third part of the Carpathian basin, which belonged to Hungary until the end of the First World War. Then it has been ceded to Romania by the Versailles-Trianon Peace Treaty of June 4, 1920. In 1437 this relatively small country has created an 'Union of Three Nations', that is Hungarians, Saxons and Székelys (Seklars); and as early as 1556 proclaimed that every persons has the right to follow the religion of his/here choice. In other word Transylvania was the first State in Europe which sanctioned a policy of religious and ethnic toleration.

The same Transylvania today, as a part of Romania, is one of the burning problems in East-Central Europe. Taking the important message of this essay into consideration, I have 'streamlined' it to our Western readers, with the author's permission. In this streamlining I have been leaning heavily on:

Cadzow, J.F., Ludányi, A.,Éltető L.J. (ed), Transylvania – The Roots of Ethnic Conflict, Especially on Chapter 1: Chronology of Transylvanian History.

While I express my thanks and gratirude to the authors, I would like to point out that this and many similar excellent book on these subjects are downloadable freely from Corvinus Electronic Library: <http://www.hungary.com/corvinus>

Chapter 7

PATRIOTISM, NATIONALISM: THE ETHICAL PROBLEM OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Judit Császár-Pungur

INTRODUCTION

The problem of Nationalism vs. Patriotism touches a highly relevant issue, one which remains unsettled especially for the populations of Central and Eastern Europe. The lack of understanding or misinterpretation of patriotism and nationalism caused the loss of many million lives during the 20th Century from Sarajevo in the 1910s to Sarajevo in the 1990s, and there is still no end to bloodshed, carnage and devastation. The root of the problem lies in the different semantics of opposing parties. What is called patriotism by one, is stamped as nationalism, or regarded as chauvinism by the other.

For us, Hungarians in Central Europe, the meaning of these terms has undergone a generation change from father to son. Our ancestors enthusiastically proclaimed: *“If the World is the hat of God, then Hungary is the boutonniere on it”*. Posters of a later era were underlining the painful fact that the *boutonniere* has been shattered into pieces, when the peace treaties of Versailles-Trianon carved out huge chunks from the body of the nation and gave them to the neighbor States. Between the two wars, our people’s slogan was: *“Little Hungary is no country, but Greater Hungary is the kingdom of Heaven”*, and *“Father Árpád, don’t fret about the Magyar Homeland, it will not be lost...”* Soldiers marched to Second World War and sung in unison: *“Scythian heroes, do not be frightened by the war”* and *“Crucified Homeland, be prepared for war”*. Then we buried our war-heroes and the dreams of our past in the same grave. During the Soviet Liberation as Communist Comrades we were not permitted even to remember them, much less openly grieve them. In the State-controlled communication and educational system the truth was hidden from us and from our children. Generations grew up without hearing the names Transylvania or Northern Highlands (Felvidék).

Nowadays we have come to the point where we do not even know the true meaning of the terms nationalism or patriotism. We are, moreover, afraid of these words, because their constant use – or rather abuse – has brought us nothing but trouble in the 20th Century. Our politicians who tried to explain these terms were afraid of their true meanings, or – for their own political advantage – they gave them a one-sided spin. Our neighboring countries tried to instill a guilt complex in us, calling us intruders in the Carpathian Basin. The Romanian paper *Vocea Romaniei*, for example in the issue for January 21, 1996, stated: *“The 1,100th anniversary of the settlement of Hun tribes on the Pannonian Plains was celebrated in Budapest”*.

Now, at the turn of the millennium, we come to the point where we have not only to teach our children these concepts in their authentic meanings, but also tell them that they can be, should even dare to be, nationalists, because it is not a bad thing at all. We all have to become self-conscious patriots. Our problem is that we do not know how to teach them, yet still we must. It is our duty not only as patriotic citizens but also as Christians, fulfilling our ethical obligations.

Patriotism, Nationalism and Related Terms

First of all we must clarify the semantics of these words before we can deal with the subject in detail. The Hungarian Encyclopaedic Dictionary, defines patriotism as “*self-conscious, active love of country*”, while nationalism is defined as: “*an ideological trend propagating national separatism, resistance to other nationalities, subordinating the working class to bourgeois national interests*”. May we add some other definitions as well:

– *State*: a rational formation with legal system, it bounds together people permanently inhabiting a territory. May be used in combinations, such as: national State, socialist State, culture State, administrative State.

– *Race*: a biological concept. Its perimeters disappeared during the course of history; only theoretically can we now talk about “pure” races.

– *People*: not biological but historical unit having a sense of belonging. A historical and intellectual community, its main criterion is common culture, from which the nation develops.

– *Nation*: a well-defined strong unit of people, where the members ostensibly feel that they belong to each other. Both inhabitants and nation denote a historical community, but while the first accepts its status tacitly, the other accepts it consciously. To belong to a nation is one’s call, dedication and duty.

Let me quote Bishop László Ravasz: “The nation is not only a historical, political and ethnical concept, but first of all a spiritual one. Its root is self-consciousness, its moving force is professional calling, its inspiration and Muse is religious feelings. The spiritual body of the nation reaches beyond its physical boundaries. It can not be enclosed into the frames of a Constitution... It does not expand in space, it expands in time and thoughts... The nation is the solidarity in faith for a group of men and women... The relationship of the individual and nation has to be expressed in solidarity... You can serve your nation the best if you offer a well-developed individuality, and one could achieve a well-developed individuality in service of a nation only”^{lix}

These words were written in 1937, and even today we could not give a better and more beautiful definition of nation and patriotism, Patriotism means a sense of belonging, a sense of serving the national goals, without giving up the inhabitants' special characteristics such as language, culture or organization.

National self-conscience means the feeling of a common fate within the community by its individual members. The components of these are: ethnicity, origin, language, a sense of belonging, place of birth, citizenship. Among these native tongue takes the first place.

On the basis of all above, let us try to define our national self-conscience: “What makes one a Hungarian?” Is it just a quality someone born with? Are we predestined to be Hungarians as defined by our Creator, or our ancestors? These definitions are unreasonable and beyond discussion.^{lx} The Hungarian culture is language, life-philosophy and constitution. The basis of this culture is spiritual, to be a Hungarian is spiritual quality. It does not make someone Hungarian that he/she was born in Hungary, or his/her native tongue is Hungarian. Prince Rákóczi, Count Széchenyi, the two greatest Hungarian heroes, learned Hungarian in their adulthood only. The citizenship does not

make someone Hungarian in spirit either. Hungarian patriotism constituted of three factors:

1. “To accept the traditions and history, including the victories and defeats of Hungarian nation, as my own and transplant them into my children”.^{lxi}

2. To be Hungarian means the fate of unknown tomorrows, to be Hungarian means total solidarity.

3. At the same time it is not the past only, but the present as well; the “here and now”. It means to accept the common fate.

What does it mean to be Hungarian? It means a call, a great undertaking. “Let me absorb the creations of great minds, let me know my homeland, my people, the history of Hungary, – and let my first and foremost concern be what might happen with Hungary tomorrow”.^{lxii}

These words were said over Radio Kassa (now Kosice) in 1939. The time and place is not coincidental. This should be a message for us too, but it would meet deaf ears today. We Hungarians today, 40-50 years after that radio message, do not find patriotic upbringing necessary. If this trend continues, history won't be among the senior matriculation courses any more. Why? Have we turned indifferent, or, perhaps, we are afraid? Since the end of the 19th Century words like nationalism and patriotism have caused nothing but troubles for us. We also miss those authentic persons who could teach us to be nationalists. Those who had used these terms, they had given them partisan-political overtones – and this is suspicious for us today. Last, but not least: in the past 40 years even our Church leadership forgot about these words, while they were in a hurry to confess *their faith in and solidarity with Socialism*. “The co-operation of Christians, in fulfilling the social and political objectives of Socialism, is based on the realization that these programs are serving the interest of Hungarian Nation and Hungarian People. Therefore they are patriotic and nationalistic. The Reformed Church political loyalty based on the trust of the Government”.^{lxiii}

Terms like nation, State, society, people, patriotism, nationalism are used intermixed with different meanings in different ages. Take, for example, the word *nationalism*. For the Romans, *natio* meant birth, origin. Cicero used this term as birthright, nobility, or aristocracy. For the historian Plinius, *natio* meant a philosophical school. Later, the *natio* was a sarcastic expression for the *plebs*, the mass of people (*proles*) as contrasted to *civitas*, a well-organized civic society”.^{lxiv}

A clear example of the multiple meanings of this term is the speech of Pope John-Paul II, (1994, January 15) who condemned *nationalism* as a new idolatry, and cautioned the Church not to become its servant.^{lxv}

Biblical Terminology

Let see now the biblical meanings of people, nationalism, global humanity, and patriotism. The Bible excludes the worship of any ethnicity, but includes the love of people. What is the “people”? The *locus classicus* of the Bible emphasizes that the love of people is the mirror image of God's love and its mighty power and caring providence in history, which is the foundation of the existence of mankind.^{lxvi} The Old Testament talks about the variety of peoples in two parallel ways:

It emphasizes that the fact that mankind branched off into different groups and nations, is the fulfillment of God's blessings. One can read in the genealogical tables (Priestly Traditions) God's order to Noah and his sons: "*be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth*" (Gen 9. 7). This command was given to the first man, and repeated again to Abraham.

The revelation about the creation of the first man (Gen 1.27) is quite different from the mythological creation-stories. While the latter ones talk about the first representatives of different nations – the first Sumerian, the first Greek – Genesis does not speak about the creation of the first Israelite, but about the creation of the first human being. There is only one difference in humans: man or woman. (The first man's name, Adam or *adam* also has the connotation *mankind*, a sense which occurs in the Old Testament some 500 times).^{lxvii} Mankind was created in the image of God. The Old Testament did not group man into different colors, races or cultures. There is one very important conclusion to be drawn here: the Bible does not support the theory of superiority of any nation or State above the others. The universality of mankind exists even today. After the flood, Noah did not become the new father of a new mankind. The creation story is the story of mankind, and mankind is one nation "*am achad*" (Gen 9.19).

But Gen. 12 starts a particular and unique story, the story of Abraham, with these words: "*I shall make you a great nation*". The Bible uses here the word *goj*. From here on the words *am* and *goj* are used parallel. One might notice that *am* is used for Israel, and *goj* for other people. This presents the question of relationship between the chosen nation and other people: the question of universality versus particularity.

At the same time the Old Testament considers the diversification of nations and languages as a punishment from God for the sins of mankind, for the disobedient revolt that one can read about in the story of Babel.

Thus there are two opposite but parallel teaching about the diverse ethnicity of mankind: on one hand it is the blessing of God; on the other it is the consequence of sin. God's judgement destroys the pre-Babylonian unity. But there is also a merciful judgement there which underlines the validity and power of God's *universal* historical covenant with Noah. Calvin, in his *Exegesis of Genesis*, states: "People inhabited the earth already. This fact cannot be considered as a punishment, rather a blessing of God's grace and mercy. But still, those who first inhabited the world in God's grace were then dispersed in shame, as members of the same broken body".¹⁰

Is it punishment or blessing to be a nation? The confusion of tongues is the key of this question. According to Calvin, God's blessing is revealed even if people talk different languages. God declared one Gospel for the whole earth, but in different tongues. He taught his messengers many different languages. Therefore all those who were miserably divided may now be united in one faith. The words are still different, but they confess one and the same faith when they cry "*Abba! Father!*"¹¹

The election of Israel is another important landmark in the Old Testament. God selected Israel as his chosen one among the nations, but only to become an instrument of salvation. The promise given to Abraham (Isa 2 and 9, *Zion tradition*) does not grant a selfish hope to a chosen people, "something to be grasped" (Phil 2.6) but makes them a humble, obedient instrument of God's universal plan of salvation. This is their call, their mission (Isa 49.6). The glory of God rests on Israel if it fulfils his call, and the animosity of nations ceases (Isa 11.10). God's command to Israel is the example for God's people

of all time. The chosen people do not enjoy prerogative rights: “God set his heart on you and chose you, not because you were the most numerous of all peoples”(Deut 7.7). This was an ever-growing circle of influence: first Abraham, then the family, the tribe and finally God’s people, because they have a mission to the whole world.

God’s *new chosen people* came into being at the first Pentecost: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet 2.9). The mission of the Church calls all nations: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”(Mt 28.19). And in the new people there is room for every nation, every tribe and every tongue. As in Rev 7.9: “a great multitude, which no man can number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues”. This is how God’s people could be the instrument and the only reality for the integration of people as a whole, and this makes possible the invigorating exchanges of human values.

The New Testament integrates the multitude of peoples in *corpus ecclesiae*, the Universal Church. The New Testament uses the words *ethnos* and *oikumene* as the definitions of people. The Septuagint translates the previously mentioned *am* and *goy* terms as *laos* for Israel, and *ethné* for other people. The dictionary defines *ethné* as genus, gens, natio, nation, nationality.

The original meaning of the *oikumene* was the domicile of educated people versus the barbarians. The countries of Hellenist civilization was formed into *oikumene*, and the political unity was the Roman Empire. The universal order over all people was indicated in the words of Caesar Augustus’ decree: “the whole *oikumene* should be enrolled”(Luke 2.1).

In the apostolic congregations the national or ethnic differences surfaced in a negative sense, that is, in a denial: “There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither slave of free, there is neither male or female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ”(Gal 3.28).

It is possible that these lines were written as an answer in the resistance to the anti-ecumenical sentiments in some congregations (*cf.* Luke 4.5; Acts 11.28, 19). Apocalyptic expectation was that “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”(Mk.13:8). The Bible and Reformed hermeneutics makes it clear: what was being proclaimed on that first Pentecost in the languages and dialects of fifteen provinces, and to their present and future *oikumene*, was the result of God’s saving grace in the Christian community by the Holy Spirit. But it is beyond the shadow of doubt that these two are not separable: the *miracle of tongues* is essential part of the Pentecostal event. The growth of people into *oikumene*, toward the “happy unity”, must come from witnessing Jesus Christ, from faith to faith.¹² Calvin explains the miracle of tongues thus: “All this happened for our sake. God gave the miracle of tongues to the Apostles, that no nation should fall astray from the doctrines given to them. Thus it serves to prove the call of nations (to faith)”.¹³

Historical Over-view

The “*nation*” and “*nationalism*” surfaced as a unique European problem of the Modern Period only. Certainly there were nations and national self-consciousness in the Middle Ages too, but that was not equivalent to the nationalism we experience nowadays. Christian solidarity, brotherhood and the belief in the universality of the church was much stronger then. “The citizenship in the Kingdom of God was a real communion,

superior to the worldly domicile. A Christian was first of all a citizen of the Kingdom of God, and only after that a member of a particular nation".¹⁴ Even *universalitas* meant something else then, because the Nation was Christian first and national second. The State was nationally neutral, and did not belong to the nation but to the king, who was not selected by the nation but appointed by the will of God, as His earthly Vicar. Nobody was harassed for his or her language, nobody was forced to give up his or her mother-tongue, there was no desire for a common language. The language of the intelligentsia was Latin (*lingua nationalis*), the language of the general population (*lingua vulgaris*) was of no importance. The real culture was super-national, the whole area was international. Perhaps this is the greatest difference between then and now: the Middle Ages were universal, the Modern Age is particular.

The clear and straightforward aim of the Modern Age is to form the nation as a separate entity, both culturally and politically, over against other nations. The nation takes priority over religion. Studying this procedure in action we can see the following changes:

1. Religion weakens. But because man cannot live without some kind of a communion, the role of the religious community is taken over by the nation. The ruler's aim is to create a unified State with an absolute monarchy, which has to be fleshed out with spiritual values, that is, with national self-consciousness.

2. Nation and the political State merge into one, so nations are separated from each other, even opposing each other. Europe is divided into national States. New-age nationalism is born, which is actually a product of decay.¹⁵ Nationalistic politics originate from Machiavelli, who was attacking the ruler of a foreign nation. In his work, "*The Prince*" he instructs Lorenzo Medici how to liberate Italy from French rule.

3. The first form of the national State was absolute monarchy. Later, as *the age of enlightenment* opposed absolutism, came a short-lived romanticism followed by that "true child of enlightenment", the nationalism of the 19th Century. It is instructive to refer to the definition of *State* in the 1750s in Diderot's Great Encyclopaedia: "a respectable size of populace living on a particular territory, surrounded with particular borders, subjected to the same government".¹⁶

4. Then Herder rejected the Latin language, because it would reduce other nations and national languages to the status of savages. The *populus* slowly rose into nationhood, language and nations came to mean the same; characteristics of a nation were a country, language and State. The age of enlightenment gave the opportunity to each national language to blossom. However, there was an interesting contrast: Dante, the creator of the first national language, still wrote his most important works in Latin, as also were Petrarch's Epic Poems, his masterpieces.

5. The focal point of the political structure of enlightenment was the social contract. All that hitherto had been considered a privilege of the nobility slowly became the rights of ordinary people as well. A new concept of State emerges, a larger concept embracing people who were not covered by the legal structure until this point.

6. 19th Century nationalism brought the idea of freedom, or, more correctly, its contemporary variant we know as "liberalism", to the forefront. And what was the result of the amalgamation of liberalism and nationalism? Ethnic minorities, which hitherto had peacefully enjoyed the protection and benefits of a large State, declared themselves (ethnic) organizations and, although they had never enjoyed independent Statehood, now

strove for their own “*national*” State, erroneously opposing themselves to the (existing) State, with which they had not the least contention.¹⁷

Summary

Relation between Medieval Identity and the Nations of New Age

Ethnical identity – a common language, traditions, mores and morals – is a very old feature of society. Ethnic groups have always distinguished themselves from the rest throughout the course of history, although this had nothing to do with political identity before the modern age.

Political identity was already a reality in ancient Rome and Greece, and it was developed further by the feudal States. But this did not necessarily mean ethnic identity.

There is a third tie also: *personal fidelity*, loyalty (for example: loyalty to king, ruler or crown). At this point the Christian and worldly meanings of the words *fides* and *fidelitas* merge into one and the same. The merger of ethnic self-realization, political identity and political loyalty created the nationalism of the 19th Century.

The concept of national identity came into being among the European nations in the 18th and 19th Centuries. On the Asian and African continents this concept surfaced in the political arena only in the 20th Century, but its roots reach back to much earlier times even there.

The triple identity discussed above, or ethnic self-realization, might have tied a person to several different groups at the same time. For example: someone could owe allegiance to the Hungarian king, could have been a native of the ethnically mixed *Szepesség* region, and could at the same time be a member of the Hungarian Order of Nobility, regardless of the fact that he did not even speak Hungarian because of his Slovak origin.

At the dawn of 19th Century these self-realizations gained some new forms. Due to the influence of transportation and commerce, people became closer to each other. Provincial borders were eroded by absolutism and community based on the same domicile became more prevalent. The languages of the populace became more assimilated. One can notice the influence of the Reformation and the discovery of printing.

With Enlightenment, *equality before the law* comes to forefront: the Declaration of Human and Civil Rights in France, the Declaration of Independence in USA, and the Declaration of Equality Before the Law in Great Britain.

The Enlightenment emphasizes the importance of Social Contract, whereby the people no longer serve the ruler, but the ruler serves the people. Thus the former identities merged into a stronger and emotionally much more loaded concept: *national identity*. “National identity brought into existence the national movement, that is, ideological and political trends for the protection and development of the nation. This is called nationalism”.¹⁸ At that time nationalism did not mean animosity between nations; on the contrary, nations could co-operate, as Hungarians, Austrians and Italians did in 1848. “At the beginning the concept of nationalism was in association with the concept of equality before the law and the concept of freedom. In opposition to nationalism one could find the forces adhering to the traditional aristocratic society and absolutist monarchy”.¹⁹ This development was characteristic of Western Europe. In Central Eastern Europe, economic and commercial development has been slower, so that, as absolutism developed later, so

did the amalgamation of ethnic groups within their political borders. There were some larger States like the Russian Empire, the German-Roman Empire, the Habsburg and the Turkish Dominions in which the concept of *national State* never materialized. But the development of the Western European States created a challenge: they had to define and formulate their own national identity. There was no suitable political pattern for this, so that national identity was attached to languages and ethnicity. “Nations which were built primarily on ethnicity are called language-nations, or culture-nations, over against the centralized State-nations”.²⁰ In the new culture-nations it was the intelligentsia who woke them up to self-realization, by creating, developing and reforming common languages, traditions, folks-arts, etc.

With the centralization of ethnic elements, that is language, customs, traditions, the consciousness of a common ancestry, a relationship in common blood was strengthened. An organized nation was conceptualized as a biological entity. “The nationalistic movements of East Central Europe could be divided into two phases. The last third of the 18th Century was the cultural period; its aim was the development of common national identities, language reform and the creation of cultural institutions. The 19th Century was the political period; its aim was national self-government, autonomy and the development of separate nation-States”.²¹

The Development of Hungarian Nationalism

First of all we have to define the concept of “*nation*”. What is the Hungarian nation? Renan’s statement is very much relevant here: “Man is not a slave either of his race, language or religion, nor to the stream of rivers or the flow of mountain-ranges. That great community of men which is called a nation is created by the warmth of hearts, the health of spirit, and moral consciousness. The nation is a soul, a spiritual principle”.²²

“Considering the history of the Hungarian nation, we might well say that the people of Árpád is a nomad people, who accept foreigners day-by-day. It was not the natural, blood-related, ancestry which created the common bond of these people – not in the very least. The basis of staying together is mostly on economic considerations. The Hungarian nation was conceived in the act of electing a Chief, and this tradition created the nation. The tradition is then inherited, and that turns into “blood-relationship”. A person is not born into the Hungarian nation, he has to accept it and take it as his own. Nation, as a spiritual community, by its essence, is rooted in superior substances than the body’s confusing instincts and the destiny enforced by blood-relationship”.²³

Our first King, Saint István (Steven), welcomed newcomers, and Hungary received them gladly. In his advice to his son Prince Imre he has written: “There is great potential in the foreigners... a one-language, one-tradition nation is surely weak and fragile. Therefore I command you, my son, receive them benevolently and care for them decently, so that they may feel more at home with you than anywhere else”.²⁴ The concept of St. Stevens’s dominion was beyond nationalism, chauvinism or hatred of foreigners.

Further development of this concept we can see in the 12th Century, when the populace in its entirety is recognized as a nation, independently from the king. At this point the concept of patriotism started to develop. A law passed in 1298 obliges the king to recapture territories taken away, “that the Hungarian kingdom, as a legal entity, may

enjoy the unity of its citizens”.²⁵ In this definition the kingdom does not belong solely to the king but to the nation as well.

Among the Asian horse-borne hordes, only the Hungarians turned into a European nation without giving up their ancient traditions. The “*Doctrine of Holy Crown*” was the founding principle, stating that “*the nation is the community of every subject loyal to the Holy Crown*”. The nobility and gentry were the members of the nation. Non-gentry people were not *nation*; they formed individual ethnic units with autonomy for each. The language of the State was beyond nationality; it was Latin.

By the second half of the Middle Ages small, closed political entities has been universally accepted in Western Europe. Thomas Aquinas recommends small, nationally and ethnically uniform, completely autocratic States, on the pattern of the ancient Greek “city-States”. He protested against the idea of accepting foreigners.

The “*vocation*”, or “*mission statement*” of Hungarians also surfaced, when King Béla IV wrote to the Pope: “The Hungarian nation is a bastion, defending (Europe) against Mongols and Turks. This is the essence of Hungarian nationalism, Hungary’s fate”.

Certainly there was some kind of hatred of foreigners among Hungarians during the Middle Ages, but it was not a chauvinist, rather an economic hatred, for example a hatred against those merchants who would take the gold reserve out from Hungary. And while the *Magna Charta* expelled foreigners from England, the Hungarian *Golden Bull* was enacted only against those foreigners who did not want to settle down and become subjects of the Holy Crown. “Immigrants of different nationalities are to be maintained in their rights and freedom given to them from the beginning”.²⁶

After the death of king Matthias, during the period known as “*between two pagans for one country*”, that is, during the Turkish and Habsburg domination, the content of our nationalism and mission statement changed to *the defense of Hungarian freedom*. By the end of 18th Century we come to the sad situation that we were an orphaned nation squeezed between two burning fires. Due to this double yoke, the nation lagged behind Western Europe in regard to general civilization. So the aim was to catch up as soon as possible. This is how we came under the influence of Enlightenment and Western European nationalism, which is built on common language, ethnicity and origin. This is how “*ethnicity*” became equivalent to “*nation*”. The eager desire of the people to develop into national States led to the explosive dissolution of the “*State*” as it had been. And this was perhaps the lesser of the two evils. The larger problem was that the nation itself exploded too.

The first, so called cultural, aspect of the national movement began with György Bessenyei’s language rejuvenation in the 1770s and continued to Ferenc Kazinczy’s language reforms in the first third of the 19th Century. Hungarian theatres were formed (László Kelemen, 1790), Hungarian periodicals published, a Hungarian National Library, Museum and Science Academy created. Historians pointed out the relation between Hungarians and the once mighty Huns, assuring thereby our right to be in the Carpathian Basin. The Hungarian golden age was that of King Lajos, Nagy (Louis the Great, 1342-1382), when “*three seas washed our shores*” and we even conquered Vienna.

The second, the political phase of the national movement began towards the end of 18th Century; the national ideology paired with the idea of freedom. Then in the middle of the 19th Century these two separated again. Parallel to this, under the influence of Hungarian nationalism, the nationalistic movements of ethnic groups, who lacked a

gentry class of their own, developed under the leadership of their Churches and intelligentsia. They aimed at language reforms, propagation of ethnic languages, search for their historical past (Dacian-Roman theory, Great Moravian Theory). As a consequence, the ethnic groups began to demand their political rights. Most of our Hungarian politicians rightly upheld the validity of these political demands of the ethnic groups. Mihály Horváth, a historian and Minister of External Affairs during the Revolutionary Period, said: "It was a great omission when, parallel with the establishment of Hungarian language laws (within the Austro-Hungarian Empire), they did not satisfy the rightful demands of the other ethnic groups".²⁷ Zsigmond Kemény planned to revive Count Széchenyi's *Hunnia* concept, which would have guaranteed a multilingual country and its safe existence, which eventually became the basis of the agreement with the ethnic groups in 1867. The Hunnia concept stated that the inhabitants of the State form one nation, which is not tied to origin, ethnicity or language; rather it leaves intact every nationality's identity, and they are united in one spirit. The official language of the State would be Hungarian, but that was only for the sake of convenience, it being the language of the majority. Count József Eötvös analyzed the different shades of nationalism of his time and concluded that "the foundation of every nationalistic endeavor is to be superior, and its aim is to rule".²⁸ The conflict between State and nationality could be solved only through autonomy, that is, when State and nationality are separated from each other (in his work "The influence of the leading principles of the 19th Century and the State", 1854).

It was József Eötvös and Ferenc Deák who initiated Statute 1868/44: *for equal rights of nationalities*". The official language of administration would again have been Hungarian for the sake of simplicity, but other languages would also have had their place in the administration. The problem was that this idea was too late, as was the passing of this law and its application. By that time what was originally a positive patriotism had developed into hatred, chauvinism and irredentism, which led to conflicts, war and disintegration of the greater states in Europe. This turbulent concept of nationalism is still on the minds of many people and haunts us even today.

Patriotism and Nationalism: a Problem of the 20th Century

According to United Nations data, 47 ethnic minority groups suffered violent atrocities in 1995 alone; 50 million refugees were registered, 23 million people were forced to leave their homelands permanently, another 27 million temporarily. At the same time several million refugees overtaxed the resources of their receiving countries, thereby embittering the tensions already there: unemployment rose drastically, as did the general economic dissatisfaction and hatred toward newcomers.

Among the 272 ethnic minority groups there are three Hungarian minorities in Eastern Europe: in Transylvania (Romania), in Highland (Slovakia) and in Vajdaság (Voivodina, Yugoslavia). In those areas the borders of States have not overlapped the ethnic borders since 1919. Furthermore, the systems created at the peace conferences of Versailles (1919) and Yalta (1945) had completely disintegrated in the years of 1989-90. The new State-formations have had to struggle with a fundamental problem: the political borders are in conflict with territorial, administrative, ethnic and even national borders.²⁹ Let us give some samples on the painful diversity of opinions in this confused situation.

Nationalism and patriotism are the topics of discussion among “the mighty and the humble”. Articles are written in the daily press about the right way to solve the problems of 4.5 m. strong Hungarian minorities in Hungary’s neighboring countries. On the other hand, some media outside our borders are accusing us of being chauvinists, while we consider ourselves to be true Hungarians, Hungarian patriots.

Some people are convinced that if we do not demand the revision of borders by ethnic divisions, then we are doomed to the fate of the Csángós. (Csángó is a Hungarian/Székely (Sekler) group, completely isolated from the larger Hungarian settlements in East of Transylvania (Romania). This is a tragedy that will not come in the next century, but in the next few decades”.³⁰ According to Sándor Püski, a *plebiscite* would be the way to come to a peaceful agreement with our neighbors. Historian Ernő Raffay also would like to see a historical agreement with our neighboring countries: “...There is only one way to go – a peaceful revision of borders under international supervision.³¹ Imre Pozsgay states: “for the sake of our Hungarians outside Hungary, we have every right to demand a negotiated peaceful revision of the borders”.³² The rather timid official policy of the successive Hungarian governments is to accept those borders as they are, while caring about the rights of Hungarian populations in the neighboring countries and – in case of unsolved complaints – lodge an appeal with the International Agencies.

As stated, these are some random samples into the painful diversity of opinions in this confused situation, with no claim to any completeness. But rising above the problems of the days, somehow we intuitively feel that the road to the future might not be this way. The future must lie in creating larger economic and consumer units, where everybody can move around freely.

The importance and burning urgency of these problems are evident from the way the media tries to renew the basics, define new concepts, or give new meanings to old ones. Publications are always seeking a new way. “It is impossible to have an acceptable European consensus on the meaning of patriotism. We do not know how to be responsible citizens any more, our loyalty to the State has dwindled, there is no solidarity left in us, and our culture is gobbled up by consumerism. In a situation like this there is only one remedy left: to be brave, to be honest and have self-confidence. We have to dare to act. Our intentions, deeds should not be directed by calumnies and contradictory interests, but by their purity, honesty, possibility and altruistic values even for others. For this we need courage and faith, that there are still human values by which it is worthwhile to organize our lives”.³³ Hungary’s special history, particularly that of the 20th Century, presents a keen ethical problem in regard to chauvinism. To illustrate this problem we will present a brief outline of a “war of words” between Hungary and Slovakia.

Roman Hofbauer, leader of “*For Democratic Slovakia Movement*” stated: “*It was not Hungary, but rather Slovakia, which suffered a drastic cut at the Peace Treaties of Versailles-Trianon in 1919, by not annexing the Mátra Mountains and its surrounding area to Slovakia, with its half million Slovak inhabitants.*” What was the purpose of such a declaration? Apparently to divert the public’s awareness from a real, current problem. His statement was publicized exactly at the time when the Slovak Parliament was debating a new oppressive legislation against its Hungarian minorities. That this statement was inspired by Slovak chauvinism is evident, because it was in the middle of the 19th Century when the intention of designating Slovak territories first surfaced. The

overtures of 1849 and 1861 were talking about territorial autonomy only. In these documents for the first time one finds such definitions as “*the Slav territory of Upper Hungary*” or “*Slovak ethnical territory*”, where the first meant pure Slovak counties, and the second mixed ones. That program did not even consider separation as a solution. It was stated: “...we feel very well at home in our everyday contact, even blood-relationship with our Hungarian brothers... we are bound with a strong and natural unity, so we cannot be against unity and integrity for our beloved homeland.”

A turn for the worse came after the First World War on May 24, 1918, at a meeting of Slovak politicians. Andrej Hlinka first formulated the declaration of separation from Hungary: “*The thousand year marriage with Hungarians has turned out to be a failure; we must separate*”. President Masaryk, Benes and Stefanik recommended an even larger section to be annexed from Hungary than the peace treaty of Varseilles-Trianon had done.

The return of a completely Hungarian populated territory named “*Csallóköz*” was brought to the negotiating table in 1919, 1921 and 1926, but always with negative results. The same question surfaced again in 1938 at the conference in Munich (1938 October 9) when Csallóköz was re-annexed to Hungary with its 85% Hungarian and 11% Slovak population.

At the end of the Second World War (1945), by the decision of the Great Powers, Slovak nationalism gained the upper hand again. On May 9, 1945 President Benes stated: “Most Germans and Hungarians must leave our land; this is our final decision. Our people cannot live together with Hungarians and Germans in our country.” Finally, in 1945, a Government Program was published in Kosice (Kassa) whereby all Hungarians and Germans were collectively declared to be outlaws.

The media propaganda war still continued. Some flyers demanded the annexation of Northern Hungarian industrial territories, others suggested that the “outlawed” population should be deported to Asia or South America. And if one looks at the decisions of the Slovak Meciar government one must conclude that the persecution of Hungarian minorities is far from over.³⁴

Europe at the Turn of the Millennium Nationalism and Religion

“We can say at the end of the 20th Century that Nationalism – including *Nationalism of the former Proletariats* – is still the strongest political and social phenomenon”.³⁵ The bipolar world of Capitalism and Socialism is waning. On both sides nationalism has been the strongest political and social deciding power of the 20th Century. The events of today, like the anti-colonial movements of the Third World, are very typical examples. The United States supported these movements against the Soviet Union. Thus, liberal countries gave impetus to nationalist movements in the Third World.

While the 19th Century was the battleground for ideologies, the history of the 20th Century was the history of the struggles of nations. John Lukacs has a horrifying vision about the wars of the 21st Century: they wont be wars between nations, but rather wars between races.³⁶ In the 21st Century patriotism and nationalism will collide head on, and nationalism will be expressed in the “natural sentiments” that is it will be a merciless survival of the fittest.

But patriotism should mean something else. Thomas Aquinas' definition still stands: "After God, man owes most to parents and homeland. A religious person's first duty is to worship God, second to respect parents and homeland".³⁷ The order is God, parents and homeland. While nationalism is quite often a substitute for religion, patriotism is not. While a patriot is not inevitably conservative, a nationalist could hardly ever be liberal.

It is worthwhile considering the statement of John Lukacs: "*the decline of Christianity in Europe was not caused by the development of sciences, but by the progress of nationalism*". Lukacs calls nationalism "the religion of our age": nationalism is the only religion which has been able to keep its popular rhetoric. Since the end of 19th Century the word "Christian" has gained a new meaning in East Central Europe, which has hardly anything to do with the original meaning of the word, which is "follower of Christ", or "Christ-like". The name of Christ on certain political banners today carries something we, as Christians, cannot accept if we do not want to be traitors to the teaching of Christ. Nowadays we have to be very careful that such a combination of Nationalism and Christianity will never happen again. At the same time we have to realize that ethnic Churches are the only organized possibility for Hungarian minorities to keep their faith and their nationalities alive. This fact has to be accepted by the Homeland Churches (in Hungary) as well. This tie loosens as soon as one moves from a minority situation, eg: from Transylvania (Romania) to Hungary. Then the person would not feel his identity endangered any more, and might change his association to something other than the Church. Thus he might have difficulty in integrating into the Church communities of Motherland.

The association of the Church with the former nationalist movements was perhaps beneficial then, but in the long run it was harmful and the Church has paid a price for it. Today some new populist movements are always emphasizing their "Christian values" but they are not really Christian at all; we Christians must disassociate ourselves from these pseudo-Christian trends too.

Nationalism and Language

One's language, no matter how important it is, does not necessarily create a reliable link with nationalist sentiments; the Czech and Slovak languages are almost identical, as are Serb and Croat, but still the common languages cannot eliminate the political tensions between them. A nationalist is happy when a foreign visitor tries to speak his tongue, but disappointed when his fellow-countryman who lives in a foreign country speaks with an accent.

The Swiss-Germans and Austrians all speak German but their nationalities are Swiss or Austrian respectively. The native tongue of some Quebec nationalists is other than French, yet still they are all Quebecois. Very few of the Irish nationalists speak the Celtic tongue.

The universal language today is English. There was a time when Latin was the universal language or when French was the language of the intelligentsia. "The universal *Lingua Franca* is no longer an exclusive language for the aristocracy or bureaucracy".³⁸ Although our lifestyles are more and more uniform, one can sense a trend to the contrary: a reaction against uniformity, a trend for retaining the individual culture and language and rejecting foreign influence".³⁹

The hegemony of the English language is self-evident: it is spoken by one quarter of the world. Its advantage is that it is easy to learn a basic English, and one can successfully communicate in that without regard for grammar, dialect or accent. 80% of the world's information storage systems, as well as the language of diplomacy and international commerce, are English. There is counter-trend to this universality that wants to keep native tongues and cultures alive. The native tongues would remain the language of leisure time, "after hours time", as the basis of local cultures. Native tongues would reinforce weakening nationalism and keep a balance between patriotism and internationalism. But right now we are still far away from this ideal state of affairs.

When a country or an ethnic group feels that a foreign culture threatens its values, it might answer with cultural nationalism, and that might further grow into political nationalism. For a classic example take the Islamic Republic of Iran, where religion gave an additional impetus to linguistic and cultural self-esteem. Salman Rushdie, a westernized Muslim writer, published the "Satanic Verses", and thus has run into a grave conflict with the Ayatollah Khomeini. There the Western principle of freedom of speech has run into head-on conflict with the Islamic concept of religious respect.

"The more we influence each other, the more we will tend to protect our own traditions".⁴⁰ Just as long as it does not lead to extremes, the protection of traditions could be fully compatible with world-integration.

We accept the fact that we have problems in our region, since we live with those problems day by day. However, it is quite interesting that the "model States" we try to learn from also face similar problems. Take, for example, the language question in USA. In the heat of a presidential election campaign, the media threw out a question: "should we declare by law that only English is the official language of the country?" This is surprising. The latest immigrants – about 10 million out of the 260 million inhabitants – do not speak English. For example, in one county of the State of Florida, one third of the public school students spoke 56 different languages, none of them English. While the immigrants of the last Century were mainly of German and Protestant background, today there are Coloreds, Muslims or Mexican Catholics. The ethnic and religious distinctions are sharper, so there is a danger that they will develop into several small unfriendly ethnic minority groups, as in the Balkan States. The supporters of the language law are convinced that this law would end ethnic separatism and hasten the assimilation of new immigrants. They also demand the discontinuation of bi-lingual government grants. The other side claims that only the bi-lingual training could eliminate the ethnic and economic differences in the long run; from the economic point of view it does not matter where somebody was born.⁴¹

Global Lifestyle versus Maintaining Individualism

The global lifestyle has conquered the world. Foreign travel, media, global television, explosion of information sciences – all drive toward globalization. The influence of the exploding Internet one cannot yet fathom. The world is turning into a great consumer society. The scientific-technical lifestyle hastens the fall of a closed-off world, since the high-speed technology is the same in Iraq or in Japan. Perhaps it was a comical but none-the-less characteristic event when nomad Tuaregs postponed their journey through the Sahara desert for ten days, because they did not want to miss the last episode of "Dallas"

on television. The new phenomenon we face is a cultural imperialism, with its both positive and negative aspects. The superficial consumer culture is damaging, while on the other hand the exchange of ideas and values presents some very positive effects. One of the greatest benefits of the global lifestyle is the dissemination of Human Rights. “The rising global culture – thank God – does not mean T shirts and fast-food restaurants only”.⁴² Although Human Rights are still rather spoken about than acted out, it is still a clear indication of what the people of the world want. This trend was begun in 1975 in Helsinki (Finland), and now slowly but with a growing clarity is established in the mentality of people everywhere (*cf.* Helsinki Human Rights Day).

The two opposing trends – global versus individual – might create quite a few conflicts. Will the world arrive at the point where one can see the two together, equipped with both proper checks and balances – after all, to keep and save the individuality of smaller communities is a common task for everyone. We must cherish and care for all cultures of the world, even if it is a minority group within a larger State or world-religion: they are our common human heritage. In the present expansion of European economic integration, the concept of cultural self-realization emerges East and West alike. The positive approach to these great trends does not mean that all problems are solved, or chauvinism is mitigated into cultural self-realization, or that we are ready for exchanging our ideas in a two-way communication with others.

Nowadays one can see the re-emergence of both absolutism and fundamentalism in Christianity and Islam alike. This is a dangerous trend, because it turns into religious intolerance, a false feeling of superiority and racism. The fundamentalist with his presumed exclusive correctness easily becomes malevolent – intentionally or not. A minority person or anyone confessing different ideas would then find himself at odds with extreme racist, nationalist or religious chauvinists. What could the solution be? Perhaps one has to replace one’s haughtiness with solidarity. After all, there should be a place for everyone under the sun, every nation, culture or language. The “little ones” are also part of our humanity; they should not disappear, should not annihilated.

New Dangers at the Threshold of 21st Century

Misusing the nationalism and patriotism of the people of the 21st Century there are some new, dangerous trends like, for example, religious fundamentalism. Fundamentalists reject the chaos of the present, searching for absolute certainties in the past – and therefore waging an all-out war against Secularist Society. While they do not consider themselves anti-democratic, they have forgotten that secularism is one of the basic pillars of modern democracy. Extreme forms of religious revivalism have surfaced all over the place, attacking the secularism of the modern world. Religion, as such, is not the enemy of democracy; on the contrary, in many countries the religious movements are the only bulwark against the oppression of the State. But we cannot harmonize democracy with totalitarian and universal religion. Many of the strongest religious movements, unfortunately, fall in this category today.

At the same time John Lukacs present us with a frightening scenario of “*ecological theocracy*”. These ecological movements have developed their own “theology”. First there was the golden age: a complete harmony with Nature. Then, as a result of industrial society, the Satan, we were expelled from Eden. Now we have to return to New Paradise.

These ecological or green movements can quite easily turn into fascism. The real and imaginary horror stories of past, and possible future ecological disasters like Chernobyl, are steering the ecological mentality in this direction.

The third great danger is the integration created by new, still unbalanced economic arrangements which hinder the production or capacity of some States (the foreign temporary migrant labor force: *braceros*, *wetbacks*, etc.) In this situation the hatred against “foreigners” could easily flare up again. The current European governments entering into European Economic Union might also act against the influx of foreign cultures. Cross-communication also endangers national identity. When the fear of cultural annihilation is deepened by large-scale immigration, it can become an explosive situation also. In economically advanced countries, the revival of nationalism is evident already. While it is true that the new global economy exports goods and services, it also creates unemployment, pollution and completely new cultures.

Remarkable features of today are the post-Soviet nationalist movements, often bloody struggles for independence. “In the next formative decades, the creation of new nations will pose the most emotional and most important problems. It is essential that certain functions should remain under national jurisdiction, and should not fall into the realm of localization or globalization”.⁴³ There are interesting but dangerous combinations there, eg: the combination of ethnic passion with ecological sentiments and religious fundamentalism in the Soviet-union. These movements, such as *Pamjaty*, one can find all over Eastern Europe, but mostly in Romania and Slovakia. “Here one can find everything together: foreigner-hating chauvinism, religious fundamentalism and ecological-theology. And in such tight and obvious combination it is nothing else than ‘going back into the new Dark Ages’”.⁴⁴ Such a combination in power could create the nightmare of a racist, ecological-fascist, theological State, which would suppress human rights, freedom of religion, right to private property. The combination of these three might lead even to terrorism.

What should a Christian do in the face of such challenges? First of all, represent soberness. First comes his duty to save the creation, meaning that one should not manipulate the ecology. Against the fundamentalists one needs the spirit of power, love and self-control. (2 Tim 1.7 “*God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and love and self-control*”). We have to bring their internal contradictions out into the open. In fact, the fundamentalist circles are havens for the lost mankind. Consequently our Churches and congregations must themselves become such havens, second homes. And against racism, hatred of foreigners (immigrants, refugees, gypsies) or anti-Semitism, we must stand up in our own country. Could the Church convince its people that hatred of foreigners is a sin, and as such untenable?

The Questions of Eastern European Autonomy

When we talk about establishing and maintaining minority rights in Eastern Europe, first of all we must think about patterns and assistance from outside regions, because the East European countries cannot solve these problems alone. Help is expected from the Western World, more precisely from the USA. However, one must realize that minority rights in Eastern Europe have yet to be defined and created, within a framework very different from that in the multicolored but still uniform USA. The residents of USA.

voluntarily selected America as their homeland, and in such a frame of mind they immigrated to the United States. Most of these immigrants do not feel, for example, that they must demand their rights to an ethnic education. They are minorities all right, but their concerns are different: will they have equal rights, will the color of their skin, religion or origin be a disadvantage to them or not? The keyword of American immigrants is *equal rights*, while the minorities of East and Central European regions want *their diversity accepted and respected*. These two basic aspects are entirely different, therefore Western mediation in Eastern European conflicts is not very helpful. Eastern Europe must formulate her own policy of autonomy, and it cannot be simply imported from the West. But still, it is the West which has to settle this problem, and doing it properly is in its own interest as well: after all, this settlement would be the least expensive solution for peace throughout the European region. Forceful assimilation cannot be the solution; one cannot dictate to the patriotic nationalist feelings of ethnic minorities.

One of the basic principles should be that *instead of redrafting the political borders, the meaning and role of these borders have to be re-evaluated and re-defined*. “For the minorities an environment has to be created in which they would not be forced to give up their identities, and they would not have to dream and hope for their liberation by the army of the original ‘Motherland’. In other words, they should enjoy autonomy”.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, Eastern and Central European nationalism does not have such an intellectual and spiritual frame of mind that they could consider autonomy without certain outside inducements. It is an interesting fact that the losing partner always claims autonomy, but as soon as he is winning he strips away the other’s right to autonomy. Nevertheless autonomy must be recognized as the most important tool for avoiding or solving conflicts, because “it is the least expensive means of peace”.

Publicists insist that the Western World could now have a good chance of convincing the present governments to accept autonomy, even if at present they still prefer integration. This does not mean flexibility on the East European side, but it is at least a possibility. So far there is no serious dialogue between the governments and their minorities. Autonomy can bloom only in open and frank societies. A mother-State which cannot initiate a turn for the better on her own would never give autonomy to her minorities. The weakness of the State and political parties is indicated by their chauvinist, racist ideologies, ideologies that are the hoops holding those weak States together. This is why the Romanian chauvinism remained untouched by the Revolution of 1989, an uprising that resulted in personnel changes only, with no change in policy or ideology. It would be quite difficult to keep chauvinism alive without hatred toward minorities. Just look at the fate of Hungarian minorities in States created by the Versailles-Trianon Treaty; it is so similar to what the Jews suffered under their persecution.

Here we also have to examine the role of the Churches. Some Churches in Central and Eastern Europe have again struck up a comradeship with Nationalism. The Russian and Romanian Orthodox Churches are once more representatives of the ancient Russian and Romanian mentality. The same could be said about some other Churches. Therefore it is of utmost importance that our most precious traditions in the Hungarian Reformed Church, our responsibility toward the nation – which was so aptly and faithfully represented by the Princes of Erdély (Transylvania) – should not be lost in any evil-tasting “boastful, chest-pounding Hungarianism”. Nobody needs that, nobody wants that.

A Positive Example for Protection of Minorities: Belgium

History provides some positive examples as to how controversial minority questions could be solved. One of these examples is Belgium. Belgium is created by two nations. Dutch is spoken by the Flemish section in the North (population: 5 million), French by the Walloon South (population: 6.5 million). But there is also a German-speaking minority. German is spoken in the East (65 thousands). Each language has official status in its own community. The Germans identify themselves as German-speaking Belgians. In the post-Versailles World Order this is a unique case where a minority group has successfully integrated in the surrounding society.

Since the '80s there are three official languages guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of Belgium: Dutch, French and German. The principles of personal freedom are also guaranteed by the same Constitution. This system of autonomy is the result of a slow development which began in 1830.

The constitutional reforms of 1993 culminated in transformation of Belgium from a unitary State into a federal one composed of communities and regions. The communities are three in number, and based on language: Flemish (or Dutch), French and German.⁴⁶ In this way the German Community enjoys complete territorial autonomy as well. The territories enjoy complete autonomy in "personal" fields such as culture, language, education, inter-community and international co-operation. Education is budgeted from the Federal Treasury. The mutual respect for the identity and integrity of the regions has made it possible for the ethnic communities to formulate their own co-operation, which is not regulated or dictated by federal law but is the free choice of the ethnic partners.

In East Central Europe one can hope such transformation of States "...only when the chauvinist dope-politics fades away, and when the federal State recognizes and acknowledges the existence of certain historical-cultural or linguistic regions. This would be the first step. The second step would be the recognition of minorities as State-forming entities, a recognition which includes their linguistic rights being guaranteed by law. Thirdly, the regions have to accept the responsibilities for their own policy decisions, in co-operation with other regions and the State. All this should be built on well-defined conventions. These components would not weaken the sovereignty of the State, but on the contrary would strengthen it: the contractual guaranties of minority rights would cease the centrifugal political trends".⁴⁷

Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary would integrate into the society in which they live *if* autonomy would be given to them. They would not seek ways to separate. They know that redrafting the borders is not the only possible solution. There is another: autonomy, that is, free rights to decide political, economic, cultural and educational questions as minorities in their own territories. The present problem is that the majorities of these States, including some central governments, do not believe in autonomy; they do not "listen to Belgium".

Christian Ethics and Nationalism

Let us see where Christian literature stands on these questions. After all, one should find some directions about such important questions of our age. But while the news

media deal with this topic continuously, on an almost daily basis, the author could hardly find any reference to this subject in recent Christian publications. Only four articles were located. While two of them deal with specific questions, the other two are quite general.

The first is a news-item about a 1986 conference held in Miskolc, and deals with freedom of religion. The delegates came from Protestant and Orthodox circles of eleven "Along the Danube River Countries". The keynote-speaker defined the concept of tolerance thus: "One should not interpret freedom of religion either as something we should tolerate or suffer in others, nor as the validation of a privileged birthright of some. Freedom of religion and opinion is everyone's right, and should be linked to other civil rights and duties. Tolerance is the kingpin of freedom of religion. Participants of the conference exchanged their opinions about the possibility of international guarantees for human rights".⁴⁸ The last sentence indicates that in the Danube States there are problems in this regard, but there was no time or possibility to spell out these problems at this conference.

The next article was written in 1989, at the 22nd Conference of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches held in Seoul (Korea). It deals with a declaration of this Conference regarding the conditions of the Romanian minority sister Churches. The Scriptural basis was taken from 1 Cor 12. "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together". The declaration lists the problems and the duties of the Alliance. Members were asked to petition both the United Nations and the Romanian Government. The Churches were challenged (1) to continue their service of prayer for the suffering Churches, (2) to express their concern and solidarity to them, and (3) to express their protest to the Romanian Government or its representatives.⁴⁹

The other two essays reach beyond the concrete problems and deal with theoretic points. Balázs Németh's (Vienna) article: "*Human rights and the Bible*" emphasizes that a straight line connects the Bible to human rights – although the phrase does not appear in the Bible. Thus it is a divine command to secure human rights and respect them.

Almost 150 years the Churches' attitude to human rights was full of suspicion and animosity. They are afraid that the concept of the "one and indivisible faith" would become relative, and the progress of human rights and autonomy would lessen divine authority. It was the ecumenical line of thought which urged the acceptance of human rights in the Churches, while condemning the curtailing of ecclesiastical activities in Eastern Europe and in Soviet Union. There are some fine capillaries worth tracing in the Bible referring to human rights:

1. The experience of biblical figures about their God, who is near and personal to them. God's nearness to men means higher values and liberation.

2. One of the central themes of the Bible is that God brought his people out from the house of bondage and freed them from slavery. God's redemptive action also defines his people's behavior in societal directions. Furthermore, the Old Testament concept of redemption from servitude extends the offer of universal salvation to all in the New Testament.

3. The relation of God to His people is expressed in the Covenant, which is another thread leading towards human rights. Man was created in God's image – although not an equal to, but a partner for God (Psalm 8). The covenant between God and man defines the right relationship of man to man – protecting the weak, the widows, orphans, slaves, strangers (Matt 25). God's covenant culminates in the Last Supper of the New Testament.

Or, as the Apostle Paul states: the death of Christ destroyed the walls of partition between masters and servants, Greeks and Jews.⁵⁰

The last article on this subject was written by Gyula Sógor, Dean of Reformed Church (Romania), and was entitled: “*Religion and Nationalism*”. It dealt with the relationship between the two terms, and raised the question: “Could the Church be blamed for preparing the road to Nationalism?” Please note: he used the term “*nationalism*” at a time when its meaning was connected to chauvinism, that is, hatred of other people. The concept of national self-realization (national awakening) was called “*patriotism*” in his dictionary. Sógor then quotes examples from the history of the Romanian people and the Transylvanian Princes. These examples prove that the two nations were able to live together, even co-operate peacefully with each other. Nationalism (*ie*: chauvinism) is the illness of people, and illness is the forerunner of death. Our aim must be life, not death. “The appearance of chauvinism, as a fatal disease, should urge us to take our prophetic call to this world and in the Church much more seriously. We should promote fraternity of people by our service. We could summarize our concrete tasks in the following:

1. Never let my love toward my people be in conflict with another nation, people or race, or with the demands of altruistic love toward others.
2. Take up the good fight of faith against human sin and wrong-doing; against selfish nationalism, chauvinism, national haughtiness and racial discrimination, no matter in what form it surfaces.
3. On the national level, we must be always prepared, in co-operation with others, for the upkeep and maintenance of material, intellectual and spiritual values”.⁵¹

The Current Search for Solution

On August 21-27, 1995 an international conference was held in Kecskemét (Hungary), on the topic: “*Christian Faith and Human Strife*”. The aim of the organizers of this conference was “to help to diminish or solve the animosity caused by chauvinist feelings, nourished by some denominational particularities in Christian Churches, contrary to the doctrine of fraternal love”.⁵²

180 persons from 25 countries attended the conference. The high attendance, both domestic and foreign, was surprising. Practically all international news agencies provided continuous coverage of the events. The most surprising was that the Serb Orthodox and Croat Catholic representatives sat together, side by side.

The papers discussed the different conflicts within the Central Eastern European region, and the possible services of the Churches in this regard. Zsolt Kozma’s paper: “*Pastoral approaches to the nationalist conflicts*” outlined the task of Christian ethics in this area. Animosity must be attacked from the roots, from the top and in between. From the top, that is at the level of the United Nations and the European Council. But even more important: it has to be aired and discussed at international symposia. Attack from the roots, that is one on one we must make clear that we should not strive against each other on the basis of history. We have to convince both ourselves and others that to be distinctive is not evil. Indispensable dismantling of the “enemy-image”.

He summarizes the chances of “the more excellent way”:

1. God wants to liberate us to love. “Where the basic ideology of an (ethnic, etc.) group is not hatred *per se*, help them to understand that if hatred is demanded from them,

or they are manipulated toward hatred, actually they are being deprived of their personal freedom of choice. When we decide against hatred, we become free men.

2. We are liberated to a limitless service of love. Love has no limits. Only man has tried to build up dividing borders. "Ethnic tension begins when we consider the *other* nationalities as the ones outside the realm of brotherly love. We are not obliged to love them, not even if they were to dwindle away at the side of the road. We could leave them there dying, just as the priest and the Levite did in the Parable of Good Samaritan" (Luke 10.25).

3. Love expels fear. When I love someone he does not fear from me any more, and when I feel that I am loved, my fears disappear.

4. Love is forgiving, it is not resentful. Those who want to heal the wounds and the injuries of the past demand repentance. The Christian thought goes one step further: God forgave us all and did it unconditionally. The reconciliation of society does not depend on human precondition, but on divine command: God forgave us for Christ's sake, and demands mutual forgiveness from us. (Parable of Unforgiving Servant, Matt 18.21).

Who are the laborers of this reconciliation? Those who have faith, those Christians who would like to give the three basic Pillars of Peace to everyone: the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount and the Hymn to Love. We have not got the power to give this to everyone, so the only way left is a personal pastoral care: witnessing. We must search for men who are willing to give and not only to gain, – who are not just talkers, but listeners too – who have dreams but are ready to give them up. And we do not give up hope of finding such human beings, even in this intolerant world.

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Translation by Thomas

Nyárády

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Chapter 8

NATIONAL MINORITIES: THEIR RIGHT TO JUSTICE AND RECOGNITION

Gregory Baum

Joseph Pungur, the editor of this volume, has invited me to write an article on the human rights of national minorities. I am a Catholic theologian with a special interest in religion, social ethics and emancipatory politics. My ideas of these topics have largely been shaped by historical experiences in Western Europe, North and South America. When I read the book *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, edited by Pungur,^{lxviii} I came to realize that the historical experiences of the Eastern European countries under Communist rule have been different, and that they led to Christian approaches to religious and social issues which are somewhat different from my own. At the same time I have the greatest respect for the Christian witnesses living under difficult circumstances in Eastern Europe. It is, therefore, with humility that I am writing this article on Christian social ethics, realizing that it represents a Western perspective.

Before dealing with the rights of national minorities it is necessary to focus on nationalism and the formation of the State. The reason for this is that the creation of national boundaries have, in many cases, produced enclaves of minority ethnic or cultural communities, *ie*: national minorities, in the new country. National minorities differ from immigrant communities. Immigrant communities have moved from one place to another, while national minorities have stayed at home. Before dealing with the claims of these minorities, I wish to reflect on the ethics of nationalism and the formation of the State.

Nationalism and State-Formation

By nationalism, in this context, I mean the struggle of a people or nation for political, economic and cultural self-determination. Following the American and the French Revolution, the nationalist struggles against the feudal-aristocratic order resulted, in the 19th Century, in the creation of modern States based on the idea of popular sovereignty and universal citizenship. Since the Catholic Church was at that time still identified with the old order, the Popes strongly opposed these nationalist struggles. Catholic teaching at that time rejected the ideas of popular sovereignty, civil rights, separation of Church and State and the freedom of religion. The Popes also recognized that if Italian nationalism should succeed in creating a united Italy, they would lose the ecclesiastical territories over which they ruled as secular princes. In my opinion, this repudiation of nationalism explains why in Catholic social teaching, *ie*: the Church's official teaching on social ethics, next to nothing is said on the ethics of collective self-determination.

While the Popes of the 19th Century defended the old order and condemned the nationalist movements, the experience of Catholic peoples subjugated by empires led them to an entirely different attitude. Oppressed peoples deprived of political power often make the inherited religion the spiritual and cultural source of their identity and resistance. This happened, for instance, in Greece subjugated by the Ottoman Empire, in Ireland colonized by the British Empire and in Poland divided up by three empires,

Czarist, Austrian and Prussian. In these and similar cases, the regional Church supported the national struggle, sometimes even giving it a certain sacred nimbus.

Neither the silence of the papacy nor the nationalist fervor of some Catholic peoples has received much ethical or theological attention. Until very recently, episcopal teaching and theological literature did not address the question of what forms of nationalism were ethically acceptable and what forms were ethically unacceptable.

According to divine providence, it was a secular event that brought forth an important ethical declaration on the topic of nationalism. Two United Nations International Covenants, signed in 1966, one on civil and political rights and the other on economic, social and cultural rights, declared the right of a people to self-determination.^{lxix} Article 1 of the two declaration reads, "All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of this right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."^{lxx} This was not a totally new principle. It had been invoked in the 19th Century by peoples struggling for political self-determination against the feudal or imperial institutions that dominated them. The principle was invoked after World War I by the American President Woodrow Wilson, who urged the Peace Conference to allow the peoples freed by the collapse of the Czarist, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires to set up their own political States. But it was only after the growing protest against Western colonialism following World War II that the stage was set for the universal recognition of peoples' right to political, economic and cultural self-determination.

The text of the two International Covenants added an important ethical imperative to this right of self-determination: the newly formed political States, it specified, must respect the human rights of their citizens in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights made by the United Nations in 1948.

It was well known how deeply Pope John XXIII was impressed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the encyclical *Pacem in terris* (1963) the Pope accepted these rights, and integrated them, on theological grounds, into official Catholic social teaching. Later these rights were confirmed, again on the basis of theological arguments, by Vatican Council II. The principal argument, often repeated by the present Pope John Paul II, was the respect for the high dignity of the human person, created in God's image, redeemed by Jesus on the Cross and addressed by the Holy Spirit. This high dignity is the ground of human freedom and self-determination: this dignity calls for public recognition, and the rights flowing from it must be protected by law.

We note that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights left the question of collective rights unresolved. They were defined almost twenty years later by the two United Nations Covenants mentioned above.

Quebec's Catholic Bishops

What about the collective right of self-determination from a Christian perspective? As far as I know, the only Catholic bishops who offered ethical guidance on a nationalist movement were the bishops of Quebec. The people of Quebec, a province of Canada, is the only French-speaking society in the vast English-speaking North American continent, a society that has always struggled and continues to struggle for the public recognition of its national identity. One group of Quebecers strives for this recognition within the

Canadian Confederation, while another, often called 'separatist', strives for the creation of a sovereign political entity.

Prior to a referendum held in 1980, which turned out to favor the federal solution, the Catholic bishops published two pastoral messages, in which they offered ethical reflections on nationalism.^{lxxi}

The first thing the bishops mentioned was the evolution of humanity's conscience in regard to peoples' right to self-determination, a clear reference to the International Covenants of the United Nations. The bishops insisted at the same time that it was not their task to interfere in the political debate over the manner in which Quebecers wanted to create their future, whether within or without the Canadian confederation. What they could offer, the bishops said, were moral norms that helped citizens to distinguish between ethically acceptable and unacceptable forms of nationalism. The four criteria which they offer may be summarized:

The struggle for political self-determination is ethically acceptable only if it (1) intends to create a more just society, (2) respects the rights of minorities, (3) envisages cooperative relations with the neighbors, and (4) does not seek support for religious argument.

We notice here that, according to this teaching, the ethical distinction which is sometimes made between aggressive nationalism, deemed immoral, and defensive nationalism, deemed moral, is not quite adequate. For even a nationalism in defense of a people's political or cultural identity would, according to this teaching, be ethically unacceptable if it violated one of the four conditions above.

Let me then amplify the concrete meaning of these four imperatives by drawing upon other pastoral statements of the Quebec bishops.

1. Intending to create a more just society here refers to the social and political efforts to make the market forces serve the material well-being of society. Following papal teaching, the bishops have lamented the increasing deregulation of the capitalist economy, the massive growth of unemployment and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. While markets are of course of great importance for the economy, they should be constrained to serve the common good of society by appropriate government regulations, the pressure of the labor movement and an ethical culture of solidarity. In line with Catholic social teaching, the bishops insist on the State's distributive function. A nationalist movement, in their judgement, must aim at the creation of a more just, egalitarian and participatory society.

2. Respecting the rights of minorities in Quebec includes the recognition of the Native Peoples and their land claims, the respect for the historic institutions of the English-speaking minority in Quebec, and the acknowledgement, in theory and in fact, of the equal citizenship enjoyed by all Quebecers, including immigrants and their descendants. In several pastoral letters, the bishops have denounced as essentially undemocratic the discrimination and prejudice inflicted upon immigrants and refugees coming from other parts of the world.

3. The desire for peaceful cooperation with neighboring States is taken for granted in Quebec. Even the strongest advocates of an independent Quebec desire close cooperation and coordination with Canada. Still, calling for a spirit of cooperation contains a more profound message. It reminds nationalists of how important it is that the rhetoric in support of their cause preserves respect for people who are opposed to them. Anger with

a government or with groups that obstruct the realization of the nationalist project must not be allowed to become a generalized antagonism indiscriminately directed toward all outsiders. How the teaching of Jesus should affect the manner in which we speak about 'the others' is a topic that has hardly been explored in Christian moral theology.

4. The Quebec bishops state that neither separatists nor federalists should invoke the Christian Gospel in support of their position. No one should say that God is on the side of Canadian unity, nor should anyone say that the disadvantaged position imposed upon Quebec is so grave that divine justice demands commitment to independence. In more general terms, it can be said that to project a religious aura on a nationalist movement is highly problematic. Why? Because this could transform the nationalist movement into a crusade and elevate the nation to become an idol. The ultimate value is God, not the nation. Not only is God more important than nation; according to the Quebec bishops, justice, too, is more important than nation.

Yet from another point of view it can be said that the Quebec bishops' pastoral messages contain an implicit theology. For them the ethical life is not the observance of a set of rules, but the result of a conversion of mind and heart. In a political context in particular, ethical choices flow from the raising of consciousness and from looking at one's own situation in the new light of a wider solidarity. Such a conversion, wherever it takes place, is the work of Holy Spirit.

The Human Rights of National Minorities

What I have not mentioned in the preceding section is that there is not any clear-cut definition of 'a people'. Peoples, after all, are historically created through major political events that produce communities of destiny and generate trans-tribal and trans-regional solidarity. These historical events generate common political and legal institutions, a common territory, a common culture, an integrated economy and, in most cases, a common language. Often the ethnic origin or the inherited religion plays a role in the creation of people. These historical phenomena are the objective criteria of peoplehood. The subjective criterion is the common will to be a people.

Yet these characteristics are by no means clear-cut. It is not surprising, therefore, that there have often been controversies as to whether this or that particular collectivity is a people, and hence whether it has a right to collective self-determination. Are the Scots a people? Then why not the Welsh? Are the Quebecers a people? Then why not the Acadians? Judgements on these crucial issues are never totally free of political interests.

The definition of national minorities is even less clear-cut and is, therefore, open to differences of interpretation. In this section, I shall first look at principles defined by the United Nations and proposed by the European Community, and then offer my own ethical reflections on the rights and duties of national minorities.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights contains only one article dealing with minorities, the very last one. Article 27 reads:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with others members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.⁵

We notice that word ‘national minority’ is not mentioned. We also notice that the rights of the ethnic religious and linguistic minorities are defined in personal terms, leaving open the question whether they are entitled to collective rights. Does the right ‘to enjoy’ their culture, assured by Article 27, entitle these minorities to public support for their schools and other cultural institutions? Is their religion and its holy days entitled to public recognition? Is their language to be recognized by public institutions?

In his commentary on Article 27, Louis B Sohn⁶ explains that the text was intended to defend the rights of minorities that have existed in States either from the beginning or from sudden changes in their boundaries. National minorities differ from immigrant communities because, as I mentioned above, the former refer to people who have stayed at home, while the latter refer to people who have moved. We note that the personal rights of immigrants as of all other citizens of a State are protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1969).

Louis B. Sohn also explains why Article 27 did not use the expression ‘national minorities’ and why the text remained rather vague in regard to the rights of these minorities. Since the Member States of the United Nations are asked to sign the Declarations, Covenants and Conventions, they become actively involved in their composition. Some of these States are worried that calling these minorities ‘national’ might persuade them that they are in fact peoples or nations, possessing the right to political self-determination. The national governments do not want their sovereignty questioned nor to encourage separatist movements in their own country. Governments also worry that by guaranteeing the rights of these minorities to publicly recognized institutions, they actually encourage these communities to isolate themselves from the majority population and distance themselves from their co-responsibility for the well-being of the entire country. The national governments claim that democracy cannot function well if minority communities cease to see themselves as active participants in society as a whole.

The promoters of human rights at the European Parliament and the United Nations, aware of the weakness of Article 27, continued to be concerned about the rights of national minorities. When, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the communist governments in Eastern Europe, the oppressive conditions imposed upon national minorities seemed to get worse, a committee of the European Parliament worked out a set of additional articles to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1953, additions that affirmed the human rights of national minorities. A Proposal made public in January of 1993 offered new reflections on national minorities, introduced a clearer definition of these minorities, and formulated a set of rights to which they are entitled.⁷

The Proposal mentions first of all that the diversity of peoples and cultures is an essential source of the richness of European civilization, and that national minorities have made important contributions to this cultural pluralism. Respecting the rights of national minorities, moreover, is the only way in which ethnic conflicts can be resolved and justice, stability and peace be guaranteed. The text also indicates that the proposed articles intend to protect national minorities, not in terms of their collective rights, but simply in terms of the personal rights of their members, which can be exercised alone or in groups.

In the second place, the Proposal offers a definition of a national minority. It is a group of people in a State who are residents of the State and its citizens, who have solid and lasting ties to that State, who have specific ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, and who represent a substantial presence, but are less numerous than the rest of the population of this State or of a region of this State. A further element of the definition is the will of this minority to perpetuate its collective identity in time.

In the third place, the Proposal specifies the rights a member of a national minority should enjoy. He or she has the right to express, preserve and develop, alone or with others, his or her religious, ethnic, linguistic and/or cultural identity, without being subjected to unwanted pressures of assimilation. A member of a national minority is to enjoy equality before the law and not to suffer any form of discrimination. Nor has the State the right to plan a resettlement of members of the majority to destabilize a national minority. The members of a national minority, moreover, have the right to create their own organizations, including political parties, and to use their own language, in private and in public, orally and in writing, in publications and audiovisual productions. All members have the right to use their first name and family name in their own language and have them recognized officially by the State. In regions where a national minority has a substantial presence, the members of this minority have the right to use their own language in the contracts with the administrative authorities and the proceedings at courts and tribunals. The members of national minorities have the right to give place names and set up public signs in their own language, which does not prevent the State from adding the same information in the official language or languages. The members of a national minority have the right to learn their language in their own institutions and create and operate their schools within the framework of the State's juridical system. In case of alleged violation of these rights, members of a national minority or their representatives have the right to have recourse to a designated office of the State. The members of a national minority have the right, as long as the State's territorial integrity is respected, to communicate freely with persons of countries with whom they share the same religious, ethnic, linguistic and/or cultural heritage. In regions where a national minority constitutes a majority, the members have the right to their own autonomous administrative structures in conformity with the legislation of the State.

At the end the Proposal specifies that the rights listed in the text may not be understood as limiting the duties and responsibilities attached to citizenship in a democratic State. The members of a national minority remain full-fledged citizen of the society as a whole. The exercise of their particular rights, according to the Proposal, can only be restricted by laws of the State that are deemed necessary to protect national security, territorial integrity, public order and safety, the health and morale of society, and the rights and freedoms of others.

In 1995, the Proposal had been signed by 22 European States out of a total of 34.⁸ Many States have misgivings about these rights conceded to national minorities. They fear that granting national minorities collective rights encourages them to arrogate to themselves the collective right to political self-determination and thus undermine the sovereign power and territorial integrity of the State. The emphasis on cultural self-determination and a certain administrative autonomy, it is feared, will legitimate the isolation of the national minority and prevent it from participating in collective effort to enhance the well-being of the entire country. A document of the United Nations

published in 1994 spells out these fears in some detail.⁹ To calm these doubts, the document explains that the rights of national minorities may never be understood as challenging the political sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State to which they belong.

Ethical Reflections on Rights and Duties

It seems to me that implicit in the efforts of the United Nations and the European Parliament to protect the human rights of national minorities is an important ethical principle. According to this principle, justice for national minorities is a negotiated compromise between their right to cultural autonomy and the State's right to govern society and its territory. The State is summoned to offer the greatest degree of autonomy to the national minority that does not endanger its governing responsibility for society as a whole, and a national minority is summoned to the greatest degree of autonomy that does not undermine its duty as citizens to promote the well-being of society as a whole. What follows from this is that justice for national minorities can only be defined in contextual terms, taking into consideration the historical circumstances in which they and the State to which they belong are situated. It is thus impossible to find one legal formula that fits all cases. Justice demands the weighing of two sets of claims, the rights of the national minority and the rights of the State of which they are a part. This means that the struggle for justice undertaken by a national minority must include, in addition to the protest against the violation of its rights, respect for the State and its legitimate concerns.

Following the example of the Quebec bishops, who developed an ethics for nationalist movements, I wish to explore an ethics for the struggles of a national minority for justice and recognition. Yet before I do this, I wish to recall a well-known example of a national minority that in the struggle for recognition betrayed the country in which it lived.

The Sudeten Germans were part of a national minority in Czechoslovakia, a State created after World War I on the basis of popular sovereignty and collective self-determination. While these Germans constituted a minority, they continued to feel like a majority, for two reasons: they were economically successful and in charge of the country's major industrial enterprises, and they were linguistically and culturally linked to the population of Austria and Germany. They had little contact with the Czechs, had not learnt their language, and looked upon their Slavic culture as something that was foreign to them. By contrast, the Czechs, the great majority, felt insecure. They had been ruled for centuries by German-speaking princes, they had lived under the superior power of these German-speaking elites, and they had almost lost their own language until it was recovered by nationalists in the 19th Century. While they now constituted a majority and had their own country, they retained the insecurity characteristic of a minority whose culture, language and collective identity were threatened by a powerful adjacent civilization.

In this situation, the Czech government was unable to be generous to the German national minority. Responding to the new situation, the Sudeten Germans were politically divided. Some of them had great sympathy for the creation of the Czech State, the redress of century-old injustices: they now learnt the Czech language and, as citizens of the State, joined the political debate and sought justice both for Czechs and for the German minority. Yet most Sudeten Germans found it difficult to muster sympathy for the new

State. Some of them went so far as to reject altogether the sovereignty of the Czechoslovakian State over the Sudeten German regions. They complained bitterly of the bad treatment they received, and looked for support among the neighboring nations. Eventually they asked Hitler to invade Czechoslovakia, partition the country and integrate their own regions into Germany.

There are several lessons in this sad story. Language and cultures have different historical weights. Majorities may be lacking in confidence, and minorities identified with successful communities across the border may have a greater sense of power. History, moreover, is the bearer of ancient prejudices. Germans who had moved farther and farther into Eastern Europe were prone to look down on the Slavic cultures which they tried to dominate. A visible sign of their sense of superiority was that in the borderlands the Germans did not learn the Slavic languages. They expected 'the others' to learn German. In addition to this, the loss of World War I had shattered the political aspirations of the German-speaking peoples so that it must have been psychologically difficult for the Sudeten Germans to welcome the new Czechoslovakian State. National minorities, suddenly finding themselves within the boundaries of a new State, are often uncomfortable in their historical situation. Still, Alsatians, who are German-speaking, prefer to be a national minority in France than to belong to Germany. To have a critical understanding of the situation of a national minority it is necessary to consider its own history as well as the history of the country to which it belongs.

These above remarks suggest that in the struggle of a national minority for justice and recognition there are ethically acceptable and ethically unacceptable strategies. What are the principles that help us to distinguish between these two? To find an answer to this question I wish to take four conditions which, according to the Quebec Catholic bishops, define an ethically acceptable nationalist movement and adapt these conditions to the struggle for justice and recognition of a national minority. As we saw above, a nationalist movement is ethically acceptable if 1) it intends to create a more just society, 2) respects the rights of minorities, 3) envisages cooperative relations with the neighbors, and 4) does not seek support from religious arguments. I believe that these four conditions can be adapted as guides for the struggles for justice of national minorities.

As the *first* ethical principle for the struggle of a national minority for its rights, I propose that this struggle must aim at creating a more just society, more just in regard to the national minority and more just in regard to country as a whole. This struggle must support the political efforts to increase the redistribution of wealth and power in society. The elites that plan the strategies of the national minorities must be in solidarity with the ordinary people of their community and of their country and use the struggle to create better conditions for them. If the national minority supports greater equality of wealth and power, it is likely to find allies in the majority population, allies who also desire a more just society.

The *second* principle demands that the struggle of a national minority for justice and recognition respect, in the regions where it constitutes a majority, the minorities which live there, whether they are members of dominant population or small groups of different ethnic, religious or cultural heritage. This may not always be easy, but respect for people who are different is such an essential element of the Christian message that without it Christian faith collapses into a human ideology.

The *third* principle demands that the national minority, in its struggle for justice and recognition, aspire to cooperative relations with members of the majority and acknowledge the right of the State to protect the common good of the entire country. This principle calls national minorities to democratic participation. Since I have argued above that justice for a national minority is a negotiated compromise between its right to cultural autonomy and the State's right to govern society and its territory, I suggest that a State will be more open and generous in its attitude to national minorities if it recognizes that their members act as citizens of the country, assume democratic responsibility, and have at heart, not only their own minority rights, but also the well-being of society as a whole. The State will be hesitant and fearful in its response to the national minority if its members express by their behavior that they are not interested in the entire country, that they distance themselves from democratic participation, and possibly that they wish they did not belong to their country at all. If these are the signals the State receives, it has good reason to be afraid. I have argued that ethics demands that the struggle of a national minority for justice and recognition must support the State in the exercise of its function to promote the well-being of the entire society.

The *fourth* principle demands that the struggle of a national minority must not be assigned a religious aura. Christians are impelled by faith, hope and love to struggle for justice and seek liberation from oppressive structures, but they refuse to sacralize the political movement in the context of which they struggle to achieve this – a point that was made by Latin American liberation theology. While these Christians, trusting in God's option for the poor as recorded in Scripture, participated in liberation movements, they refused to sacralize these movements: on the contrary, continued listening to God's Word made them critics from within these movements, intent upon clarifying the ethical vision that guided them. Nor did these Christians interrupt communion with Christian believers who interpreted the political implication of the Gospel differently. The best causes in this world, to quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer, are penultimates; the ultimate is God alone.

I propose that in each situation Christians must examine the arguments by which they support their political engagement. The Quebec bishops, we recall, believed that neither federalists nor those who seek independence should use theological arguments in support of their cause. Since both sides appealed to social justice, Christians were free to endorse either one or the other of the two options. There are obviously situations where the biblical vision of love, justice and peace demands that Christians commit themselves to a particular political cause, but even then this cause may not be looked upon as holy; Christians who remain unconvinced have the freedom to stay aloof from it.

It would be important for the Church in the national minority to enter into dialogue with the Church or Churches of the majority and together with them try to formulate the demands of justice that would recognize the cultural autonomy of the minority while at the same time guaranteeing the State's right to protect society and its territory.

The mission of the Church to assist the social and political process of justice and reconciliation is a topic that is dear to me. I have had occasion to study the role of the Protestant and Catholic Churches in the negotiated process of reconciliation in justice between Germany and Poland after World War II.¹⁰ The Churches have also contributed to reconciliation in justice between Germany and the Czech Republic. Recent efforts were the declarations made by the German and the Czech Catholic bishops on September

5, 1990, their joint declaration made on March 9, 1995, and the bold statement made jointly by the German and the Czech sections of *Pax Christi* on October 13, 1996.

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The reflections on the rights of national minorities offered in this article belong to the field of social ethics and, more particularly, Catholic social ethics. Yet implicit in these reflections is a theology of human transformation. I have referred to this above in connection with the pastoral messages of the Quebec bishops. There are limited contexts where ethics may be understood as obedience to a set of rules, but when responding to the larger issues raised by historical circumstances, ethics must be understood as attitudes and actions that flow from a conversion of mind and heart, a raised consciousness that reads the history of one's own group in the light of an expanded solidarity and a desire for justice and compassion for all. On this scale, ethics is a creative endeavor, a work of the Holy Spirit, lifting us beyond the powers of our broken humanity.

NOTES

1. Pungur, Joseph (ed.), *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, Calgary, Angelus Publishers, 1994.
2. See *The Human Rights Reader*, Walter Laqueur (ed.), New York, New American Library, 1990, pp. 215-233.
3. *ibid.*, pp. 216, 225.
4. "Le peuple québécois et son avenir politique" (Aug.15, 1919); "Construire ensemble une société meilleure" (May 1, 1980) in *La justice sociale comme bonne nouvelle*, Gérard Rochais, Montréal: Bellarmin (ed.), 1984, pp. 133-144. An English translation of the first of these pastoral messages is found in *Canadian Churches and Social Justice*, John R. Williams (ed.), Toronto, Anglican Book Centre, 1984, pp. 181-188. See also Gregory Baum, *The Church in Quebec*, Montreal, Novalis, 1991, pp. 159-170.
5. *The Human Rights Reader*, p.224.
6. See Louis B. Sohn, "Rights of Minorities", in *The International Bill of Rights: The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, (ed. Louis Henkin, New York, Columbia University Press, 1981, pp. 276-288.
7. "Rapport relatif à un protocole additionnel à la Convention européenne des Droits de l'Homme sur les droits des minorités." The Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Document 6742, January 18, 1993. An English text of this 'Convention' is found in *The Human Rights Reader*, pp. 205-214.
8. See Marcel Scotto's article "La convention sur les minorités fait craindre les régionalismes", published in *Le Monde*, Paris, and reprinted in *Le Devoir*, Montreal, February 23, 1995.
9. "Pacte Internationale relatif aux droits civils et politiques", Nations Unies, document CCPR/C/21, 26 avril 1994.

10. Baum, Gregory, "The Role of the Churches in Polish-German Reconciliation", in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: A Challenge to the Churches*, G. Baum and H. Wells, (ed.), Maryknoll, NY., Orbis Books, 1996, pp.129-143.

* *Acadians* was the name of the French settlers who lived in Acadia, today Nova Scotia, from 1604. In 1755, at the end of the Anglo-French wars, they were scattered over other provinces. (Editor)

Chapter 9

HUNGARIAN MINORITIES IN EUROPE: A CASE STUDY

Robert J. Pátkai

Any State with sizeable numbers of co-living just across its border as citizens of another State will be sensitive to the problems and aspirations of these co-ethnics. And the State in which they live will likewise be concerned about the loyalties of these ethnic minorities.

To look in this connection at the broad canvas of post-Communist international affairs is to be struck by the contrast between the calm in Hungary and the turmoil of the former Yugoslavia. There is of course regular speculation about the situation of the Hungarian minorities in Serbia, Slovakia and Romania and whether their relationship to Budapest is a source of instability. But while there has certainly been friction between Hungary and its neighbors, the overall situation has remained relatively calm; and Hungary's behavior towards its co-ethnics has been in complete contrast to that of Serbia, Slovakia and Romania.

To some extent, the relative calm in Hungary may be seen as a consequence of the upheavals in the former Yugoslavia. Hungary and its neighbors seem ready to go some distance to avoid bloodshed and to seek a political solution to what will always be a complex relationship.

The Hungarian Situation

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918, the old kingdom of Hungary lost large chunks of its territory to the successor States – Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia – and smaller areas to Austria and Poland. Part of this lost territory was inhabited by non-Hungarians, but what distressed many Hungarians was that around 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians now found themselves living in the successor States, often in the immediate vicinity of Hungary. Suddenly every third Hungarian was living outside Hungary. This loss of empire led Hungary, along with Slovakia and Romania, to side with the Axis powers during the Second World War. Between 1938 and 1941 Hungary did regain sizeable parts of the lost areas, only to lose them once more in the post-1945 territorial dispensation.

Under Communism, the ethnic Hungarians became a taboo subject. Hungarian society grew used to having lost the territories, though it retained an active interest in the fate of its co-ethnics: 600,000 ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia, between 1.7 and 2.0 million in Romania and approximately 350,000 in Serbia. There are smaller and politically less important minorities in Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria.

With the collapse of Communism, the new government that took power in 1990 under the prime ministership of József Antall pursued a policy that was virtually the polar opposite of that of the Communists. The Antall government put the fate of the ethnic Hungarians first in its foreign policy aims, causing some degree of alarm in the host-States.

Following May 1994 elections, a government was formed by a coalition of the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats, under the prime

ministership of Gyula Horn, with a strong base from which to launch a more conciliatory foreign policy.

As for the ethnic Hungarian minorities themselves, it would be wholly misleading to assume that their interests are identifiable with those of the Hungarian State. Far from it. The Hungarians of Romania, Slovakia and Serbia have a strong and clear-cut identity of their own, and their priority is demanding the equal rights denied them. It is fair to say that all the minorities have sought to use Budapest for their own purposes, but those interests have not automatically coincided with the interests of the Hungarian State.

Despite repeated polemics between Hungary and its neighbors, the relationship between Budapest and the other three capitals has never deteriorated to a crisis. Friction there has been aplenty, but all sides seemed ready to recognize that there was more to lose than to gain by letting matters escalate. The very complexity of the Hungarian ethnic situation makes all the participants move with caution, seeing that outcomes are very uncertain.

Furthermore, the presence of the West, to which both Hungary and the host-States look as a source of both political and economic support, acts as another inhibitor. Integration into the West is conditional on the reduction of tension, and various Western organizations, not least the High Commissioner on National Minorities, have played an active role in minimizing it.

At the same time, it should be noted that most if not all of the political actors in the Danube region have only limited experience of the politics of compromise and acquiring this will take time. The Communist system, with its clear-cut, black-and-white attitudes, was hardly the best school for the new breed of post-Communist politicians, who have had a completely different set of tasks to tackle. Post-Communist politicians have had to learn on the job, and there is little doubt that they have made many mistakes.

Their task is made more difficult by the readiness of a minority of politicians to listen to the siren call of the easy way of mobilizing political support by appealing to extreme nationalist sentiment. In every post-Communist State there is a well-defined constituency of members of the ethnic majority that will listen to nationalist demagogues – as a rule, those who have the most to lose by the transformation into a democratic market system.

The argument that will be developed in this paper is that nationhood became an inescapable fact of political life in Europe in the 19th Century and that, far from disappearing or even weakening, it has retained its key function in the 20th Century. Considering the Hungarian case, I shall focus first on the Austro-Hungarian empire, where national and ethnic tension emerged in its modern form, up to 1918, when the empire ceased to exist.

After the First World War the victors were themselves well aware that the national settlement they had created in 1918-20 was, to say the least, imperfect. Besides the hopelessly mixed ethnic make-up of the region, the emerging new States were anything but ethnically homogeneous nation-States. The period after the First World War saw massive loss of faith in building on the existing European tradition, understandably so in the light of the terrible devastation that Europe had undergone. The problem of broadening popular participation remained, coupled with a

weakening of the self-legitimation of the ruling élites. This inevitably produced a gap in the fabric of thought and through this gap emerged two broad radical alternatives – Fascism and Communism. Both of them denied development and demanded radical transformation. Fascism failed first with the defeat in 1945, for which the world paid a terrible price. It left Europe more exhausted than ever before. Having linked itself to the nationalistic currents of the right, Fascism did much to discredit nationhood as well as nationalism. On the other hand, Communism and nationalism are theoretically incompatible. Ethnic interests and nationalism are very much subordinated to internationalism, the linchpin of Communist ideology. Existing national identities were replaced with what was termed “socialist internationalism”. The legacy is still with us today, and common efforts are needed to overcome it. The combination of political, social and religious tolerance with a willingness to cooperate is essential to this process of overcoming the legacies of Fascism and Communism.

Finally, Hungary's official attitude towards its own ethnic minorities will be described in some detail, and I shall also evaluate the challenge to the Churches, drawing on the lessons of Hungary. Although history is central here, in dealing with ethnic and national issues it may not be helpful to focus only on historical rights, since there are as many histories as there are sides to the conflict.

A Historical Résumé

The term "Marchland" was used by some American geographers to indicate the region in the Carpathian Basin where the Hungarian State was formed towards the end of the 9th Century. The question of the origin of the Hungarians is beyond the scope of this paper. History tells us, however, that the bulk of this nation moved from the East to Central Europe and established a kingdom there in AD 896. The new State proved its viability and soon obtained admission on equal terms into the company of Christian kingdoms by the coronation of King Stephen, later St Stephen.

Hungary was not only the Eastern religious, cultural and political border of Europe: it was also its defense frontier: first against the Mongol invasion (1241), later against Islamic expansion. After 150 years of defensive battles, the Hungarian resistance against the Turks collapsed at the battle of Mohács, Hungary (1526). This was the beginning of the most disastrous period of Hungarian history: almost two centuries of Turkish occupation in the center of the country, with the German-Habsburg empire holding the Western fringe under a rule almost as harsh as that of the Turks. The flickering light of Hungarian independence barely survived in semi-independent Transylvania. With the death of King Louis II at Mohács, Hungary and Croatia came into the possession of the Habsburg dynasty.

The losses inflicted by the Turks resulted in a radical alteration of the demographic conditions of Hungary. Vast regions had been depopulated. The Habsburgs promoted their policy of Germanization by repopulating these areas with German settlers and immigrants from neighboring countries; thus Hungary including Transylvania, became ethnically more colored. The 50 million population of the Habsburg Empire (as it was called after 1867) was however, ethnically and linguistically mixed and heterogeneous to an extent that had been and remains unparalleled in the history of Europe (except perhaps for the Balkans and Russia).

The main issue was finding a form of government and administrative structure for such a huge heterogeneous population that would operate smoothly but at the same time be acceptable to all ethnic and national groups. From the beginning of the 19th Century until the collapse of the empire in 1918, when the ethnic and national problems emerged in a modern form, the concept of "we-ness" against "otherness" was strengthening. Many ideas came to the fore – from the centralistic model to the suggestion that the empire be developed into a federalized power. The most important of these, coming from different ethnic and national groupings aimed not to transform but to break up the empire. The mixture of the contemplated solutions, or rather the tension between them, eventually led to the first historical watershed of the 20th Century, the First World War. In 1914 all plans for the transformation of the empire were swept away by the storm of history, creating in its place a mosaic of small successor national States which, though badly shaken in the last three or four years, by and large survive to this day.

What finally was the cause of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire into small national States? Was it failure to cope with national issues or were there power interests involved? Most likely a combination of these two factors was responsible.

On the one hand, a growing national awareness was taking place among the nations of the empire or, to put it more precisely, the nationalism of the élite was changing into mass nationalism. Two new States emerged at the same time, Serbia between 1830 and 1878, and Romania between 1867 and 1878.

On the other hand, a vacuum was created by the Turkish withdrawal from the Balkans, resulting in conflicting interests among the major European powers: Russia and Germany aspired to fill this vacuum; Britain and especially France regarded the survival of the Danubian empire as a guarantee of the balance of power in Europe. For several historical reasons, however, from the summer of 1918 onwards, the question was no longer whether Austria-Hungary would survive, but rather where the new frontiers of the States, to be created in its place, would be drawn.

But this new balance of power established after the First World War was to be short lived. It soon became clear that the newly created States were unfit to halt Germany's expansionist drive. For ironically from the mid-1930s onwards the entire region became dependent on the German economy, regardless of the political sympathies of the countries in the region.

“The Peace of the Victors”

“All the peace treaties made in this century have been the peace of the victors, particularly the treaties which concluded the 1914-18 war, the Versailles peace treaty just as the 1945 peace treaty. All the peace treaties which came from these were unjust treaties. None of them took notice of historical, geographical, intellectual or ethnic realities, and each peace treaty served to glorify the victor or to satisfy its instincts for power and its interests at that particular time. The tragedy of the next war was always written into the previous peace system”.

These words of Francois Mitterand president of France, at the 1992 Paris symposium for representatives of ethnic groups in Europe, are revealing. An increasing number of politicians and political scientists realize that in Central and Eastern Europe the majority of conflicts, the slow pace of democratization, social development and the escalation of nationalism in the wake of Fascism and Communism are rooted in the peace settlement after the First World War. While peace treaties claimed to be based on the principle of self-determination, in practice they demonstrated an unjust application of that principle. The antagonism between a

nation organized into a nation-State and the ethnic-cultural entity has led to internal conflicts within the countries concerned and to confrontations between neighboring countries. These ethno-cultural communities, different from the majority, responded with resentment and hostility to the attempts at integration, which they perceived to be an alien policy.

The terms of integration were such that no distinction was made between loyalty to the State as citizens and loyalty to the cultural community. Ultimately this meant that members of ethnic minorities were inherently suspect and that the terms of loyalty demanded of them complete abandonment of their own moral-cultural codes, something that communities as a whole would seldom do. Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia between the wars illustrate this process well.

After the Second World War the state of affairs in Central and Eastern Europe remained deeply unsatisfactory to all concerned. Intensified anxieties continued, which did little towards the integration process. The Holocaust is the most extreme example of this. After the war, ethnic German minorities were expelled from their homes. Similarly, Hungarians were repressed in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. And during the war itself, inter-ethnic conflict produced terrible bloodletting, the memory of which does not disappear easily. One could conclude that in Central and Eastern Europe the ugly face of nationalism acquired an exclusive, messianic quality.

Prospects for the Future

The recognition that nationalism is an inescapable present-day reality which is playing and will continue to play an ever-increasing role in both internal and international politics – and not only in Central and Eastern Europe – compels us to concentrate on the prospects for the future and on what influence can be brought to bear on the outcome.

To begin with, we need to take into account the aspirations of ethnic minorities. In Central and Eastern Europe the primary aim of minority ethnic groupings is not the alteration of frontiers or secession but the right to retain their language and culture, to educate children in the language of their parents and ancestors, to have local officials and national representatives chosen from their own ranks. Autonomy and self-determination is for them the only way forward if they are to survive.

Indeed, autonomy is the only viable alternative to ethnic cleansing, mass migration or secession. In Europe there are well established patterns that can help to guide our thinking in the right direction. Consider, for instance, the autonomous rights of the German communities in Central and Eastern Europe during and after the Middle Ages. They were able to preserve their language and culture for eight centuries, while making a valuable contribution to the kingdom of Hungary. But there are a few functioning present-day models too. Belgium, Switzerland and the Southern Tyrol region of Italy are all worthy of attention with a view to adopting their solutions to the Central and Eastern half of the continent.

Both Hungary and its neighbors have often expressed the desire to join the European Union. Integration with the West, however, is conditional upon the reduction of tension in this region and the adoption of a democratic system of government which takes the well-being of ethnic minorities into consideration. So far,

however, there is little evidence of willingness in the post-Communist governments to acknowledge the rights of ethnic minorities living within their borders, with the exception of Slovenia and Hungary.

In the light of the foregoing, what response is expected of international ecumenical organizations in general and the Churches in particular? In the first place the World Council of Churches and other such bodies must maintain their global initiative on issues such as this one. We have seen the World Council of Churches at its best when coordinating worldwide action against apartheid in South Africa. The same worldwide action of Churches is imperative now if we are to be instrumental in halting the dangerously escalating nationalistic trends.

The Lutheran World Federation expressed its opposition to apartheid by expelling two white South African Churches from among its ranks because they did not show willingness to resist the oppressive government. The Lutheran World Federation took *a status confessionis* in this case.

But where does such action leave the local Churches caught up in a hitherto unseen turmoil? The religious divide in Central and Eastern Europe observes the same ethnic and national frontiers as their respective governments do. These local Churches have been and still are unable to cross the national and ethnic divide for fear of State arrogance and retaliation.

Therefore, while the worldwide Church community needs to take a firm stand against oppression of minorities, it must at the same time give meaningful support and encouragement to local Churches caught up in the conflict.

This point is well illustrated by the Hungarian-Romanian Church meeting held in Újvidék (now Novi Sad) in 1990. The parties, brought together by the Conference of European Churches, firmly committed themselves to fight against national hatred, intolerance and chauvinism, and to defend together the rights of ethnic minorities. Even though this well-meaning commitment has not borne fruit, it should nor be a cause of despair, but rather the opposite. Many more such events need to take place in order to demonstrate an unswerving commitment on the part of the worldwide community.

International consultations can provide a framework with well-formulated resolutions as guidelines and pointers to “where” and “how” action is to be taken. Such efforts and deliberations and their results need to trickle down through the stem to the grassroots, to the everyday men and women of the Church. For only through the transformation of hearts and minds can the Holy Spirit lead and strengthen us in the struggle for justice and peace among nations and individuals.

National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary

The Hungarian government considers the protection and upholding of the rights of minorities in society to be one of the most important measures of democracy, and it is seeking, in accordance with European standards, to develop an atmosphere in society in which nobody has cause to live in fear or suffer discrimination because he or she is different.

According to the provisions of Law LXXVII of 1993, the government regards as one of the most basic human rights the right to a national, ethnic and linguistic

identity, that is, the freedom to take oneself as belonging to one or other ethnic group. The survival and development of the national and ethnic minorities, the lessening of pre-existing inequalities between the majority and the minority and the alleviation of the disadvantages arising out of life as a minority require preferential treatment and special rights for communities as well as individuals.

Ethnic minorities in Hungary may claim preferential treatment as a right. Their situation must not be a function of how well the rights of Hungarians living outside of Hungary are upheld. The government rejects such an attitude of reciprocity.

The Government supports the process by which minorities in Hungary are organizing themselves. In order to realize and expand the minorities' autonomy, both culturally and in public law, the government is pushing for the formation of local and national minority councils, and wishes to support regional organizations built from these local organizations. The aim is to create an institutional form which, in harmony with the constitution, will enable the minorities' legitimate deputies to become involved in the work of the parliament.

The right of national and ethnic minorities to maintain links freely with their parent country, the nation with whom they share a language, as well as other ethnic groups and organizations living abroad, is guaranteed by law and supported by the government. It urges minorities to participate actively in the international protection of minorities. The government considers it natural that while being Hungarian citizens, individuals who belong to the minority should also regard themselves as belonging culturally to their parent nation.

The main condition for strengthening the identity of minorities is that there should be substantial progress in the area of minority education. Respecting the minorities' autonomy, the government guarantees them nursery education, primary and secondary education, at mother-tongue schools and the conditions for higher education, as well as library and general educational provisions and the development of minority-language mass communications. It is the State's task to train teachers and bilingual subject teachers, and to provide the textbooks and materials necessary for minority education. The central support given to these activities must, according to the principle of preferential treatment, exceed the level of similar support given to the majority.

A Regional Responsibility

In conclusion, while it may be extremely painful for the members of an ethnic group to be divided among two or more States, it is possible to come to terms with this and to move away, however slowly, from the traditional nationalist imperative of uniting all members of a nation into a single State. Hungarians have had since 1918 to accept the fact that membership of the cultural community (the ethnic group) need not automatically mean membership of a given political community (the State). Other divided nations may care to take note of this, while recognizing that time is a key factor in this context.

Another lesson Budapest has gradually learned – and which neighboring countries might also learn – is that patient negotiation can achieve more for co-ethnics than megaphone diplomacy. Clearly this is easier for Hungary, an ethnically near-

homogeneous State, than for States that must construct a multi-ethnic system which will satisfy both majority and minority.

Running a multi-ethnic State will work only if citizenship is emphasized as the primary factor determining the relationship between rulers and ruled. If ethnicity is given this role, individually or collectively, the minority will inevitably see itself as disadvantaged, because it will be unable to share in the political goods of the State in the same way as the majority. In this area, the role of the kin-State is limited. There is very little that Hungary can do, for example, to promote the emergence of a civil society in other States. The most it can do is to avoid giving extremists a pretext for mobilizing along ethnic lines.

How a kin-State treats its own minorities can also affect the kin-State/host-State dynamic, particularly where (as in Hungary) the kin-State itself has become a host-State for minorities from its neighbors. Hungary has sought to establish a relatively liberal minorities regime, partly as an aspect of democratization, but partly also to serve as a moral justification for its stance towards the Hungarians in the kin-States.

The Hungarian case also illustrates another process: what are to be the principles by which the kin-State determines its policies? Here the Budapest government has several factors to balance. It must satisfy Hungarian public opinion; it must pay attention to the cultural needs of ethnic Hungarians, and with sufficient sensitivity to avoid raising the hackles of the government and ethnic majority of the neighboring States; and, in whatever it does, it must be aware of the demands of international and regional stability, something the West is monitoring with greater awareness of the dangers of destabilization through ethnic conflict as a result of what has followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In this sense, Hungary has a responsibility in the region.

Chapter 10

FIGHTS FOR THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN ROMANIA¹

László Tökés

1. Human and Minority Rights in Romania²

Romania is a country in which the issue of minority rights is one of the main impediments to progress, and in which the solution of the minority problem is closely related to the treatment of minority Churches, the members of which are drawn mainly from the ethnic minorities. That is, Romania's treatment of her minorities is strongly linked to the issue of religious freedom. Without the assurance of human and minority rights for the approximately 3 million Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Gypsies *etc.*, people who are both ethnically and confessionally in a minority, it is simply impossible to conceive of real democratization in Romania or the creation of stability in Romanian society.³

In 1989 I was a minister of that Hungarian Reformed Church in Timisoara whose resolute resistance to oppression provided the spark that kindled the revolution. In that multinational and multi-religious town, about ten ethnic groups and as many religious denominations live side by side. One of the secrets of the success of Timisoara's insurrection was simply that the different ethnic communities and religions joined together. One of the main pillars of the Ceausescu dictatorship, on the other hand, was ethnic division – in the ideology of Communist nationalism, divide and rule. It was no accident that the changes in Romania started with the joining together of different ethnic and religious groups around a minority Church. It is also no accident that in the period since 1989, the Romanian authorities have used the divisive nationalism they inherited from Ceausescu to restrain democratic transformation, limit human rights and basic freedoms, and thus preserve their dominant position in Romania's pseudo-democratic society, which has been very aptly called a "democratorship".

Two shocking demonstrations of Romanian human rights violations and of Romania's oppressive anti-minority policy were the ethnic clashes in Târgu Mures in March 1990, and the June 1990 miners' strikes in Bucharest. In neither case did the neo-Communist authorities hesitate to use force or to provoke violence when seeing their power in danger. In both the suppression of the Bucharest youth movements, which were in protest against the Communist regime, and the suppression of the Hungarians demanding their rights, the Iliescu regime demonstrated its willingness to use drastic means to limit the role of minority and civil rights in the developing society. By doing so they have left the Romanian people a lasting reminder of how far their liberty is to extend.

In the opinion of the eminent Romanian writer Octavian Paler, from Bucharest, a process of "organised non-agreement" is now evident in Romania. As an example, he points to the official organisation of the miners' marches on Bucharest and of pointless ethnic conflicts. These centrally organised subversive activities and this State terrorism use division and fear to distract the attention of the citizens from the real problems of the country, and enable the government to control the bulk of the Romanian people. This evident manipulation, combined with the economic chaos in Romania since the changes, tends to compromise the concept of democracy, and provides a breeding ground for the openly dictatorial tendencies of the extreme nationalist parties.

The leader of one such party, the MP C.V.Tudor, for instance, urges the introduction of dictatorship to "maintain order" in the country. That this is not only the dream of the extreme nationalists is confirmed by the fact that the Romanian National Unity Party, with its anti-Hungarian ideology, has recently been admitted into the Romanian government. The president of this party is Gheorghe Funar, the extreme nationalist mayor who has transformed Cluj into the operational headquarters of ethnic incitement and the artificial stimulation of tension. This hare-brained politician, who introduced into his town a one-man dictatorship, told the discontented Hungarian electors that they should leave the country, and recently suggested a military occupation of Budapest as a Romanian province if the Hungarians "do not mend their ways".

I must mention again that this nation-wide incitement is pursued by the president of a party which is a member of the government. Nevertheless the Romanian Government has not once distanced itself from the staggering statements of the leader of a party which is an integral component of this government. Why should it? After all, even the president of the majority Romanian Socialist Democratic Party, Mr Oliviu Gherman, indulged in a violent outburst against the Hungarian ethnic group, summoning all the Romanian

parties to unite against the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania. Pascu Mircea, Under-Secretary of State for National Defense, surpassed even that, and made a statement in which he held out the threatening prospect of possible military action against the minorities.

Likewise, in the report the Romanian Intelligence Service submitted to Parliament last month, the desire for democratic autonomy on the part of Transylvanian Hungarians is declared “dangerous” for the Romanian nation and “anti-constitutional”, and of necessity should be scrutinised by the Secret Service.

We could illustrate with many examples the numerous anti-minority policies to be found throughout Romanian life. I will confine myself to drawing attention to the new Education Bill, which surpasses even the former Ceausescu law in its anti-democratic and discriminatory character. Romania’s Hungarians protested with approximately half a million signatures that acceptance of the Education Bill, which was passed by the Lower House of the Romanian Parliament, would endanger their national identity. The Bill before Parliament is especially damaging to university teaching in the mother tongue, which is prohibited in every branch of education except teacher training facilities.

To understand the situation more fully, we must note that the first Hungarian University was founded in Cluj in 1580. Its modern successor, the Bolyai University, was closed in 1958 by Nicolae Ceausescu – that is, he merged it with the local Romanian University. For decades the Hungarian section of the merged Babes-Bolyai University has been constricted. As a result, Hungarian scholarship in Romania has been suppressed, and the talents of Hungarian intellectuals have been wasted.

Even today, mayor Funar attempts to continue this Ceausescu policy of assimilation, so much so that even the half-Hungarian name Babes-Bolyai offends him, and he wants the University to bear the Romanian name Dacia Superior, which accords better with Romanian nationalist historical tradition.

The peace of the University has been disturbed in the last few years by the violent and provocative interventions of mayor Funar. To this day, however, Rector Andrei Marga and the leadership of the University, who pursue the Transylvanian tradition of inter-ethnic coexistence, have been able to resist such nationalist diversions successfully.

The Romanian Rector of the University is not the only one who has seen so clearly what is behind Funar’s policy. Not long ago Doinea Cornea and Octavian Buracu, respectively leaders of the Civic League and the Association for Inter-Ethnic Dialogue in Cluj, spoke up for the Hungarians whose basic human dignity has been compromised. Octavian Buracu, a committed fighter for ethnic reconciliation, pointed out in one of his protests: “Fundamental human rights, including minority rights, are trampled underfoot consistently and without any hesitation in Romania”. The League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADO) recently related the following to the High Commissioner of the CSCE in Warsaw: “In the past few years, the Hungarian ethnic minority has had to endure yet greater oppression from local authorities, oppression that is encouraged by central government”. The president of the League, Nicolae Stefanescu Draganesti, points out in one of his interviews: “Even at this moment, a centrally guided exclusion of Hungarians from different administrative and other managing levels is underway (in Romania)”. Recently Corneliu Coposcu, the highly respected president of the Christian Democratic National Peasant Party, characterised the Romanian situation as follows: “It would make no sense to speak about democracy in Romania. It is a dictatorial regime, or rather absolutism”.

Given these respected opinions, the statement by Angel Martinez, President of the General Assembly of the European Council, that Romania could be the international ‘model’ for the handling of the minority question can be nothing but the successful outcome of the “outward appearance” policy of the Romanian Foreign Ministry. The Romanian practice of “foaming nationalism” is diametrically opposed to the honestly held view the president has been given. Such a practice not only sours the life of minorities by treating them as second-class citizens, but also forms the main obstacle to the normalisation of Romanian-Hungarian interstate relations.

The victims of Communist and nationalist policy are not only the minority communities, but also the Romanian nation as a whole. Evidently Romania’s national Communists, in their attempt to cling to power, are sacrificing democracy and the fundamental political interests of their own community in their policies of restoration. As the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania points out in one of its latest statements: “The ethnic tension nourished by President Iliescu, the Romanian Government and by some extreme nationalist parties is opposed to the interests of the citizens of Romania. It is destabilising in character, and renders Romania’s integration into Europe more difficult”.

Minority rights, by their nature, constitute an organic part of the basket of human rights and freedoms. To describe a minority struggling for its rights as “enemies” and “a destabilising factor” is nothing other than a political manoeuvre aimed at further depriving them of their civil rights. The first period in the

struggle for basic human rights in the spirit of the Helsinki process began in 1975, but it must be followed by a second period that develops concentration on minority rights in the International arena.

It is indisputable that in the period since 1989, in reaction to Eastern European nationalism, which was then revived, a major leap forward has occurred in managing minority rights. Nevertheless in the developed West, and in power politics, the past is still strong; their lack of awareness of minorities and their misconception of the nationality problem illustrates this. Examples of this are the essentially indifferent Western policy in Yugoslavia, and the West's inability when faced with the nations and problems of the late Soviet Union.

The modern approach and strategy of the International University Initiative, within the framework of the CSCE process, is the right way to search for solutions. It opens the door to the solution of our real problems. However, I believe that more than an "opening" is needed, a real breakthrough in the political approach of European organizations – above all in regard to the problem of minority rights.

2. In the Community of Europe and the Fellowship of Churches for Minorities⁴

For representatives of the oppressed people of the former Soviet Empire, it is a new phenomenon to be able to present our problems to the world, even to Europe. Now we can search together for solutions to our vital issues in the community of nations, in the framework of the international and European co-operation which is broadening in a spectacular way following the unravelling of those antagonistic politico-ideological blocs and the collapse of the Iron Curtain. If nothing else, this is to be considered a major result of the momentous changes that began in 1989.

Despised in their faith, humiliated in their self-respect and limited in their natural relationships as brethren, our Churches consider it a major gain that they are able to return into the ecumenical world-wide movement of international Christianity, and, as in these days in Budapest, together with our foreign brothers in the faith, we may search the Gospel path which would provide a way out from the seriously divided complex world of the Europe of today.

But despite the positive international co-operation and European process of integration, these epoch-making changes have their negative, even tragic projections. In all probability the chauvinism and nationalism giving new life to extreme violence, the ethnic and denominational conflicts, and the xenophobia and anti-semitism gaining ground on the entire continent, are some of these negative results. These phenomena, the diabolical forces of bloody tempers and hatred, severely test the expanding unity and democracy of Europe, as also the ecumenism of Churches searching for the road to renewal.

The war between the peoples of the former Yugoslavia teaches lessons not only for Europe and the official policy-makers, but also for Churches of Christ. Especially we, the Church servants of the minority communities of Eastern and Central Europe, are able to feel the significance of this. In all probability, this disturbing feeling of remorse causes those present to act, to collaborate and to confer, both our brothers who cannot be silent in their civic wellbeing and the Churches of the former Eastern bloc who live amongst hostile ethnic relationships.

Yugoslavia is a memento for us all, especially for the "Western World", of determinative politic and economic influence, and for its Churches of greater opportunity to act, to be more attentive and helpful towards our peoples, tried as they are by the tides of history and ravaged by Communism, especially towards the suffering minorities in our region.

It is in this sense that we greet the conference in Budapest of the Program for Human Rights of the Churches. We appreciate that the Conference of European Churches, in the framework of the human right dimension of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), has given recognition to the timeliness and importance of the minority question and is ready to submit these to the international authority of the Churches.

Between the parliamentary session of the CSCE held in July this year in Helsinki and the coming conference of the European State presidents and prime ministers in Vienna in October, I consider it important to report to you the following regarding changes that have occurred in Romania.

At any price, Romania wants to get into Europe. More specifically, Romania searches for its way out from its rapidly deepening economical, social and political crisis, and towards the advanced West. It has no other possibility of better choice. In this sense, Romania makes major efforts to gain, among other things, membership in the Council of Europe and Most Favoured Nation status with the United States of America.

These priorities determine Romania's actions in the field of minority policy. It wants to comply both to European and international requirements on minorities, bearing in mind the severity of the problem. But the

increasing demands and the growing compulsion to comply do not represent a real advance in the treatment of the ethnic problems, of the safeguarding of minority and human rights and in the field of bettering conditions of the two million ethnic Hungarians and one million inhabitants of other ethnic groups. On the contrary, chauvinism rages in Romania in a manner and to a degree rarely experienced elsewhere. Although altered in form, the State nationalism of the previous regimes has not changed.

The pseudo-parliamental and national-Communist regime of Iliescu now in power is founded on the pillars of the former *nomenclatura* and the notorious Romanian secret police. With it, the Vacaroiu government, supported by extremist nationalistic parties, follows the pathway of Communist restoration. The democratic changes felt in spite of all these are caused on the one hand by the inevitable forces of change, and on the other hand by the stipulations of the democratic world and European regulations.

Otherwise the regime, aspiring to Europe, in a paradoxical and schizophrenic way bases its power on the ideology of exclusive nationalism, and shows a preference for the application of the methods carried over from the days of dictatorship: ethnic incitement, deceit, subversiveness and underhand practices, in the sense of the classic maxim "*divide et impera*" – divide and rule.

Of course, nationalism and anti-Hungarian manifestations are not simply aims. First of all they are weapons to maintain the regime, to preserve prosperity for the privileged elite, to oppress and control domination the people of the country. In this sense it is as much anti-Romanian as anti-minority. Milosevic's war dictatorship afflicts in the same way the Serbs and their enemies. But it is equally obvious that the injured parties of this policy, when all is said and done, are the minorities. They are the hostages and targets of the ruling power, and they are compelled to play the role of scapegoat for the majority society.

The ruling power, wanting to impress Europe, true to Ceausescu's Romania, makes efforts to formulate the most favourable image of the country for the outside world, for the Council of Europe or the government of the United States, through its propaganda system working at a professional level. In compliance with this, giving way to its old reflexes, credulity or aversion to "redundant problems", the Western world is also susceptible to see in a good light what it perceives as the Romanian reality, and "generously" disregards the painful injuries of the minorities.

In general, not even the Churches of the West are immune to this, although recently their sensitivity has increased in large measure. It is difficult to make them understand that, for example, the impressive phraseology of the majority Orthodox Church covers up a very different kind of reality.

Without entering into ill-mannered criticism, let me mention the Romanian-Hungarian Church Conference, organised in the spirit of mutual reconciliation at the initiation of the CEC in November 1990 in Novi Sad, where the parties firmly committed themselves to fight against chauvinism and intolerance, to protect the rights of the minorities and the injured Churches. We may say that in the past three years practically nothing has come out of this "holy decision". The Orthodox Church never raised its voice to support the permanently injured minority Christians, and moreover, certain of its chief priests were at the head of stirring up nationalism. In one instance an Orthodox Metropolitan consecrated the monument to the anti-revolutionary Securitate officers. The exception to all this was Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Timisoara, who consistently fought for minority rights.

Today I am not going to illustrate with data and facts the anti-minority policies of Romania; I would just like to present their general outline:

- Ethnic Hungarian political prisoners are languishing in the jails of Romania because of their participation in the revolutionary events on 1989, while the assassins of more than a thousand victims have not yet been called to account. In show trials following the events of December 1989 and March 1990 in Targu Mures, only Hungarians and Gypsies were sentenced. The chief inspector of the CSCE for nationalities and the Romanian reporter of the Council of Europe spoke out on their behalf.

- The ruling power tolerates, sometimes even encourages, the functioning of extremist nationalistic parties. "Legionary" (meaning fascist) movements have appeared in the political field of the country. Anti-Semitic propaganda has become commonplace.

- The minorities in Romania, especially the Hungarians who live in great numbers, even in a majority in certain regions, are submitted to economic, linguistic, cultural and educational discrimination.

- Because of artificial assimilation and forced emigration, the numbers of the Hungarian minority in Romania stagnated for 75 years and are now dangerously decreasing. In the last few years, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans have left our country as a result of the adverse economic and ethnic pressures they face.

- The Constitution of Romania declares the country a “unified Romanian national State”; it does not recognise as State-forming ethnic groups – the minority national communities.
- The nationalised ecclesiastical properties have not been restored, and discrimination is felt towards national and religious minorities.⁵

This enumeration of grievances is a true reflection of our situation. On August 31st of this year, Romanian anti-minority policy made us recall our DAHR representative from the Council of National Minorities, operated by the Romanian government. This institution has never been able to show any real results; it was never anything more than a window-dressing facade designed to deceive Europe.

Nonetheless the Hungarians of Romania do not engage in the depraving policy of injury of the State. The DAHR, as a member of the opposition Romanian Democratic Convention, comes out in support of democratic changes, political pluralism, constitutionality and market economy. Moreover, it readily endorses the main objects of Romanian foreign affairs – membership of the Council of Europe, Most Favoured Nation status and so on – on the condition of ensuring human and minority rights. For the sake of the resolution of common problems, the DAHR keeps on urging the organisation of a country-wide Romanian-Hungarian round table conference, but so far without any results. At the suggestion of the Hungarian Churches in Romania, we have tried to promote Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation in the framework of a country-wide ecumenical meeting, but again with no more than trifling results.

It is our hope that the October conference of the CSCE in Vienna, and the European institutions in general, will efficiently contribute to the settlement of minority questions in our region and Romania, and that by properly monitoring, checking and sanctioning systems, they will ensure that Romania, as well as Slovakia, will not only sign but will also give effect to the documents regarding the human and minority rights of a common Europe.

3. Timely Expectations from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the European Area Council⁶

I should start my report to the Meeting of the Governing Body held in Geneva from 15th to 18th of March by saying how important the WARC is to us, what purpose the WARC and EAC have in the universal community of Reformed believers and in this community’s relationship with our Reformed Church in Romania, and how they fulfil this role. In this regard I would like to emphasise that the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has only become real to the Churches on the other side of the Iron Curtain since 1989. It follows that the current period is nothing less than a period of integration into the Alliance for the Churches of Central and Eastern Europe. The political changes have found us unprepared and we must invest a great deal of effort into becoming worthy members, both in respect of our organization and in the spiritual; community of the large international family of the Reformed Churches.

Turning now to our expectations from the WRAC and EAC, I should firstly offer an answer to points 2 and 3 of the SWOT analysis⁷, that is the issue of WRAC’s “weaknesses” and “opportunities”. Since our opinion on these issues can in many respects already be found in the many answers given by the other Churches, I would like to restrict myself in this report to saying that which is new, different or additional.

1. First, I would like to raise the question of Reformed identity. The weakening of the Reformed identity is part of the general identity crisis of our times. The most common form of this lack of identity is consistently demonstrated in over-compensating ecumenical behaviour. The WRAC should begin a process of theoretical, theological and sociological clarification in order to proclaim, protect and strengthen our identity as Reformed Christians.

2. The general identity crisis of which I have spoken is particularly significant on the continent of Europe. Clearly, the “master” of this issue should be the European Area Council. The EAC, struggling as it does with confusion about its role and function, may find itself through addressing this specific problem – as indeed it may in other ways.

3. The issue of national minorities is also primarily within the territory and authority of the EAC. Naturally this does not imply that minority problems outside Europe and different from our own are any less deserving of attention, nor that the WRAC as a whole does not have a role to play in this area. I consider it essential, however, that this difference in emphasis be highlighted in any approach to Europe – or rather, Central and Eastern Europe.

4. Sensitivity to minority problems, which threaten the very existence of Churches in Eastern Europe, is even more possible and necessary since the breakthrough at Edinburgh in September 1989. In our opinion,

due to its exceptional importance and moral weight, the issue of minority rights deserves to be treated at the same level as human rights are. Although important steps have been taken in this direction over the last few years, we still feel that the matter of ethnic and religious minorities continues to lie in the background of international political and Church life.

5. The problem of Communism and nationalism is closely connected to the minorities issue. Milan Opocensky, the Secretary General of the WRAC, insisted in his speech at Edinburgh last September that: “there are situations, events and developments which, because of faithfulness to Jesus Christ, require a clear answer”. In my opinion, Communism is one of these. Criticism of Communism, and just as importantly the self-criticism that this would involve, comprise part of the WRAC and EAC’s duties of our times. Naturally this criticism cannot be expected of the WRAC alone.

6. The reincarnation of nationalism as part of the process of Communist restoration is a specifically neo-Communist phenomenon. It is for this reason that the WRAC and the more directly affected EAC should turn their attention to the implicit and explicit connection between the two, and on the basis of this enquiry develop adequate and differentiating positions on the matter of majority nationalism, and on the ethnic and religious minorities threatened by it. Our struggles to defend ourselves must never be confused with the majority policies of assimilation and discrimination.

7. Starting from this important precondition, I would ask the EAC to work harder in the future for the protection of the minority member Churches of Central and Eastern Europe, and through working with different international ecumenical organizations to take initial steps to press forward the process of national and denominational reconciliation. The great obstacles to the duty of peace-making we have laid on us in the Gospel are at present a Communist-style manipulation of the people, and large-scale disinformation.

8. Finally, I would like to express the general necessity for Churches of Eastern and Western Europe to draw together. Due to historical, cultural and, most of all, political factors, Churches once divided by the Iron Curtain remain in many respects on different sides of a gaping divide. With the application of effort on both sides, we should develop a strategy to bridge the differences and tensions that divide and separate us. After which we should be able to say, in the words of St Paul: “now in Christ Jesus, we who were once far off have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Eph 2.13).

4. Autonomy: the Best Solution Against Secession⁸

Today is a day of happiness and satisfaction for the Hungarian national minority in Romania. Just three years have passed since the Flensburg Congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) accepted the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) as a full member – and already we have been given the special honour of hosting in our country, in historic Timisoara, the noted representatives of Europe’s minority nationalities during the forty first FUEN Congress.

First of all I must thank President Christopher Pann and FUEN’s decision makers for this honour, and for the practical help that the simple choice of Romania as the venue for this meeting has given to both this country’s Hungarian community and the other national minorities present in Romania. The presence of the Congress here represents real support for our minority’s struggle.

It is here, too, that I would like to say a few words of thanks to those colleagues and supporters who played a major role in our acceptance as a full member of FUEN, and in FUEN’s acceptance of our invitation to hold this congress here in Timisoara. They are, among others: Géza Szócs, past General Secretary of the DAHR, László Pillich, our representative to FUEN, and Eva Maria Barki, the noted Barrister in Vienna. It is with regret that I learned of László Pillich’s final decision to resign the post and responsibilities which he has carried for so many years at FUEN. The ban on Mrs Barki’s entry or residence in this country is, on the other hand, Romania’s shame.

My third word of thanks is that I am able, after much unforeseen complication and lengthy to-ing and fro-ing, to address this respected Congress in person. It is not as the Honorary President of the DAHR that I wish to address you, but much rather as a past pastor of the Timisoara Reformed Congregation.

First, I would like to cite the abiding memory of the bloody Christmas of 1989, and bring before you the lessons it offers us. Here in Timisoara, from the church of my congregation, the Hungarian Reformed people and the – mainly Romanian – supporters who joined them, set on foot that desperate opposition which grew into the Romanian Revolution, and signalled the coming end of the Ceausescu Communist dictatorship. The defining characteristic of those December days was the close solidarity and united action of the Romanian people and the other nationalities against common and nationalist oppression. Multi-

ethnic and multi-denominational Timisoara gave the country and the world the example of national tolerance and religious ecumenism.

I would much prefer on an occasion such as this to speak only about national and religious reconciliation, and about the good relations between nationalities. Especially here in Timisoara, where since the changes of 1989, inter-ethnic and inter-denominational festivals and conferences organised by our Church have taken place every year. Unfortunately, this I cannot do.

The restoration of Communism in this, as in many other neighboring countries, has obstructed democratic transformation in Romania, and I am forced to continue to talk about the deprivation of our rights as a minority. The constitutional principle of the “unitary Romanian national-State” upon which the homogenization of the country’s population is based, is but a continuation of the oppressively nationalistic and assimilating politics that have been practised in Romania for the last three quarters of a century. This pan-Romanian great national political process has resulted in the size of the Hungarian community falling from 32% of Transylvania’s population to 21% (in actual numbers, from 1,663,000 to 1,603,000 people) and the German group melting away from 800,000 to just 100,000. Over the same period, the number of Romanian inhabitants of Transylvania has increased through organized assimilation and migration from 2,829,000 to 5,671,000 people, which represents a jump in ethnic concentration from 34% of the population to 74%. While in 1920 over half of the country’s population belonged to the national minority communities, this proportion has now fallen below 10%. The continuation of this nationalist policy of minorization can be felt to this day.

Respected Congress! In no way do I wish to spoil the festive atmosphere of our gathering, but I cannot hide or falsify the upsetting facts of our minority’s plight.

It is a great honour for us that Theodore Melescanu, the Foreign Minister of Romania, has promised to greet us in person. His presence, however, should not make us overlook the regretful circumstances in which the authorities, through the massive participation of the Council for National Minorities and the Ministry of Culture, have from the very beginning attempted to assume control of our Congress. Romania’s leaders would like us to use even his occasion to make the outside world believe that they are “democratically” and “impartially” trying to resolve the nationalities question, that their only obstacle to this is the power of the so-called “extreme” nationalist forces, and that, as a result, the dissatisfaction of the minorities is entirely groundless.

We are sure that the FUEN Congress and the worthy delegates will not be misled by the different types of manipulation experienced in Timisoara and Romania. We very much hope that you will not be drawn into making the same mistakes that many in the West make concerning us, now, as they did in Ceausescu’s time.

The Hungarian national community in Romania has never at any time in its 73 years as a minority resorted to violence. It continues its struggle within the framework offered by parliamentary democracy, with peaceful and legal means, to obtain human and collective rights consistent with European standards and practice, and to see created in Romania forms of autonomy that have worked well in other parts of Europe.

Professor Christopher Pann, in his speech last year in Washington, was correct when he stated that “Autonomy is the best protection against secession”. We would like to ask the democratic forces in Romania, and not least the FUEN, to reject the baseless accusations of separatism or, even worse, of secessionism that are made against us by Romanian nationalists, and to support our Hungarian national community’s endeavours towards autonomy. We are convinced that only autonomy for the minorities can guarantee our rights and our survival. This autonomy is also the best guarantee for our region’s peace, security and stability.

5. Report of Committee on Minorities and Minority Churches⁹

Introduction

On behalf of the Committee, mandated by the European Regional Council of the World Alliance of the Reformed Churches (WARC) on its Prague meeting, April 1997, I respectfully table my report. The Committee, in approaching to the questions under its mandate, met with multiple problems.

1. It is difficult to determine that we have to deal with the minority question in general or only with regard to the minority Churches.

2. Even if we start from the latter case it is almost impossible to separate from each other the general and the particular questions of minority Churches. It is even so impossible because in the majority of cases the ethnic and religious minority cases are closely intertwined or actually coincided.

The Committee has an additional trouble with the circumstance that in Europe the Reformed Churches, almost everywhere, are minority Churches at the same time. Consequently it is extremely difficult to determine and in clear form narrow the subject of the report.

Taking into consideration the aforementioned, we can do the following:

a. We selected randomly those minority situations, those countries and Churches which are in our knowable reach.

b. We concentrate on those countries and Churches where the minority question causes severe problems. Because of the ethnic feature of the task force (István Csete Szemesi, Szilárdka Baczoni, László Tőkés) we dealt with mainly those countries, the Central East European region, in which our minority Churches are living (Romania, Slovakia, Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Croatia) – even so because the Geneva meeting of the officials of the European Regional Council, on last fall, underlined the extreme importance of the case of Hungarian language Churches.

c. Beside this the charge on the officials of the European Region of the World Federation especially mandated us to deal with one or another Hungarian minority Church. (For instance the observation of the Sub-Carpathian region belongs to me). 5. Finally I have to mention the difficulties in the work of the task force. Since Prague we did not gather together for a meeting. Its main reason is my heavy program and too much responsibilities. When I made an attempt to meet a month ago, my effort was not successful.

Because of these my report is based on the written materials of Bishops István Csete Szemesi (Yugoslavia), Lajos Gulácsy (Sub-Carpathian Ukraine), Géza Edélyi (Slovakia) and my own work. We hope that our next report will better embrace the issues of minorities and minority Churches.

Preliminaries

In the fall of 1995, on the General Assembly of the European Region of the WARC a big step was done forward, or rather a breakthrough happened in respect to the viewing of the minority Churches. As its direct continuation The European Regional Council pays special attention to the issues of minority Churches and national communities.

Thank to this new view and dealing our Hungarian language minority Churches received significant representation and role in the European Regional Council, and their particular troubles are in the center of attention of the Council.

In the program framework of the SWOT's measurement I could sent my paper entitled "Our Timely Expectations" to the Prague meeting of ERC 1996, then I tabled with confidence a minority "parcel" to the Prague meeting of the Council in April, asking to pay increased attention to the questions mentioned in it, and to table them to the General Assembly, Debrecen, August 1997. In Debrecen on a plenary session I tabled, from the same impulse, the common statement of the World Federation of Reformed Hungarians and the Consultative Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Churches, asking for the distinguished attention of the General Assembly and for its binding statement with regard to minorities and minority Churches in East and Center-East European – among them the Hungarian ones.

It can be stated with regret that in contrast to the Prague resolution of the ERC which marked with priority the minority question – the minority question together with the question of bankrupt Communism were put totally in the background at the General Assembly in Debrecen. In both cases we have to regard as correct the statement of the 1997 September meeting of ERC which says: "the end of the Communist era did not become the theme in Debrecen. In spite of the fact that the conference was held in a former socialist State, the organizers of the conference did not give space for these questions. This theme surfaced only cursorily..."

We can objectively state that the minority question got lost in Debrecen – against the European priority of our Council. More over, in Debrecen the "Calvinist Rome" of Hungary the official press service of the WARC launched a rude onslaught against the Hungarian Reformed

Churches accusing them with the “attempts for the restoration of Hungarian hegemony”, with the creation of a “mega or super Church” and a “sole transnational Hungarian congregation”. Left without answer our expressed collective request and the leadership of the WARC did not give to us satisfaction for our severe accusation – in our common native land.

Minority Problems in the Hungarian Reformed Member-Churches of the Europe Organization of the WARC

The first thing that needs to be said, before I deal with the concrete problems experienced in the individual countries, is that that our Committee on Minorities is yet to formulize its work-method, strategy, work order and contact-system extended over Europe.

In its latest letter the Regional Secretariat recommended to us as pattern to follow the report of the task force on “The Ordination of Women” and its work-methods. I have already mentioned in the introduction and I would like to emphasize that the subject of Committee on Minority is much more complicated than we could mechanically follow the clear pattern of a different task force.

Further, we have to see clearly that organizing and functioning of a well founded Church-service on minority issues far beyond the capacity and the financial means of our Committee. Before we endeavor the serious service the WCC has to overhaul its plan and expectation with regard to the Committee on Minorities.

The following can be stated in respect of national and minority Churches.

1. In **Slovakia** the power of prime-minister Meciar was completed with the jurisdiction of Head of State, which was vacant. The anti-democratic Slovak society, which brushing with the national-Communist dictatorship, is drifting far from Europe.

The lack of democracy most strikingly marked in the anti-minority or rather Anti-Hungarian policy of the Meciar regime. The newest rude series of onslaught against the Reformed Church is constitute systematic part of the attack against the 600.000 strong Hungarian nation in Slovakia - stated by Bishop Géza Erdélyi. The renewed anti-Hungarian Church-campaign is aggravated by the circumstance that Jan Kaduk, the nationalist church-activist on behalf of 13% Slovak Reformed minority within the Church attacks the Church leaders of 87 % Hungarian Reformed majority.

In Slovakia under the blanket of nationalism there is an ongoing fight between dictatorship and democracy. The Hungarian and the Reformed Hungarian minority are exposed the discrimination of the nationalism of majority. There problems are as follow:

- the Slovak language-law discriminative in character,
- the introduction of “language police”,
- the sabotage of the minority language law,
- the restriction of Hungarian language and religious education,
- the forcing of the so called “alternate education” which has a scope of Slovakization,
- the withdrawal of State material support from minority culture,
- attempt to wear out or to ban the opposition, that is Hungarian, political parties.

The Christian Reformed Church in Slovakia is compelled to fight against the Slovak ethnic separatism too, which threaten its unity. The Church in this minority fight time to time faces the lack of understanding of the central leadership of the WARC.

Recommendations:

- to sending an impartial committee to study the situation of minority and that of the Church in Slovakia,
- to monitor continuously the minority situation and that of the Church in Slovakia,
- to be written a comprehensive report on the April visit of Krister Anderson president, it should be debated in the ERC and to draw its consequences.
- to organize Church meetings in order to promote the approach between Reformed Slovaks and Reformed Hungarians.

– WCC and WARC should protest against the antidemocraticism of the Meciar regime.

2. In **Yugoslavia** annihilation threatens the tiny Reformed Church. The abolition of the autonomies of Voivodina (Vajdaság) and Kosovo results that the minorities, threatened in their existence, left almost without legal and political defense. The artificially directed resettlements upset the demographic balance. The post-Communist, dictatorial and militarist Milosevic regime applies a policy characterized by merciless assimilation and discrimination. The ethnic cleansing of the Balkan war keeps in fear the non-Serbian populace.

The education in Hungarian language totally collapsed.

According to the report of Bishop István Csete Szemesi the greatest worry is the emigration of the Hungarian youth and intelligentsia.

Cannot be expected something better from the splintered opposition than from those in power. The greatest challenge of the Hungarians in Yugoslavia to find “the real possibility of how to stay at home” (István Csete Szemesi).

Recommendations:

- The delegation of the WCC should visit Yugoslavia and urgently examine the situation and should strengthen the faith and moral of the oppressed,
- To create civilized conditions by enhancing Western contribution in order to block emigration,
- WCC and WARC raise its voice against anti-minority, discriminative and assimilative policy,
- To continuous monitoring of the situation.

3. In **Croatia** post-war conditions prevail in the areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians and Reformed people. The majority of these regions came again under Croatian authority on January 15 1998.

The greater part of the country’s ethnic Hungarian population (22.000) escaped during the war or the Serbian military chased them away (1991). Many of their settlements almost completely demolished. The village Szentlászló calls to mind the one-time destruction of Lidice in Czechoslovakia. The Hungarian language Reformed congregations in Romania make united effort for rebuilding its Reformed Church demolished by gunfire.

For the time being only a few thousand ethnic Hungarian and a handful Reformed people live in Croatia.

Amidst the slowly normalizing circumstances the major worry of the Hungarian minority as well as that of the co-habitant national groups is to return to their native land and the rebuilding.

The society, the Church-life and the ruined education system have to be reorganized.

Recommendations:

- To support materially and morally the homecoming and rebuilding,
- To reorganize the Reformed Church in Croatia and to assist rebuilding of the churches.
- To launch social-diakonal programs.

4. **Sub-Carpathian Ukraine.** Here the Reformed Church made up the majority of the 160.000 strong ethnic Hungarians. 130.000 Reformed people live in 98 congregations. There are 42 ministers.

The progress toward democracy is grossly hindered by the unfathomable misery of the country. Unbearable is the situation of the elderly, the extended families and the sick. The rate of unemployment is huge. The health system is in ruins.

Beside the general worries of the people the particular problems of the minority ethnic Hungarians are the following: the high rate of emigration of youth and intelligentsia, disordered

proprietorships, the chipped away minority language rights in front of the Ukrainian language-protection, the deplorable situation of the minority education.

In 1991 82 % of the people of Bregyszász county voted for the creation of the Hungarian Autonomous Region. But the Ukrainian authorities delay the implementation of the lawful referendum.

Ukrainian authorities unlawfully hinder the import of humanitarian aid from abroad.

The Reformed Church in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine did not receive back good half of its manses nationalized under Communist era. Its confiscated properties did not return to its owners.

According to the opinion of Bishop Lajos Gulácsy the greatest challenge of the region as well as the Church are: the misery which must be appeased on material and diakonal levels.

Recommendations:

- To call people for a general co-operation, to organize programs for the alleviation of hunger and for helping who live in want,
- To support the reorganization of the Church ruined during the Communist era,
- To visit Sub-Carpathian Ukraine by the delegation of the WCC,
- To support the fight for the human right of minority and that of the community.

5. In **Romania** because of the government crisis, which lasts for months, and because of the survival of the Communist-nationalist elements in the structure of the administration and in the society the process which started on the fall of 1996 and aimed to democratic transformation came to a standstill.

Apart from a slight improvement, in general the situation of Hungarian national communities as well as the problems the minority Churches in Romania remained unchanged. Out of these the outstanding ones are the following:

- The dragging of the returning of the confiscated properties of the community and that of the Churches,
- The discriminative features of the Romanian Education Law,
- The restriction of the language usage,
- The postponement of the restoration of denomination based education,
- The apparent discrimination of the administration against the minority Churches,
- The continuation of the nationalist-chauvinist propaganda,
- The obstruction of legislating the Law on Religion.

The documents handed over in this year are more or less still valid.

For the time being the Hungarian language Churches in Romania involved in organizing a campaign of collecting signatures for returning of the properties to the Churches and communities confiscated in the Communist era.

Recommendations:

- To monitor continuously the situation of the minority and that of the Church,
- The official intervention of the WCC and WARC for the returning of the Church and community properties, for the restoration of the denomination based education, for the assurance of the education in mother tongue on every level, for against every form of discrimination,
- The active promotion of the interchurch reconciliation, and the public condemnation of the nationalist-chauvinist propaganda.

Finally, starting from the similarity of the various situations we recommend to the special attention of the respective members of the ERC asking the contribution of the Council to handling, solving or eventually eliminating the followings:

- The ethnic and religious intolerance and discrimination,
- The policy of assimilation (for the creation of “pure national State”),
- The refusal of granting historical and moral satisfaction (eg: in the cases of genocidium in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine and in Yugoslavia),
- The suppression of rightful aspirations for autonomy,

- The refusal of accepting democratic value system and European integration,
- The usage of faith, religion, individual Churches and ecumenism against the will of God for alien purposes.

NOTES

1. The first four essays were taken from the book of László Tőkés, *In the Spirit of Timisoara*, Oradea, 1966, with permission.
Bishop László Tőkés when he was the reformed minister in Temesvár (Timisoara) had a decisive role in the downfall of the Communist regime of Ceausescu (December 25, 1989). His heroic resistance to the dictatorship lit the fire of the revolution which led to the downfall of the dictatorship. The Bishop is the fighter for the rights of 2.5 million strong Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania.
2. Lecture at an international forum, Budapest, December 8, 1994.
In the introduction the author writes – *inter alia* – the following: “The Spanish Helsinki Committee, acting within the framework of the International Helsinki Federation, has given prominent interest and assistance to social change in countries of Central and Eastern Europe in itself noteworthy and laudable. As a representative of this area, I am even more pleased to see the establishment by the Spanish Helsinki Committee of International University Network with its practical programs and methods, which promise real help for the countries ravaged by Communism. The Budapest University Forum complements in a positive way the work of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and with its sincerity and its lack of a political or prejudiced character, it can contribute to both the democratic transformation of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which began with the changes in 1989, and to the recovery and consolidation of their economic and social lives”.
3. In Romania the Hungarian ethnic minority lives mainly its Western part in Transylvania (Erdély). This region was part of the historical Hungary for a thousand year and the Versailles-Trianon peace dictate, after the First World War, awarded it to Romania. With it some 2.5 million Hungarians and 800,000 ethnic Germans fell under Romanian rule. In the Royal Romania as well as in the Communist one the oppression, defrauding, romanization and dispersion of the ethnic minorities continue unabated. This type of ethnic policy has not been abandoned by the regimes after the changes in 1989, rather it was sharpened.
4. The paper was delivered on the minority conference organized by the Committee for Human Rights of the Conference of European Churches cooperating with the CSCE, Budapest, September 6, 1993.
5. In the Western Part of Romania there are two major regions the so called “Partium” along the Hungarian border, and “Transylvania” proper (Erdély). There are two Hungarian Reformed Church Districts in Romania. In Partium there is the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District, in Transylvania there is the Transylvanian Reformed Church District. After 1945 the Roman State confiscated from the Királyhágómelléki Reformed Church District 277 objects. These are: 1 bishopric palace, 142 schools, 14 cultural centers, 11 real estates, 101 dwelling houses and 8 other houses. From the Transylvanian Church District 500 buildings, schools and real estates were confiscated. From the confiscated properties none of them was returned to the original owner by the end of 1997.
However, the Romanian State returned to the Romanian Orthodox Church the formerly confiscated properties, such as: real estates, monasteries, and provides help for construction of new churches, even factories were donated to this Church in order to assist in maintaining the Church. All these are proofs for the discriminatory Church and minority policy of the Romanian State.
6. The speech was delivered in Geneva, Switzerland, on March 14, 1996.

7. The SWOT analysis was prepared upon the reports of the member-Churches. In it they spell out their opinions in the terms of “**S**trenght”, “**W**eakness”, “**O**pportunities” and “**T**hreats” about the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.
8. The speech was delivered at the 41st Congress of the Federative Union of European Nations, on 16 May, 1996, Timisoara.
9. Appeared in the “Partiumi Közlöny” (Partium Gazette),viii.Yrs.No.5, April 10, 1998, Oradea, Romania, pp.1-3. Translation by the editor.

editor

Notes compiled by the

Chapter 11

WE DEMAND OUR RIGHTS

Botond Somogyi

There were three major waves of expansion in the history of the Transylvanian Reformed Church^{lxxii}. The first was in the time of Bishop Domokos Szász, the second after the Treaty of Versailles-Trianon at the end of World War I, when many denominational schools needed to be built, and the third is the present construction of buildings following the revolution of 1989 in Romania.^{lxxiii} However, the third is the greatest and the most important of them, brought about by the fact that our nationalized estates were not and will not be returned. This situation acted as a catalyst for the construction of many new buildings because prior to the Communist era, the Church used to have cultural centers and schools in many places which could be used by the Church for congregational purposes. But before I expand on the subject of construction, I would like to say some things about our nationalized Church estates since, as will be clear from the previous comments, the two go hand in hand.

The Transylvanian Reformed Church claims approximately 500 buildings from the Romanian Government. The majority of these, more than 80%, are school buildings or denominational schools, but there are also cultural centers, apartments, Christian Youth Centers etc., and it would not be out of place to include our charitable institutions, such as old-age homes and orphanages.

In the last ten years the traditional Hungarian Churches have already asked the authorities to return our nationalized estates.^{lxxiv} The Transylvanian Reformed Church has often voiced these demands in past years, first by direct request and second by the Conference of the leadership of the Hungarian Churches (Bishops and Chief Elders). These requests were delivered to the authorities, but it is no great surprise to report that we have had no response. “On this matter we have asked for a hearing from President Constantinescu,” says Bishop Dr Kálmán Csiha,^{lxxv} “but the hearing was so organized that all of the recognized Churches were represented and the problems were too generalized. When we brought up the question of the return of the Church estates we got a digressive answer, in which the President recognized that their return was necessary while at the same time emphasizing that the solution was very difficult, because buildings belonging to ethnic minorities are mostly in downtown areas and they have already been taken over by the Romanian Government for various purposes. If they were to be returned, their present occupants would then have nowhere to go”.

The Reformed Church thus not only internally but also internationally emphasizes that Romania has a long way to go in fulfillment of its aim of the return of Church estates, a goal supported by the European Council. The World Council of Churches (WCC) and The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) are also aware of our situation. In consequence, several Reformed Churches have requested the Romanian Government to secure freedom of religion in Romania.

When Romania was being monitored by the international community,^{lxxvi} we aired our problems before representatives of the European Parliament (representatives of the Romanian authorities were also present) adding that our country does not meet the requirements of the European Council about Churches, namely, securing the functioning of denominational schools and the return of nationalized Church estates. On 26-27 October 1998, the Common Synod of the Austrian Reformed and Lutheran Church invited Bishop Kálmán Csiha to Vienna, where he made a report on the home situation. The Synod’s invitation was particularly important, because in that year Austria held the presidency of the EC, and their representatives were also participants, so that we could speak of our demands in front of them and at the same time we could hand over the book entitled “*We demand our rights*”,^{lxxvii} along with various documents regarding our minority situation.

Help, unfortunately, did not come from any quarter. There is no difference in the relationship to our Church of the old Communist government and the new, so-called democratic Romanian government. Thus, our Church was able to get back only two buildings, which were not even then accessible due to further difficulties imposed by the authorities. The buildings were still occupied as the headquarters of other institutions. The combined outcome of all this is that in the past few years the Transylvanian Reformed Church has begun a full-blown constructional program. Among the first to be built was the Youth Center of Illyefalva (Ilieni), followed by the Bethlen Kata Diaconal Center of Kolozsvár (Cluj).

Congregations have started this construction program with their own efforts (a 36-member congregation in the village of Szopor, near Kolozsvár, built a church without any international help whatsoever) and the help of the District and sister-congregations. Naturally, as well as the assistance of sister-congregations, other help comes from charitable organizations such as the Swiss *HEKS*, a Lutheran-Reformed charitable organization, the German *Gustav Adolf Werk* which helps mostly with diasporical work, the Swiss *Glaube in der 2. Welt*, the *Lippische Landeskirche* and the *Reformierter Bund* from Germany, as well as the Swiss *Lazarus Hilfswerk*. The Hungarian Reformed Churches in the United States, Australia and Canada, which were visited by the leadership of our Church, also sent their assistance.

Let us see, then, what kind of Church estates have been built (up till now 250 in all, of which 34 are churches or church expansions). They include diaconal centers, children's homes (Illyefalva), health and conference centers, houses for prayer and kindergartens (Medgyes, Sárvásár), and also a bakery, a gas station, a dairy products maker and a meat factory. Mostly they are homes for the various congregations, but also significant are the number of new manses. These constructions are characterized by the fact that the congregations want to break out of isolation and take part in the life of the society, as shown by the construction of badly needed orphanages, senior citizens homes and youth centers. The congregational homes serve the purpose of Church members wanting to take part not just in the devotional life but also in the wider social life, where they can sit at a table and talk to each other, for instance in women's associations or where youth groups can hold meetings, and they can live their Christian life unobstructed.

Besides the construction of recent times, the necessity is more and more felt that dormitories for students need to be built, because hundreds of schools were taken from the Church and until now we have not got many of them back. Mostly without buildings, we organized six Reformed Boarding Schools (located at Kolozsvár, Nagyenyed, Marosvásárhely, Kézdivásárhely, Székelyudvarhely, Sepsiszentgyörgy) and four colleges (for religious instruction at Kolozsvár, for home nursing at Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely, for an organist school at Marosvásárhely). A reformed dormitory was built in Kolozsvár, the same place as the home nursing school, along with classrooms for the students. Dormitories were built in Nagyenyed, Székelyudvarhely and Kézdivásárhely for the students of the Reformed Colleges, and soon the construction of the Diaconal Center in Marosvásárhely will begin.

Among all these constructions three stand out: the Zsobok Center with its orphanage, school and dormitories, where now a senior citizens home is being added, the Youth Center at Illyefalva and the Diaconal Center at Kolozsvár. These three are also major conference centers. That at Kolozsvár provides space for the Reformed Emergency Mission, the Religious Resource Center and the Agnus Radio Studio, where church-related programs are broadcasted. It is of great significance to us that these centers also hold conferences for Christian youth, women's association, training for church elders and ministers, and so on.

As to the congregational homes built (with guest rooms) in smaller villages, there are those who say that the buildings are not used to their entire potential. Slowly coming into focus are tourist groups visiting Transylvania, mostly from American Hungarian Reformed congregations. Tourism at the village level is still young here, but many people consider it has a great future. Even this year there were organized groups of Canadians who visited Transylvania. Groups from Western Europe and even from Australia are going to visit congregations belonging to our District. In many places it makes things much easier if they can be adequately boarded in these guest rooms or conference centers. Visitors accustomed to western conditions are pleased that we can treat them with sufficient care in the newly built congregational homes.

In our Church we meet with many new initiatives. The social and evangelical tasks are so pressing that we cannot take care of everything at once, but now and then a new idea comes up and some of them we have been able to realize, as for example the diaconal service for more than 500 patients at Kolozsvár, and the Eutikhus Youth-Worker Service. This last initiative started as the diaconal project of the Szentkeresztbánya congregation but has now become autonomous. Its purpose is as follows: at the age of 18, youngsters from State-owned orphanages are put out on the streets. These youths are unprepared for life and have no work opportunities, no homes, no place to fit into our society. They are in hopeless circumstances; many of them turn to burglary and begging. The Youth Worker Service wants to integrate them into the society, so they buy houses in depopulated villages which are being renewed. They even buy land for them, from which they can sustain themselves. In this way it has successfully placed 24 youths in three agricultural youth-worker centers in Ége and Lengyelfalva and Petek.

There is an even greater need for these buildings for the purposes of home-missionary work. The Christian Youth Organization, the Women Association work, the religious and youth instruction, senior care and orphan care are all in need of buildings to house them. Although it is true that in our country the standard of living is very low by Western standards, and as an ethnic minority Church we suffer from discrimination, yet we still hope and believe that this new construction campaign is a sign of an inner construction – a renewal, the will to live. Let us believe that this will for life is being blessed by God so that our Transylvanian Hungarian people and Reformed Church can live, witness and serve for which God has called them.lxxviii

NOTES

1. The Transylvanian Reformed Church's foundation can be dated to the middle of the 16th Century. The movements with Calvinist tendencies quickly spread throughout Transylvania, which was then a part of Hungary. The Catholic believers converted to the Reformed faith in large numbers, and soon the entire area became the "vassal" of the Reformation. In 1568, the first place in the World to declare religious freedom was Transylvania. The Reformed Church came into being in 1576. Until 1918, Transylvania was part of Hungary. After the First World War the Great Powers (USA, France, England) ceded Transylvania (101,500 sq km) to Romania in the Peace Dictate of Versailles-Trianon. Due to this Dictate, Hungary lost more than two thirds of its territory and half of its population. The majority Hungarian population of Transylvania, which for more than 1000 years had belonged to Hungary, came under Romanian jurisdiction. Today, Transylvania's population is made up mostly of Romanians, with a Hungarian minority of about 2 million people. Even so, the Hungarian minority in Romania is the biggest minority in Europe.
In Transylvania, after the Second World War, two Reformed (Hungarian speaking) Church Districts were founded: the Transylvanian Reformed Church and the Kiralyhágómellék Reformed Church District (in the North Western part of the region). The Transylvanian Reformed Church consists of 16 dioceses, its membership amounting to 400,000 in 512 congregations. (The two Reformed Church Districts have about one million members. *Ed*).
2. The first wave of construction began at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century. The second, after the Dictate of Trianon following 1918. The third is the period after 1989, which still continues to this day.
3. After the Second World War, in 1945, the Communists came into power and they nationalized everything in 1948. This meant that everything that had been private property was taken away, and they nationalized land, factories, hospitals, buildings etc. Many landowners and factory owners were thrown in prison, deported or executed. The Church leaders and priests were persecuted, many were taken away, others taken to forced labor camps. The Communists did this in order to found their atheist regime, where the people do not worship God but the Communist leaders. This situation lasted until 1989, when through a popular revolution the Communist dictatorship of Ceausescu was toppled. Through democratic elections a new Government came into power (they won the elections in 1990 and 1992), but this was still a left wing Government since the majority of the party were the executed Dictator's cronies. After the elections in 1996 a new, more democratic Government came into power, but its policies were also nationalistic, anti-democratic and non-privatizational.
4. From 1990 until now, Kálmán Csiha has been the Bishop of the Transylvanian Reformed Church. During the Communist regime he was unjustly put in jail with many other Reformed ministers. He was forced to work while ill, he lived on bread and water. He sat in jail for more than 6 years unjustly. He first saw his 6 year old daughter – who was born during his time in captivity – only after his release.
5. Romania was monitored by the European Community to ensure that international requirements accepted by the Romanian Government would be met. These included the upholding of Human and Minority Rights, the acceleration of privatization, the return of State-seized Church properties and the ratification of laws that uphold democracy in the country.
6. *We demand our rights* (Cluj, 1996) Published by the Cultural and Cults Department of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania.
From the book: *"All that has happened in the way of consolidation of democracy in Europe and indeed in the whole world can somehow be regarded as a consequence of that law of 1568. In this way our piece of land becomes the territory where the revolutionary ideas of equality, brotherhood and liberty,*

as well as the declaration of the United Nations Organization about the basic human rights, struck its roots. And precisely here, on this piece of land, in a country which aspires to European integration and makes preparations for establishing a constitutional State, there is no political will to correct a fundamental historical error of the last totalitarian order: to give back the confiscated ecclesiastical properties, to annihilate a measure which trod underfoot all basic human rights. Why cannot be a historical administration of justice be given to just those who refine mostly the human soul and spirit and are the embodiments of the Christian moral ethic, which guarantees the order in the world? We may assert that this is a sin committed not against them, but against all of us and against mankind. Our volume wants to illustrate the kind of devices by which the Transylvanian historic Churches were deprived of the fulfillment of their mission. Our crying voice requires legal remedy”.

7. This essay was written on the basis of an interview with Bishop Dr. Kálmán Csiha, which was published in January 1999 in *Reformátusok Lapja*, Hungary.

Chapter 12

THE HUNGARIANS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1945-1948)

Katalin Vadkerty

Early in the 1940s the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London and the Communist emigrées in Moscow prepared separate plans for the renewal of Czechoslovak power in the former territory of the Czechoslovak Republic. The new Republic's Slavic national character, first formulated by the London emigration, joined their plans with the Communists in Moscow. On April 5, 1945 in Kassa (Kosice) the program proclaimed by the government was what counted – in spite of the protest of the victorious Western Great Powers – with the mass deportation of the Germans and Hungarians. The creation of the Czechoslovak national State by the Czechoslovak government and political parties set in motion a property grabbing spree that nobody even bothered to hide. “The German property shall enrich the Czechs, and that of the Hungarians is for the Slovaks” – so proclaimed the Czechoslovak government.

For the ‘final solution’ of the Hungarian question they prepared multiple plans. As a first move before the Potsdam conference they formulated a plan characterized by the total deportation of all the those without property. Later plans included wholesale population exchanges, and the unilateral deportation of 200,000 Hungarians was requested at the Paris Peace Conference.

The Czechoslovak government and the Slovak National Organizations, holding all the power in Slovakia, went beyond the mere oppression of ethnic Hungarians and concentrated on sequestering the Hungarians’ property. The nationally proclaimed agrarian reform nationalized all estates of more than 50 hectares, but Decrees No.104/1945 and No.64/1946 deprived the Hungarian peasants of all their land on nationalistic grounds. In the ‘settlement zones’, as they called Hungarian districts, they confiscated 236,891 hectares of land, although in the interest of assuring public food supply they left a mere 60,000 hectares in the hands of Hungarian peasants.

As part of the agrarian reform and ethnic discrimination, confiscated farms were given to Slovak colonists. The result of this North-South Slovak migration was only partial, because the Western Great Powers refused the plan for mass deportation of Hungarians. They allowed only a bilateral one, the Czechoslovak-Hungarian agreement based on an exchange of inhabitants. Because of the internal settlement of strangers, counties which had previous to 1945 been inhabited only by Hungarians were henceforth of mixed racial population.

When the agreement of exchange of inhabitants was forced upon the Hungarian Government on February 27, 1946, the Czechoslovak government expected that at least 150,00 Hungarians and – in the Czechoslovak understanding, about 80-90,000 war-criminals – were to be deported along with their family members; around 300-320,000 Hungarians in all would move from the Republic. As it turned out, the exchange of the inhabitants became “the biggest disappointment of the Czechoslovak government”, because after the improvement of Hungary’s economic situation 95,421 Slovaks in

Hungary asked for resettlement, but with the exchange transportations just 27,961 actually moved, because only these owned real estate in Hungary. They left 38,372 cadastral acres. The number of the deported Hungarians was 89,660 persons, including those who left voluntarily before and after the agreement. In Slovakia they left behind 109,294 cadastral acres of land.

Because, on account of the disadvantageous agreement, the Hungarian government attached some conditions to the deportation, the Czechoslovak government brought in various forcing provisions. They decreed forced communal work for the ethnic Hungarians. Officially, when they were speaking to those in other countries, they referred to the Presidential General Labor Decree No.88/1945, but in fact whole families were transported by means of deportation. In the cold of winter, in unheated cattle trucks they were carried off to work in the Czech regions, in the Sudeten land. From 393 villages, 9,610 families comprising 41,640 persons were removed – among them 5,462 children less than six years old. Only in response to the determined action of the Hungarian government, in order to set in motion the exchange of inhabitants, did the Czechoslovak government agree to stop the deportations, and to return the Hungarian laborers, giving them back their properties.

Decreasing the numbers of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia also served the “reslovakization” proclaimed on June 17, 1946, according to which Hungarians who could prove they had Slovaks in their ancestry could ask to be granted Slovak nationality. In the general anti-Hungarian mood, tens of thousands of Hungarians, worried about their families, properties and futures, applied in this way for Slovak nationality. Many of them received it, but by the middle of the 1950s the bulk of them reclaimed their Hungarian nationality and declared themselves Hungarians at the national census.

The dismissal of Hungarian civil servants and employees from their work, stopping of pensions and educational support, confiscation of the property of Hungarians and punishment for using their own Hungarian language, the complete prohibition of the Hungarian culture, education and studying, created in the Hungarian inhabited areas of Slovakia a kind of situation which Karel Kaplan, a Czech historian, characterized as something “close to genocide”.

Translation by Éva

Kossuth

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Chapter 13

CHURCH AND POLITICS ¹

Géza Erdélyi

First of all, it is important to clarify the concepts that we shall be discussing. The *Church*, according to our faith, did not come into being by human decision but by God's will. The community of faith, that God has chosen, forms the Church.

The world is God's creation, created by His free will. The Church has a place and mission in this created world. The world has fallen into sin, and was saved by God's love. Based on these precepts, it can be said that there is nothing in our world that the Church should not take an interest in. This statement attests to the fact that God is an eternally active God, and that nothing happens without His knowledge and will. The Church itself is an instrument in God's hand through which He does his work in the world. There is not a place in this world from which the Lord would have wanted to exclude the Church. Politics and politicization should not be "taboo" for the Church.

Politics usually deal with matters of State and the affairs of the Land. The Church does not intend to assume the administrative and public affairs of the State; however, as the Church forms a part of our world, it has to concern itself with politics. Theologically, the situation is simpler and clearer, for sin has manifested itself in this world, and while we have to deal with sin, the Church has a serious task and an active role in society. We can phrase it in another way, and say that precisely because of sin, the Church has to be vocal in the field of politics. It is clear that the connection between Church and politics is a debated issue. Opinions are divided on the subject.

On the one side are those who loudly declare that the Church should not get involved in politics. This attitude is characteristic, especially in our century of atheist ideology. Through loud proclamations and forceful implementations, it has tried and is still trying to curb the role and limit the activities of the Church, and to restrict its work to within the four walls of the church. In other words, it is attempting to relegate the Church to a ghetto.

The opposite camp, on the other hand, declares that the Church has to assume a decisive role at all times in all public affairs and thus in the affairs of the State. In other words, one of the important roles of the Church should be consistent politicization.

Let us attempt to untangle this complicated issue, and try to define the role of the Church in the practical, everyday life of society. In recognition of the fact that, in our present world, the outward appearance of the Church is not one of unity, since there are numerous traditional Christian groups and denominations, we are forced to narrow down, at least to some extent, the overall view of the worldwide Church. For my own part I wish to speak about the Reformed Church in the Eastern European region, and illustrate my remarks with a few examples from its experiences.

I am convinced that it would be impossible to debate the fate and history of the peoples of Europe without considering the Christian Churches, for the Bible and its moral philosophy have played a decisive role in their development into nations. There is hardly any part of life where the teachings of the Bible have not had an impact. With respect to our own Hungarian minority, it is similarly impossible to speak out with authority on

their behalf and, at the same time, neglect or exclude the Churches; it is nevertheless necessary to speak out, and this conversely means interfering in current politics. The expression *minority* is a much debated and variously interpreted expression. However, it becomes clearer as time goes on that it has to be considered and defined, preferably universally, that by minority and minorities are meant those who are in a minority in proportion to others within the boundaries of a State, but are no less valuable members of the society than the majority.

The whole history of Israel is eloquent proof that ethnicity and nationhood, mission and “destiny”, morals, culture and knowledge are inseparable from one another. We reach the same conclusion by looking at the history of Hungary in Central Europe. The founder of our State, King Stephen I (998-1038) and his successors, possessors of significant secular power on the European stage, converted our people to Christianity. However, the Reformation and the Reformers made them into true nationals, not through secular power but through the Hungarian language and the vernacular Gospels. We can justifiably ask if, when they adjusted their policies to the value system of Christianity, were they not conducting a missionary enterprise? They certainly were, and their action is eternally meritorious even from the Christian Church’s standpoint. We similarly pose the question that, when the Church used particular political tools, did it not conduct missionary work at the same time? In all probability, it did. In view of this it is enough to cite from the Old Testament King David’s form and methods of rule, or the role of the prophets, who were constantly doing missionary work among the people and the kings. In the history of the Dutch Presbyterian Church, Abraham Kuyper offered the most eloquent example in modern times. Looking at other regions of Europe, we can mention Comenius. After the mortal military and political blow that Bohemian Protestantism was dealt, he was invited and given asylum by the Hungarian Reformed community who, while greater in numbers, were by no less persecuted themselves. We can justifiably ask, did the foregoing act of the Hungarian Reformed Church not have political or sociological significance? Most definitely yes, although it did not happen out of political interest.

It is commonly known that at the battle of Mohács in 1526, several Catholic Bishops died a hero’s death fighting the Turks. This was a hard political act and, despite the lost battle, nevertheless carried great moral weight.

Even silence can have serious political implications. The great Hungarian poet, János Arany, made political statements with his silence after the lost 1848 Revolution. My earlier great predecessor, the poet Mihály Tompa, preacher of Hanva (Chanava), politicized exactly the opposite way when, in his humiliation, destruction, and in peril of his life, he called the nation to song with his poems. Let us take a leap in time. What did our contemporary, the Rev. László Tőkés, do in Temesvár (Timisoara, Transylvania, Romania) in 1989, when he broke through the diabolical wall of silence erected by a murderous, merciless Ceausescu Communist regime? Perhaps he shouldn’t have done it. Perhaps he should have praised the dictator, as did so many of the orthodox and non-orthodox clergy. For praise him they did, and by doing so they politicized, albeit falsely, lauding an immoral, oppressive regime. Perhaps these examples are sufficient to pose the question, is it possible not to take part in politics?

We should finally understand that prophetic zeal, a certainty of calling and a sense of mission, moral decisions born out of vatic inspiration impossible to suppress, are all inner

forces that have always and everywhere found expression in the “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise” code of true conscience made famous by Martin Luther. I think that this much is enough to make it crystal clear that every conscientious personal and public manifestation, decision and act in its own place and time means politicization in a certain context. Precisely for that reason, there have always been – and, let us hope, always will be – those who, against all official will and order, will bravely stand up for the ideals of freedom, or in the interest of justice; who will fight their battle on the side of human dignity, harboring the persecuted, satisfying the hungry, stretching out a helping hand towards those less fortunate in life, rescuing the ones in danger for their faith. They are all serving in response to an inner order; they are, if you will, politicizing.

The crucial question therefore is not whether the Church should politicize, or should Church and politics have anything to do with each other. The question is rather, to what end, conceding what or to whom, and how should the Church or a member of the Church behave in relation to his faith and moral norms? There is instruction and education on faith taking place in the schools at the John Calvin Theological Academy (Komárom, Slovakia), and pedagogical activity unavoidably and necessarily contains polity.

Only the Churches can teach people to tolerate each other with love and with patience, to have courage, humanity and strong faith - and so they should, so that while saving ourselves, we can save the majority with our good example - for even a hint of oppression would tempt them to turn away from us - before destructive and self-destructive hatred becomes their life-principle. In the interest of clarity, allow me to quote well tested, three-thousand-year-old words: “Man’s lot is labor, God’s grace is blessing” (The Pilgrim’s Song).

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that built it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman stays awake but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so God gives his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of ones youth. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them: he shall not be ashamed, but he shall speak with the adversaries in the gate.”

(Psalm 127)

Reformed Spirituality, Homiletics, and the View of the Future²

The roots of Reformed spirituality reach far back in history, to the century of the Reformation. In spite of historical obstacles and storms, we have to view the Reformed Church’s more than four and a half centuries’ past in its entirety, and evaluate Reformed spirituality based on a common thread of unified attitude. This spirituality is the result of the spiritual awakening that was experienced by the whole nation with the adoption of the Reformation. In our view, the Christianization of the Hungarian nation reached its peak with the Reformation; it really came about with the acceptance of the tenets of the Reformation, for only then could the people become acquainted with the Gospel of Redemption in their native tongue. Until the Reformation they met, in essence, only with the outward practice and religious representation of the Christian – or rather the Roman Catholic – Church. To understand, to accept and to live by the essence of the Gospel became possible for the Hungarian nation only through its proclamation and communication *in their own mother tongue*. This general statement can also be applied to

the Reformed Church in Slovakia, which formed an integral part of the Reformed Church of the Carpathian Basin, including the Slovak-speaking part of the Reformed Church in Slovakia. From the foregoing it can be deduced that the spiritual life of our Church in Slovakia was formed over a long period by the same influence that fashioned the spirituality of the present Reformed Church in Hungary. I would like to draw attention to the fact that since the division of the Reformed Church of the Carpathian Basin into several groups, the Slovak-speaking section of our Church (13-14,000 souls) is continuously exposed to other intensifying influences, in part by the Czech Protestant side, in part by secular, non-ecclesiastical entities.

The history of our Church had a supreme period, whose influence can be felt even today, and that is *post-Reformation Puritanism* (by which we refer to both Dutch and Scottish inspired influences). The fruits of Puritanism can be seen in the periodic spiritual awakening of the Reformed Church in the past centuries, even in our 20th Century. Owing to positive influences, and despite all devastating and undesirable influences that affected Hungarian Reformed people in Czechoslovakia, especially after the Second World War, when their region was re-annexed to Czechoslovakia. As a consequence they were deprived of legal rights, and could not for a long time escape from the trauma caused by being torn away from the home country and Church for a second time. Ministers who found a way out of the situation were the ones who, not giving in to despair, were touched deeper by a strong Puritan spirituality. These preachers were not carried away by seemingly attractive politicizing, nor were they paralyzed by bitterness and hopelessness. Rather, they began to organize the people in their care into larger units, tried to heal them, to strengthen them and lead them to faith in Christ. We are actually speaking of the two generations between the years 1920 and 1955 that produced many excellent men such as: Mihály Péter, István Pálóczy Czinke, Elemér Balogh, Béla Sörös, István Szőke and others. They were followed in the second wave by Károly Nehézy, Kálmán Tóth, Mihály Erdélyi, Ede Vágó, Károly Urbán, Zsigmond Csukás, Vince Virág, János Vaszily and others, including various members of the Levite Training School of Komárom (now Komarno) who, within the home mission, were encouraging the practice of piety within the family, such as daily devotions led by the head of the family. They helped the people to live a life faithful to the Creed (for instance, by personal and family spiritual counseling, Bible study and house sermons, as well as by various publications such as Bible Guides and sermons published with complete liturgy). I wish to remark that in foreign countries and at home there are people who, with a belittling and disdainful attitude, declared this puritan-style home mission movement undesirable “Puritanism”. However, it has been proven valid by a thriving congregational life and by the strengthening of the unity of the Church, and we see that Puritanism was not a sentimental, romantic movement that divided the unity of the Church. Had it been such a movement, it would have corroded the Church, as it corrodes it today, and creates schisms. Every such schism is the work of the Devil. Every declaration branding true piety “Puritan” is usually the result of lack of adequate education and information, as Professor Csémy has remarked.

Let us summarize what has been said above. There is such a thing as true Reformed spirituality, the basis of which is the proper interpretation of the Gospel and the fundamental Reformation truths based on the Gospels, which are: “Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia”, humility, the mature life of faith, the need for faith and

knowledge and making the Gospel known in the mother tongue. All these reveal themselves to our congregations in their relationship with God and people in a detectable and controllable form.

We are, of course, aware that Reformed spirituality can be influenced by outside elements, such as secularist aspirations towards self-realization and self-redemption, the destructive concept of cosmopolitanism, a lack of spiritual maturity. The situation in the case of the Reformed Church of Upper Hungary (now Slovakia) is unique, in that the Hungarian section of our Church, living in a double-minority situation, is larger in proportion to that of Slovak Reformed people. The situation is contradictory because, while urging us to mutual acceptance and respect, leading us to humility and helping us live our double identity in Christ's unity, it also makes us a constant target for incessantly recurring and agitating nationalistic attacks.

Homiletics

The basic principles of Reformed homiletics were already formulated by the Reformation:

– “Scriptura Scripturam interpret” – the Gospel interprets itself, or Interpretation of the Gospel by the Gospel.

– The significance of exegesis in the preparation of the sermon was accorded great weight by the Prague Faculty, presumably due to German influence, from where seventy percent of currently serving ministers graduated, including myself. At the same time, the manner of presentation is being largely neglected, so that it has become fashionable to read the sermon. We should add that, in spite of this fad, Reformed people still prefer and express a need for a freely delivered sermon. The optimal recommendation and solution would be a well prepared sermon, freely delivered. Such a commitment to spiritual leadership was represented by Professor Lajos Darányi and the pupils taught by him.

Our Church in Upper Hungary (now Slovakia) has not made any special contribution to the way sermons are presented, for we cannot speak of the influence of a homiletic school of any kind either now or in the past. At the same time, our preachers learn from and are influenced by the prominent clergy of the Reformed Church in Hungary, as they have always been.

On a critical note: It seems that our native preachers are, in the most part, neglectful of pious, theologically well founded, serious preparation, and in certain instances are ill informed of the true situation and spiritual requirements of their parishioners. We can offer as an excuse the great shortage of ministers in the past, as a consequence of which such ministers as there were, were obliged to serve four, five, sometimes eight parishes. In the interest of parish service, higher theological requirements and a closer relationship of theological students with their congregations would be desirable, or even with the Church itself. It becomes evident from the foregoing that a search for and development of new forms and methods of parish service are necessary.

A View to the Future

We were, and still are, insufficiently prepared for the acceptance of and healing from the trauma of the territorial division that took place between 1918 and 1938, for the threat

to our very existence between 1945 and 1989, and for people returning to the fold of the Church in 1990, who brought with them a libertine, secular, anti-clerical attitude. Nevertheless, their orientation towards the Church is a joyous fact which contributes to a more hopeful outlook for the future. This is strengthened by the blessed missionary work among children, the increasing interest on the part of young people in the Gospels, and not least by the fact that Hungarian Reformed Churches of the Carpathian Basin are once again reaching out to find each other. It becomes clearer all the time that the only possible way is *inner revival*, maturity, a life of spiritual freedom. In other words, there should be a metamorphosis from the “*people Church*” to the “*confessing Church*”, a Church of quality with inner development, where inner tensions, tension between generations, in our case the serious language problem, the moral crisis, etc. can be gradually resolved. We can say with ever-increasing certainty that our future is presented to us in Christ. This is the only possibility in the future that can be developed *with a firm faith in God* and realized in the community of those called by the Holy Spirit.³

Current Questions in Ecclesiology⁴

*“For as we have many members in one body,
and all members have not the same office,
So we, being many, are one body in Christ,
and every one members one of
another.”*

(Romans 12, 4 – 5)

I wish to contribute to the above complex question a few observations and some background information of my own.

The everyday life of the Christian Churches is full of struggles. We have to speak of continuous battles when we examine the life of the Church. There are periods when the Church, in the human sense, is struggling for its very existence. The present situation of Christianity *vis-à-vis* non-Christian religions can be compared to that of the first Christians, although its present existence takes place in completely different circumstances and under different conditions from those in the first centuries.

Since the topic is many-layered and branches out in many directions, we can not to discuss it in a generalized way, but we conceptualize in concrete terms about a concrete Church – the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia – its situation, life conditions and its present and future. Naturally, this is only possible when it is based on strict theological foundations – but first and foremost, on the analysis of the Old and New Testaments, as well as on the Church-concept of the Reformation.

Reflecting on our previous experience, I find it important to analyze the problems of the Church: to identify its temptations, define its situation and, through Biblical contemplation, attempt to open up the way for the future.

It is commonly known that after one and a half centuries of rationalistic period, followed by a liberally oriented period, there came – after two decades of breathing space – a demonic and destructive half century after World War II – the Communist era – which was for us a 40-year long ideological insanity. This last period was characterized by intensive and violent alienation (*ie*: alienation from the Church), which questioned the

existence of both God and the Church. To what inner poverty and destruction it led in people's lives we are just beginning to discover. I wish to demonstrate these negative results with the following.

A considerable number of our Church-members were alienated from the Church primarily as a spiritual community, but considered its financial and other assets alien as well. Similar alienation developed between the members of the congregations and the ministers, coupled with alienation between the ministers themselves, fed on artificially and consciously created distrust and existential uncertainty and, as a side effect, it was followed by the general phenomenon of distrust and aversion between one generation of ministers and another.

The outside perils for the Church are of no lesser proportions and just as many layered. With the regaining of our everyday freedom and independence, new temptations also appear. Let us look at a few of these as well.

There are the destructive activities of the *sects*.

Within the Western Christian Churches, one can already observe the effects of an inner emptiness, which some of our representatives unanimously label as the "post-Christian era".

The life of the Churches – and it also applies to our Church – is more and more influenced by a dependency on the world of money, or rather on the power of money.

Today the anomalous situation is unfolding, that while great multitudes, made up of individuals and groups, are searching for spiritual communion, a spiritual home and privacy, the world does not even want to take notice of the Church as a spiritual community. It satisfies itself with acknowledging the Church as a legal entity, and wishes to meet with its representatives only occasionally in accordance with the rules of protocol, and if possible without any commitment that could be of any consequence to the person.

In our part of the world, we now lead a life outside the confines of Communism, which is a hopeful sign, but it is difficult to tell how long it will last. In other words, we wish for a richer spiritual life and a more intensive religious life. Our alienated young people are still more approachable, albeit not too easily, than are their counterparts in the more affluent societies.

The Church, our Church, has to again face – as it has so many times already in the course of its history – the question of social injustice. The mission of the Church needs to be reinterpreted in this respect as well.

The Church is called upon to eliminate the destructive effect of moral relativism and demonstrate to millennial man and society – accustomed to advertising, fashions, drugs and the everyday pleasures of life – permanent values, spiritual and intellectual treasures, and non-relativist spiritual norms.

After this short and far from exhaustive analysis of the topic, we can conclude that our Church, due to destructive inner and outer temptations and influences, has drifted towards a break-up or to the brink of the abyss. We have to urgently reconsider the task we face on the basis of the Word of God, under the guidance of the Spirit in a way that we all learn thinking in terms of Church and not only the Church's institutions – be it school, seminary, educational or diaconal center. Have to obey an inner command and try to push our egoistic, subjective, careerist and adventurist desires into the background. We should learn to serve the interest of each member of the congregation as a person, and the

congregation as a part of a larger community and serve it in relation with the universal Church. If God's Grace allows it, beginning now, it is the duty of all of us to bring all this to fruition. But first and foremost it is a task awaiting the younger servants of God. For it has pleased the Lord to perform a miracle, by which our Church is the only Church within the Carpathian Basin, and perhaps even outside it, where within a few years three quarters of the ministers will belong to the lower one-third age group of general life expectancy. We must consciously prepare for the task facing us so that, in the midst of serving the congregation by preaching, counselling, in missionary and diaconal works, the situation described above should not find us unprepared, as happened to our Church after the changes in 1989, which is still going on in accepting and admitting former members to the Church.

Translation by Éva

Kossuth

NOTES

1. Presentation at the International Conference in Komárom, on January 8, 1999.
2. Conference presentation heard at Balatonszárszó, on August 22, 1988.
3. Prior to the development of the topic, I listened to the opinions and ideas of ministers and laymen serving the congregations in the cities and villages, to the following, among others: Professor Dr Lajos Csémy, Dr John Molnár, dean, László Fazekas, minister in Komárom, and Zoltán Orémus, minister in Kassa.
4. Presentation at the post-graduate courses at Józsa, in November of 1998.

Chapter 14

MORAL QUESTIONS OF PASTORAL WORK IN CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE AFTER THE POLITICO-ECONOMIC CHANGE^{lxxix}

Géza Erdélyi

Introductory Remarks

This essay does not deal with any detailed theoretical explanations with regard to the origin and the idea of ethics, or with the attempts of philosophers of various ages to explain it – which in many cases have corrupted it. Rather, I am going to refer to Biblical norms on which I, as a theologian and pastor, am competent – indeed, compelled – to take my stand.

I ought to mention here the paradox of my position. My work at the University of Prague entails frequent absence from my home in the Carpathian Basin. Therefore there is a sense in which I report almost as an outsider on the present situation, its positive and negative aspects and changes in the life of the Carpathian Basin. At the same time I and my family are living in upper Slovakia, where I am in charge of four congregations belonging to one parish.^{lxxx} Together we are carrying the burden of being a denominational and national minority in Slovakia, imposed upon us by the Great Powers of Europe in the first half of the last century (1920 and 1947), that left millions of unfortunate peoples to their own fate.^{lxxxi} It is my firm conviction that the problems caused by this situation, with its serious ethical aspects, can be solved in functioning democracies with a true Christian attitude only if we take into consideration the contribution which the Churches can and must make.

I would like to emphasize that it is impossible to find a universal ethical solution to all of the various problems. This is quite impossible because of the differing past and present economic state, and the differing political trends, of the countries which are now neighbors to Slovakia.

The general and ethical problems listed below indicate the areas where we can make a coordinated common pastoral effort in order to reach positive change for good. These are:

a. Troubles of subsistence. The countries of Central Eastern Europe today are constantly facing such troubles. These also involve some ethical problems, though they may be variously weighted.

b. The power of money, and of wealth. The power of Mammon fetters the spirit (Luke 16.13). In day-to-day practical life, this means that the selfish man having concern only for his own interests, who is not charitable towards others but is solely looking out for his own personal benefit, replaces the charitable man who supports the welfare of the future. This is even so today, and sadly it is seen on the level of worldwide politics, as witness the sad cases of Kuwait, or Bosnia... And it is here that the aforementioned formula turns upside down. The immoral relationship to existing problems finally entails some existential consequences.

c. The perils of these critical situations. The societies and countries embroiled in multifarious crises are gradually coming under the power of unscrupulous political adventurers, careerists of evil spirit, and consequently the crisis grows ever heavier.

What can the Churches do in such circumstances? We can recognize the peril in a timely way and thus prepare the members of our society to head off the danger. This is our religious and ethical obligation. Our task is to offer and bring to the fore the moral and spiritual values we stand for. The question of how to do this can be decided only in relation to each actual situation. There have been examples of it in the past, and present experience proves on innumerable instances that for troubled, confused modern man, the Christian ethical order provides the means for a stable foundation amid the sea of chaos.

Based on my experience up till now, it seems to me that the Christians of the Western World are very much engaged in their own problems – and this is, of course, only natural. However, I am determined to make it unequivocally clear that there is no change in our continued need and request for their caring interest, their goodwill and their support. We do not ask God to grant us the opportunity to pay back all their generosity and goodwill in precise reciprocal terms, because that would mean that they would become impoverished and would come under a dictatorship just as we did, a situation that has lasted for forty years. We do not wish them the same fate.

It is a well-known fact that “The Great Commandment”, referring back to the Old Testament, is the foundation of Christian ethics (Matt 22.36-39). Loving God and our neighbor are inseparable. The twin commandments together meant breaking with much of the usual interpretation of humane and legal ethics of their time, but Christian ethics has already emancipated itself from the cult of the Old Testament. This process, however, also means the further development of the foundations of the new ethic, and its essence can be found in the teaching of Apostle Paul on the Kingdom of God found in his letter to the Romans (Ch 14.17) where we read: “*The kingdom of God is not meal and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*”. The guiding thought underlying all Christian ethics, therefore, is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Based on our recognition of the message of the Bible as a whole, we must further add to these fundamentals of Biblical Christianity repentance, conversion, rebirth and the sanctification of our own lives.

Christian ethics, as can be seen, is quite different from that of the world around us. We build upon the bedrock of the biblical foundation, and we are obliged to weigh the events and phenomena of everyday life on this basis. As far as we consider this to be valid for us, we may condense all our inquiries about our moral obligations into two questions, namely: *what we should do*, and *how we should do it?*

However, first let us dwell a while on the negative formulation of the apostle Paul, his saying that the kingdom of God is *not* meal and drink. I would like to call special attention to this, because lately we have experienced so-called “welfare societies” that declare themselves to be Christian. Moreover, as we today examine the societies that seem to be facing in that direction, it appears that they pay scant attention to this principle, or even no attention at all. This behavior has permanently disturbed the public’s thinking about the Christian value system. Its characteristics appear to be the following:

The Question of Money and Material Goods

1. The rapid amassing of material goods has become the almost exclusive goal of individuals as well as of the society as a whole. This, it is believed, is what generates happiness, but its consequence is a grave imbalance in human behavior because the rapid rate at which consumer goods perish or lose their value has made it easy to lose sight of lasting non-material values. Before the political changes we experienced in 1989^{lxxxii} the repressed, minimized and regulated wishes and aspirations imposed by the central power dragged the masses toward a vision of becoming rich in a manner which was without sober thought and out of touch with reality, the result of which was a quick and deep moral decline.

2. It must be admitted with real grief that while, during the era of “real socialism”, the total lack of personal freedom caused almost physical pain, after the arrival of “freedom” many quickly subjugated themselves to a different type of slavery – bondage to lust and the power of money. This decay of our societal morality particularly endangers our young people.

3. After 1989 the relationships between people did not take a lasting positive direction. Without real repentance and confession of sin, even in the case of Christian pastors, we cannot talk about universal renewal. The collective comradeship forced upon the society was colorless and feigned. To this day a pattern of interpersonal conflict between individuals, who frequently have contradictory interests, is shaping our society’s human relations – without ethical norms to guide them.

4. There is great confusion in the mutual relation between a dominant nation and national minorities. It has several causes, known and unknown. Studying this group of questions we have to go back to the source of the problems. It is a well known but sad fact that our 20th Century was not only the century of fantastic achievements but also one of enormous destruction. At one and the same time Europe became the plaything of the Great Powers and the focal area of unjust peace agreements. The lives of millions were trodden down, and the faith in justice of millions was trampled under foot. In the past century not all guilty leaders were punished, while whole nations were thrown under tyranny, even though they were not more seriously guilty than other nations. Tens of millions were deported by men dizzy with the vision of a national State, or they were driven onto the land of those who were chased away. Parts of nations became national minorities on their own land, as it was handed over to red or brown dictators^{lxxxiii} or simply delivered as prey to the despotism of majority nations. This “predator view” (for there is no better expression for it) – the practice of showdown – is slowing down to the greatest extent the development of middle class principles, no less than the realization of a Christian lifestyle. These facts raise some very important and deeply interwoven ethical problems, especially because for the past seventy years we have been forbidden to talk about them, so that even today it is still not natural to raise them in discussion. If one does, then one will certainly be a marked person. These questions crop up, even in the pursuit of pastoral work, with new urgent problems – although one must recognize that, with respect to their intensity and their significance in differing ways, they are present in all the post-communist countries.

Left to themselves, the countries of Eastern Central Europe wrestle with a huge variety of economic, political and ethical questions that can hardly be understood by the

governments and the citizens of the Western world. For example, while the people of the East, confined in their cages, gazed with wonderment at how fundamentally capitalism had been socialized (a process that is still continuing), at the same time Marxism-Leninism, under pressure of its ideology, refused to be democratized.^{lxxxiv} And despite the turn-around its past allows only slow progress, although democratic transformation is the most pressing demand of our age. The positive and negative features of the still commencing transformation appear to be very widespread and therefore cause uncertainty, eliciting a huge chaos in the development of a new order of values. It is not evident to everyone that from the general view of human rights, including the rights of property, from human relations to the relation of mankind to nature and to things about him, new norms have to be asserted. The necessary new forms of lifestyle have to be filled out with new durable contents. The Churches have to come up with a convincing message, due on one side to the compelling power of the changes and on the other side, despite the forces drawing back and the ever-present hindering powers, the message of the validity of Christian morals, and of their necessity. In a Europe divided into two such different parts, overall development has brought about differences of such extent that we have problems in understanding each other, even among people speaking the same language, because often the same words turn out to mean different things to different people. Still more complicated is mutual understanding of one another among those belonging to different linguistic, national or religious communities. Sometimes even the example to be followed is not unequivocal. For instance, in our countries, not even the institutionalized forms of neighborly charity services are built up, so that where it is met it makes the uplifting and healing warmth of feeling of charitable behavior seem just like The Good Samaritan. It is a great question among us, how to make these neighborly services become more effective, in order that the feeling of responsibility for one another, the warmth of hearts beating together, may be maintained.

The problems alluded to and illustrated here have their own projection onto the everyday pastoral or spiritual work of the Christian minister.

The Problems of the Countries of Eastern-Central Europe

Preparing this paper, I have collected information directly from seven Churches of five countries of Eastern Central Europe; from four more I received information through the press and other channels. Now I would like to present to you the replies and the comments on them I received in writing and by word of mouth. In what follows I am going to touch first of all (but by no means only) on the questions that mostly engage those of Eastern Europe, where the pastors have to come to terms with them like everybody else. I must point out that, in certain countries, the order of importance may be different. There are also perhaps some differences in emphasis that we ought to take into account, without thereby making any claim of being comprehensive. The replies and the problems can be divided into the following groups:

A. The situation of the family:

1. the contact between the partners of a marriage,
2. the situation of the children of the marriage,
3. the problems of moral education.

B. The questions of the development of personality:

1. the conditions of free development of the personality,
 2. the importance of healthy sexual interaction,
 3. the problem of homosexuality.
- C. The sphere of the entrepreneur:
1. the lack of entrepreneurial ethics,
 2. the creation of the conditions of a so-called “pure enterprise”,
 3. the perplexities of entrepreneurial activities (such as competition, envy and force).
- D. The sphere of problems of public interest:
1. the equality of the right to live in peace and the independence of the courts,
 2. the defenselessness of the citizen amid the spreading of violence,
 3. the appearance of racial hatred and its treatment, and in particular the gipsy problem,
 4. the matter of the ecclesiastic or denominational schools.
- E. The questions of the fate of minorities:
1. the practical assurance of the statutory law and its adequate international supervision,
 2. ideas of their necessary autonomy and guaranteeing its operation.
- F. The problems of nationalism, and the building of the nation:
1. the multifariousness of the problem,
 2. the perils of its being left unsolved,
 3. attempts at phasing out the minorities in parliamentary ways (linguistic law for the protection of the majority language, for phasing out the language of the minority, continuous attempts at phasing out the minority schools teaching in the mother tongue of the minorities),
 4. discrimination against minorities in the processes of privatization, its existential consequences, gradual impoverishment, growing unemployment in the ethnic regions.

Remarks on the Main Points

A. Despite the fact that several circumstances contributing to the dissolution of the communities have ceased to exist, the family situation and the position of families does not show any real change since the turn-around we experienced in 1989. In practical terms the crisis continues in all countries of the region. The root cause of this is that there was, and even today there is, no opportunity of an overall ethical education, so that whole generations have grown up experiencing this moral vacuum. According to reliable sources, the most frequent reason of divorces is unfaithfulness, alcoholism or other harmful passion, but social reasons also play an increasingly significant part in the problem. The situation of the children, particularly as the result of divorces, is very disquieting.

B. Conditions for free development of personality have improved. In this sphere the most positive phenomenon is that ideological pressure to conform has been lifted. In some countries, however, an improper schooling policy is the main hindrance. In general, sexual enlightenment is obscure and not clear both in the context of schools and also in the family. One of the reasons that homosexuality is growing ever more obtrusive may be, especially in bigger cities, the lack of educational work noted above. It may be,

however, something much more mundane, such as the end product of an altogether agonizing era. Think, for example, of the break up of ancient Greek culture. In turn, it is a fact that Churches ought to, but do not, take a uniform standpoint on this urgent question. It would seem very likely that there are some deep internal problems lurking in the background, accounting for this decline into a systemic social illness.

C. The problems of the entrepreneurial sphere in our country present a new type of challenge. To solve them, the countries of the EU and its Churches could offer significant help, the latter mainly in moral respect. The fact is that, first of all, there has been an influx of unbridled capitalism into our region. Western peoples have gained significant experience in dealing with its worst excesses, so it seems that, in this respect, our Western Christian brethren must be blamed for not coming to our aid, in spite of the fact that in other areas they have supplied us with significant support.

D. In the countries of our region the activity of independent courts is not yet a natural thing, nor is the assurance of the citizen's complete overall equality of rights. Racial hatred and the violent use of force are common problems. In this respect the positive thinking of the citizens and their activity to correct the situation are very rare. It would be necessary to bring about a consistent collaboration between the Churches and secular social organizations to make any real progress.

In some East European countries the ecclesiastic schools have been operating for many centuries. In Hungary, for example, at the beginning of the century their number exceeded that of the State-owned schools. Looked at purely in terms of time, this means that from the Reformation onwards, up to the beginning of the Communist rule in 1948, they existed and had a serious significance in Hungary. In Hungary, Slovakia and Bohemia, to name just a few countries of our region, it is again permitted and practical to open such schools; some already exist. It is allowed, at least in theory, in other places too, though in practice serious hindrances are raised to prevent it really happening. For instance, in the cases of Slovakia, Transylvania and Sub-Carpathia, it is possible for the minority Churches to have such schools only in a context of various heavy worries and difficulties. It is impossible to overstate the significance of such schools for the future of our peoples. Here great tasks are waiting for the Christians, and alongside them for the secular intelligentsia with its Protestant background.

E. and F. These two points are going to be dealt with in a compressed form, since it is difficult to separate them from one another. The complexity of the question of minority is known in the Western hemisphere, but not with the intensity we experience. This fact is well reflected by the events of the 20th Century and the decisions taken at international conferences.

In this region religious consciousness often goes hand in hand with one's consciousness of a national identity. This is, of course, the result of a long drawn out process and it is necessary to make it a matter of awareness. That it is really so is proved by the fact that if one of them weakens, the other one declines with it, or is lost altogether. At this point the problem and the indispensable role of the ecclesiastic and the schools of the minorities strongly appears. The State's endeavors to make it impossible for them to function show unequivocally the grotesque intent of bringing about States or nations based solely on a kind of racial nationalism. It is clear, but still needs to be emphasized, that it is by no means necessary to create national States in the center of Europe by racially homogenizing their ethnic minorities, for it always entails force, even

bloodshed. We recognize that Eastern European nations have lived throughout their history in certain ways differing from Western Europe, that is, their ethnic awareness made them orient themselves towards either Byzantium or Rome, Wittenberg or Geneva. They have thus developed their culture, opposing either the Tartars and Turks or the Germans and the Russians. Here, to belong to a certain Church means to belong to a given colorful culture and to a certain nation (as for instance, in the case of Transylvania). Therefore nationalism, since it has discredited itself, has to be rejected by the Churches, but at the same time – and this is very important – they must make way for a consciousness that does not hurt others, but rather builds up the nation. This is imperative because, once the masses have lost their collective consciousness of a particular binding identity, they are in a perilous condition and can easily be manipulated by anyone.

It is befitting not only for historians and politicians, but also for pastors, to know that the national minorities of the Carpathian Basin are not just a mass of immigrants, nor guest workers, but natives of the area where they now live. To destroy and chase out their culture and language is a sin. To state this with the necessary emphasis is the priority task of the Churches. Unfortunately the word ‘sin’ has been gradually eroded from the dictionary of politics. It should also not be forgotten that these national and denominational minorities do not endanger anybody. Their voice is heard only when they are threatened in their very existence. When they are compelled to protest, they do it out of a sense of self-protection, pressed into desperation. This is, of course, valid for the region as a whole.

Finally, allow me to say a few words about one national minority that exists in the region. In regard to its numbers it is the most significant one, and I myself belong to it. This is the Hungarian minority, for their cause is a matter not of one or two countries only but, as a result of the peace treaties of our century, a matter of Central Europe as a whole, and to solve it is the task of at least Europe, if not the whole civilized world. By today it has become clear that without some form of autonomous rights the survival of minorities is impossible. Anyone professing principles in opposition to this is secretly or openly endeavoring to have their survival wound up. Therefore to postpone or to deny these rights would be nothing short of political adventurism. It is precisely the Hungarian minority of which their enemies so often insist that they are a restless, destabilized people, whereas the facts are quite different and prove just the opposite.

Nowadays it can be heard increasingly often that the Hungarians have a “Trianon Complex”^{lxxxv}. And it is really justified to speak of such complex. The Versailles-Trianon Peace Treaty(1920) really did cause conditions of shock that would not be easily bearable for any other nation. The fact is not known to everybody that, as the result of the Trianon Peace Treaty, the country lost two thirds of its territory while leaving the ethnic borders completely out of consideration, so that more than 4 million of the Hungarian population found itself living outside the borders of Hungary in the surrounding successor States. Taking into account the size of the population as it was then, this is a very large number. All this is a matter of historic fact, a fact about which for the past seventy years we have not been allowed even to speak. Therefore to many ears it is uncomfortable and irritating when we now do. Many are to blame for it, but surely the punished minority is not.

I would like to call your attention to the fact that the “Trianon Complex” is living not merely in the Hungarian minority, but even in the successor States as well. About this, however, nobody is willing or dares to speak. While for Hungarians the outcome of the Trianon Treaty has been a loss of such magnitude, to the politicians and citizens of the successor States it has meant the gain of enormous territories and with them their Hungarian ethnic populations. Their question now is how to keep and integrate them, in one form or another, in their countries. Hence we have this continuously present air of distrust, the evil conscience, the fear caused by the unhealthy changes, the overheated nationalism and chauvinism, all of which can be readily understood. Were it otherwise, instead of alternate ethnic cleanings going this way or that, sometimes in drastic forms and at other times more secretly, the assurance of autonomies would prove to be the way leading towards the solution.

Working out a more healthy mindset and way of thinking is also the task of pastoral spiritual care. From the bondage of hate, liberation is possible only by the way of love. Let us think about the road ahead of us in the spirit of the Gospel. We are convinced that hate cannot be the program of a State, or of a nation. Where hate grows dominant, a lack of vision for the future will always be found.

I had to touch upon all this, for this is the reality of our situation, and because it is self-evident that pastors have a duty to abide by the truth and strive for objectivity. If not, they will become unable to behave objectively and will grow immoral. We must not become the servants of any “isms”, for that would be bring about disruption in the Church and among the people. If the Church and its servants, experiencing social injustice and misdeeds, were to remain silent, it would become the accomplice of the wrongdoing and lose its position of trust. Without the prophetic spirit and calling, it is impossible to carry out effective pastoral work. Our actual situation can be characterized very briefly. Our world is dominated by three passion – by hate, by sensuality and by the spell of money and wealth, or, as Endre Ady, the renown Hungarian poet, formulated it, by Blood and Gold. But this is not a Christian world. What then shall we do? Listening to the Lord of Life, let us speak and act in harmony with each other.

NOTES

1. The essay was originally delivered as lecture by Bishop Dr. Géza Erdélyi at the Conference of Representatives of the Protestant Pastors’ Association, Liebfrauenberg, Germany, November 15, 1995.
2. The author lives in Slovakia which lies at the uppermost part of the Carpathian basin. Before the formation of Slovakia it was the part of the historical Hungary for a thousand years, at which time it was called the Hungarian Highlands.
3. The peace treaties following World War I were signed at Versailles, near Paris, France. Among them the most severe was forced upon Hungary on June 4, 1920. This dismembered Hungary, ceding two thirds of its territory to the neighboring States together with half of its population. The Hungarian Highlands went to form a part of a new State Czechoslovakia. Similar harsh Peace Treaty was forced upon Hungary after World War II, in 1947, Paris.
4. In Czechoslovakia the political change took place in 1989 in what became known as the “Velvet Revolution”. In subsequent years the county fell apart to the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. This latter lies in the Carpathian Basin – the former Hungarian Highlands.
5. The “brown” dictator refers to Hitler and the “red” to Stalin.
6. There is a hint of the “Prague Spring” led by Alexander Dubcek in the attempt that was made in Czechoslovakia to give a human face to the inhuman Communist system. But it failed under the

invading tanks and troops of the Warsaw Pact countries in August 1968.
7. The Hungarian Peace Treaty that followed World War I was signed at the Trianon Palace in Versailles. Hence, instead of speaking of the Versailles Peace Treaties, Hungarians prefer to speak of the Trianon Peace Treaty with regard to Hungary. The “Trianon Complex” reflects the Hungarians’ abiding dissatisfaction with the stipulations of the fateful peace treaty forced upon their country.

Notes compiled by the editor.

Chapter 15

THE SITUATION OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN SUB-CARPATHIAN UKRAINE ¹

Lajos Gulácsi

This territory formed part of Hungary for one thousand years until, after the First World War, it was awarded to the Czechoslovak Republic in accordance with the terms of the Trianon (Versailles) Peace Treaty. After the First Vienna Award of 1938, the territory was recovered by Hungary; but then during the Second World War, in the Fall of 1944, it was occupied by the Soviet Union. Since 1992, this region has been part of Ukraine.²

What happened in the past is only just now becoming known, and more time is needed to shed light on every aspect of the situation. From the Church’s standpoint its tribulations had already begun at the time of the Czechoslovak Republic. Although the Czechoslovak leadership of the time deemed itself a democracy, the official ideology was atheism and this concept was backed up by the ideals of internationalism. To wit, Hungarian Reformed believers should become internationalists, while others remained Czech chauvinists. The Reformed Church in the region forced to break away from the Reformed Church of Hungary, thus becoming a minority.

Slav expansionism began with its support of the subversive activities of adverse sectarian groups, a disabling and destructive process which reached its height with the occupation of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Army. When a people is stripped of its faith, religious beliefs and language, it is easy to keep it in bondage. The Soviet Red Army was portrayed as a liberating Army, but in reality their presence meant serfdom, humiliation, forced labor and deportation. The “liberation” started with the deportation of men between the ages of 18 and 50, for the so-called “malenki robot” (small labor). In reality, however, they were taken not to labor camps but prison camps. More than 38,000 Hungarian men perished in these camps, their graves unknown to this day. Those who returned after three years of captivity led a life of physical and spiritual intimidation. There is not a family in this region that does not mourn a family member.

The State expropriated everything from the Church and the churches were nationalized. The pastors were evicted from their manses, a third of them were arrested, and many others died in the camps. Those who remained were kept under close surveillance. The Church was not allowed to have anything to do with youngsters under the age of 18, and could not carry out any other activity except pulpit service. Replacement of ministers was not allowed either. By the mid 70s the pastoral staff of the Church was reduced from 104 to 24, to serve 130,000 Reformed people in the then 86 parishes.

With the signing of the Helsinki Accord in 1975, which was also signed by the Soviet Union, anti-religious activity began to ease. Preparation of young people for the ministry became permissible, albeit only privately, and strictly in direct proportion to the number of ministers lost through death. Even at present – although theological instruction is once again permitted – only 34 ministers and 8 assistant ministers serve Sub-Carpathian Ukraine's present 98 parishes.

To turn to our present situation (1998,Ed.): although the Church is now able to conduct its activities freely, and the churches have been given back, only 40% of the manses have been restored. There is not even mention of restoration of land and other real estate. The main problem is economic decline, poverty. Formerly, factories of the territory served mainly military interests. Now that there is no more need of them, 80% of their former work-force is unemployed. This contributes to the prevailing low morale, many finding solace in drink. Income is hard to come by and poverty is on the rise. The situation is especially difficult for large families, but old age pensioners suffer greatly as well. The average monthly pension does not even cover the cost of bread and milk, let alone that of gas, water and electricity. Health care is also in dire straits. Hospitals lack medications; in fact, they are hardly able to feed the patients.

The main task of the Church at present is to minister to the needy. Mention should be made here of the humanitarian aid sent by our sister Churches from abroad. Many have benefited from these donations. However, new customs duty regulations on incoming goods present new obstacles for their dispatch and distribution. All such shipments are placed in bond at customs, and as there is no reduction of duties on many items, we are obliged to pay 30% import duty, which we are unable to afford. If there are no amendments to the customs regulations, we will be compelled to refuse these humanitarian aid shipments. The Church has petitioned for a reduction of rates, but with what result is hard to tell. The situation is the same for the Catholic Church. There is a shipment of goods which has been held at customs since October (1997, Ed.). We are unable to get to it, but it is easy prey for the mice and the rats.

The ideal solution would be if people could get employment and thus earn enough to support themselves. Our people are industrious, they love to work – yet are condemned to idleness. The situation begs for better and more practical political and economic policies, better utilization of agricultural land. The present co-operatives are virtually bankrupt. Factories are broken down and non-productive, with machinery rusting away. There is extensive migration due to poverty, especially among the educated; as a result, many aged and sick remain without support. Unfortunately, there is no hope of immediate improvement. Tensions grow among people, discord within families, envy and suspicion are on the rise. The current political climate takes advantage of the situation and encourages confrontations between communities. Groups have already broken away from the Hungarian Cultural Association of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine at a time when unity would be their very strength.

Unfortunately, even the Churches are unable to bring about real unity. There are considerable ideological and theological differences of opinion between Church leaders. Ecumenical practice is at best an association borne out of politeness. Thus tensions continue, the hurts of the past cannot ease. The most difficult things are to forgive and to apologize. In our opinion, the World Federation of Reformed Hungarians and the

Consultative Synod of the Reformed Hungarian Churches could do a great deal to remedy the situation, and we ask them to act as circumstance allows.

Coming back to our situation, it is one almost impossible to describe. We survive, because we know that “God is with us”, and this gives us strength and hope in our hopelessness. The foremost task of the Church is to give us support in strengthening our personal faith, so that we will have the courage to carry our burdens and not to grow weary.

Alas, we have to report another sad fact. Those living close to the border used to go over to Hungary to work in order to procure a modest livelihood for their families. They found employment mainly in agriculture and in construction. However, soon they were expelled by the authorities and denied re-entry for several years. It is unfortunate that we are often humiliated and rejected by our homeland. They know that we are Hungarians, but greet us – with exceptions – with such words as: “Here come the Ukrainians!” Needless to say, the black-marketeers and the new business class get much better treatment. Yet it would be nice if our native land tried to understand our situation and come to our aid.

The Reformed Church in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine during the Decades of the Cold War³

The Second World War came to an end in this region in the Fall of 1944. Intensive fighting and devastation occurred only in the Hungarian border region. Everyone was waiting for the end of the war. But as the Soviet Army occupied the territory the Church had no reason to rejoice, for they all knew what the atheist-Communist rule meant for those who believe in God. Their anxieties and fears were well founded.

All political leaders were arrested and received sentences. Among them was Imre Narancsik, professor of theology and pastor of Muzsaly, and Jenő Szutor, pastor of Beregszász congregation. Both dies in the deportation camps. Several clergy, foreseeing the future, fled. During the war years there were 104 ministers in the region. By the end of the war their number was reduced to 60, and all were placed under two years’ surveillance. Active Church leaders were removed from their posts. In 1947, Barna Horkay, pastor of Nagyszöllős, and József Zimányi, pastor of Gecse, were arrested. The Rev. Zsigmond Simon of Asztely and The Rev. Gyula Fekete of Névtelen soon followed them. Then, on March 20, 1949, a further six suffered the same fate: József Paszit, István Györke, István Asszonyi, Béla Huszti and Zoltán Kovács of Munkács, Beregújfalu, Forgolány, Kigyós, Tiszaújlak respectively, as well as Lajos Gulácsy, the assistant minister at Munkács.

During this period several ministers were suspended, others were transferred. Church sessions were abolished and Soviet-type councils were formed in their stead, each made up of 20 members appointed by the president of the city council. Well-to-do people (*kulaks*) were arrested and those who opposed the forming of collective farms (*kolhoz*) were accused of anti-Soviet mentality. Among them were József Vass of Técső and Pál Forgon of Visk, who were accused of fomenting anti-Soviet propaganda and misinforming the people.

As the training of new clergy was forbidden, by 1975 the number of ministers was reduced to 24, while there were 86 congregations. Although the clergy were evicted from

the manses and the churches were nationalized, parishioners were allowed to use the churches. Six churches were closed down and used as warehouses. Much more could be written of these times. We can only hope that history will document the facts.

With the signing of the Helsinki Accord by the Soviet Union in 1975, the situation of the Church changed for the better. They allowed two people each year to receive pastoral training. From 1991 on, they allowed two people to study in Budapest, Debrecen, Sáropatak (Hungary), Kolozsvár (now Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and Komárom (Czechoslovakia). At present there are 95 congregations, although only 4 ministers from Hungary and 34 local ministers are actively serving. Hungarian professors of theology graduated 90 young religious instructors between 1992 and 1995. During the Cold War years, religious instruction of the young was considered a major offence. We are now trying to make up for lost time by instructing and preparing adult parishioners for confirmation.

Currently 9,000 children receive religious instructions. We are building 6 new churches, 3 are nearing completion. A new church is being built in Szerény, and one in Nagydobrony for the Gypsy congregation. Foundations were laid for another one in Beregszász. The manses are currently being repaired and new ones built, but not all manses have yet been restored.

The Situation of Hungarian Minority in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine

Hungarians make up approximately 12% of the population of the region and, according to statistical reports, their total number is 150,000. A significant number live in the Ungvár, Nagyszöllös and Munkács districts, but form a majority only in the district of Beregszász. Even so, the population of the city of Beregszász is only 50% Hungarian.

The largest organizations safeguarding their interests are the Hungarian Cultural Association of Sub-Carpathian-Ukraine with 22,000 members, the Hungarian Educators' Association of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine with 1,100 members, and the Hungarian Cultural Association of Bereg District with 2,200 members. None of these receive federal aid.

Instruction in Hungarian is conducted in approximately 90 schools. Hungarian speaking, or partially Hungarian speaking groups are present in a vocational (secondary) school, in a department of an agricultural technical college, and in the Department of Mathematics at the National University of Ungvár. Teaching also started at the Hungarian Secondary School Teachers' College of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine.

Local Hungarian-language publishing, apart from the *Kárpáti Igaz Szó* (Carpath True Word), is limited to periodicals put out by a few organizations and Churches. The importation of up-to-date Hungarian media publications or books is an unsolvable problem.

Cultural organizational networks, including rural cultural centers and libraries, are inactive due to the general economic breakdown. The same is true of kindergartens, only a few of which are functioning. The teaching staff gets paid six months in arrears.

While Hungarians have proportional representation in the decision-making process of local administrative bodies, they are excluded from key decision-making forums on the federal level. The new election laws put minorities in an even worse predicament.

As bankrupt factories and plants put masses of people out of work, migration to the cities from rural areas has come to a halt. Emigration is on the rise, especially among

Hungarians and Germans, many seeking work in neighboring countries. While local prices exceed those in Hungary, the salaries are only 20% of salaries in Hungary, and even these are paid with several months' delay, at times in the form of unmarketable commodities. Passport application fees are set at a level that is unaffordable for most people. The Hungarian intellectual pool has been considerably depleted due to emigration. Only about 5% of young people who study abroad return.

The enforcement of Hungarian minority rights is guaranteed neither by rights laid down in the Ukrainian-Hungarian Charter, nor by the existence of an active Joint Committee on minority and language rights. It is a year-by-year struggle to obtain consent for Hungarian-language matriculation examinations, or entrance examinations. To this day no bilingual report cards are being issued. There are problems with bilingual signs, as well as other language-related issues. The new policy on the instruction of minorities allows teaching in Hungarian at elementary school level only.

For all practical purposes the dwindling Hungarian population has no collective rights. The mere making known of our problems runs into obstacles, due to current Ukrainian domestic policy, as well as the fatal Hungarian foreign policy decision regarding the status of this region.

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The Cistibiscan Reformed District in Hungary, with which they are neighbors, have their cause very much at heart; they gave a lot of assistance. Through them and with their help the Church has been able to establish three secondary schools. The great flood in the Fall of 1998 was an especially trying time for Hungarians in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. Victims of the flood received considerable aid from the Hungarian Churches, as well as from Hungarians all over the world.(Ed.).

Translation by Éva

Kossuth

NOTES

1. The first section of this paper was originally published in the *Partium Gazette* (Partiumi Közlöny), the official publication of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District (in Western Transylvania, Romania), viii.Yr.No. 5, April 10, 1998. The Report is dated at Beregszász, February 5, 1998. .
Sub-Carpathian Ukraine lies between Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania. It is called "Kárpátalja" in Hungarian, hence it is also known as "Sub-Carpathia". Sometimes it called "Ruthenia", after its major population the Ruthens. Its other name, of recent usage, is "Sub-Carpathian Ukraine" because this region today belongs to Ukraine, although it never belonged to it before throughout history.
As to the Ruthen nation: in the previous centuries, in a slow process, they immigrated from the Ukrainian side of the Carpathian Mountain and settled down in Hungarian territory. The cohabited friendly with the Hungarian

population. The Ruthen nation is made up the following branches: Huculs (in the valley of River Upper-Tisza);

Dalinyans (in the valley of River Borsa); Bojkos (in the valley of River Latorca) and Lemkes (in the region near by the Polish borders).

2. A Hungarian born in this region before 1920 was born a Hungarian citizen. After the First World War, the Peace Treaty of Trianon (Versailles) awarded this Hungarian territory for a thousand year to the newly created Czechoslovakia together with its substantial Hungarian ethnic population. Consequently Hungarians of this region became Czechoslovak citizens. Following the 1938 Munich Accord, after Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, the Czech part became a German protectorate and the Slovak part gained independence. At that point Hungary occupied this region for historical reason and the Hungarians again became Hungarian citizens. After the Second World War, the Paris Peace Treaty ceded this territory to the Soviet Union and its Hungarians became Soviet citizens. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union this territory became a part of Ukraine, ethnic Hungarians became Ukrainian citizens. Some unfortunate old-age people changed citizenship five times without once leaving their homeland, and are expected to accept this abnormal situation as normal! This bizarre situation also points out the indifference of the Great Powers towards the fate and the suffering of ethnic minorities. The case of ethnic Hungarians in Sub-Carpathian-Ukraine is only one of a host of similar cases.
3. From the periodicals of *Magyar Egyház* (Magyar Church), Paramus, NJ, USA, 1998 Spring, 77, Yr, p.9.

the editor

Notes compiled by

Chapter 15

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Unfortunately, even the Churches are unable to bring about real unity. There are considerable ideological and theological differences of opinion between Church leaders. Ecumenical practice is at best an association borne out of politeness. Thus tensions continue, the hurts of the past cannot ease. The most difficult things are to forgive and to apologize. In our opinion, the World Federation of Reformed Hungarians and the Consultative Synod of the Reformed Hungarian Churches could do a great deal to remedy the situation, and we ask them to act as circumstance allows.

Coming back to our situation, it is one almost impossible to describe. We survive, because we know that “God is with us”, and this gives us strength and hope in our hopelessness. The foremost task of the Church is to give us support in strengthening our personal faith, so that we will have the courage to carry our burdens and not to grow weary.

Alas, we have to report another sad fact. Those living close to the border used to go over to Hungary to work in order to procure a modest livelihood for their families. They found employment mainly in agriculture and in construction. However, soon they were expelled by the authorities and denied re-entry for several years. It is unfortunate that we are often humiliated and rejected by our homeland. They know that we are Hungarians, but greet us – with exceptions – with such words as: “Here come the Ukrainians!” Needless to say, the black-marketeers and the new business class get much better treatment. Yet it would be nice if our native land tried to understand our situation and come to our aid.

The Reformed Church in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine during the Decades of the Cold War³

The Second World War came to an end in this region in the Fall of 1944. Intensive fighting and devastation occurred only in the Hungarian border region. Everyone was waiting for the end of the war. But as the Soviet Army occupied the territory the Church had no reason to rejoice, for they all knew what the atheist-Communist rule meant for those who believe in God. Their anxieties and fears were well founded.

All political leaders were arrested and received sentences. Among them was Imre Narancsik, professor of theology and pastor of Muzsaly, and Jenő Szutor, pastor of Beregszász congregation. Both dies in the deportation camps. Several clergy, foreseeing the future, fled. During the war years there were 104 ministers in the region. By the end of the war their number was reduced to 60, and all were placed under two years’ surveillance. Active Church leaders were removed from their posts. In 1947, Barna Horkay, pastor of Nagyszöllős, and József Zimányi, pastor of Gecse, were arrested. The Rev. Zsigmond Simon of Asztely and The Rev. Gyula Fekete of Névtelen soon followed them. Then, on March 20, 1949, a further six suffered the same fate: József Paszit, István Györke, István Asszonyi, Béla Huszti and Zoltán Kovács of Munkács, Beregújfalú, Forgolány, Kigyós, Tiszaújlak respectively, as well as Lajos Gulácsy, the assistant minister at Munkács.

During this period several ministers were suspended, others were transferred. Church sessions were abolished and Soviet-type councils were formed in their stead, each made up of 20 members appointed by the president of the city council. Well-to-do people (*kulaks*) were arrested and those who opposed the forming of collective farms (*kolhoz*) were accused of anti-Soviet mentality. Among them were József Vass of Técső and Pál Forgon of Visk, who were accused of fomenting anti-Soviet propaganda and misinforming the people.

As the training of new clergy was forbidden, by 1975 the number of ministers was reduced to 24, while there were 86 congregations. Although the clergy were evicted from the manses and the churches were nationalized, parishioners were allowed to use the churches. Six churches were closed down and used as warehouses. Much more could be written of these times. We can only hope that history will document the facts.

With the signing of the Helsinki Accord by the Soviet Union in 1975, the situation of the Church changed for the better. They allowed two people each year to receive pastoral training. From 1991 on, they allowed two people to study in Budapest, Debrecen, Sárospatak (Hungary), Kolozsvár (now Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and Komárom

(Czechoslovakia). At present there are 95 congregations, although only 4 ministers from Hungary and 34 local ministers are actively serving. Hungarian professors of theology graduated 90 young religious instructors between 1992 and 1995. During the Cold War years, religious instruction of the young was considered a major offence. We are now trying to make up for lost time by instructing and preparing adult parishioners for confirmation.

Currently 9,000 children receive religious instructions. We are building 6 new churches, 3 are nearing completion. A new church is being built in Szerény, and one in Nagydobrony for the Gypsy congregation. Foundations were laid for another one in Beregszász. The manses are currently being repaired and new ones built, but not all manses have yet been restored.

The Situation of Hungarian Minority in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine

Hungarians make up approximately 12% of the population of the region and, according to statistical reports, their total number is 150,000. A significant number live in the Ungvár, Nagyszöllős and Munkács districts, but form a majority only in the district of Beregszász. Even so, the population of the city of Beregszász is only 50% Hungarian.

The largest organizations safeguarding their interests are the Hungarian Cultural Association of Sub-Carpathian-Ukraine with 22,000 members, the Hungarian Educators' Association of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine with 1,100 members, and the Hungarian Cultural Association of Bereg District with 2,200 members. None of these receive federal aid.

Instruction in Hungarian is conducted in approximately 90 schools. Hungarian speaking, or partially Hungarian speaking groups are present in a vocational (secondary) school, in a department of an agricultural technical college, and in the Department of Mathematics at the National University of Ungvár. Teaching also started at the Hungarian Secondary School Teachers' College of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine.

Local Hungarian-language publishing, apart from the *Kárpáti Igaz Szó* (Carpath True Word), is limited to periodicals put out by a few organizations and Churches. The importation of up-to-date Hungarian media publications or books is an unsolvable problem.

Cultural organizational networks, including rural cultural centers and libraries, are inactive due to the general economic breakdown. The same is true of kindergartens, only a few of which are functioning. The teaching staff gets paid six months in arrears.

While Hungarians have proportional representation in the decision-making process of local administrative bodies, they are excluded from key decision-making forums on the federal level. The new election laws put minorities in an even worse predicament.

As bankrupt factories and plants put masses of people out of work, migration to the cities from rural areas has come to a halt. Emigration is on the rise, especially among Hungarians and Germans, many seeking work in neighboring countries. While local prices exceed those in Hungary, the salaries are only 20% of salaries in Hungary, and even these are paid with several months' delay, at times in the form of unmarketable commodities. Passport application fees are set at a level that is unaffordable for most people. The Hungarian intellectual pool has been considerably depleted due to emigration. Only about 5% of young people who study abroad return.

The enforcement of Hungarian minority rights is guaranteed neither by rights laid down in the Ukrainian-Hungarian Charter, nor by the existence of an active Joint Committee on minority and language rights. It is a year-by-year struggle to obtain consent for Hungarian-language matriculation examinations, or entrance examinations. To this day no bilingual report cards are being issued. There are problems with bilingual signs, as well as other language-related issues. The new policy on the instruction of minorities allows teaching in Hungarian at elementary school level only.

For all practical purposes the dwindling Hungarian population has no collective rights. The mere making known of our problems runs into obstacles, due to current Ukrainian domestic policy, as well as the fatal Hungarian foreign policy decision regarding the status of this region.

*

The Cistibiscan Reformed District in Hungary, with which they are neighbors, have their cause very much at heart; they gave a lot of assistance. Through them and with their help the Church has been able to establish three secondary schools. The great flood in the Fall of 1998 was an especially trying time for Hungarians in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. Victims of the flood received considerable aid from the Hungarian Churches, as well as from Hungarians all over the world.(Ed.).

Translation by Éva

Kossuth

NOTES

2. The first section of this paper was originally published in the *Partium Gazette* (Partiumi Közlöny), the official publication of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District (in Western Transylvania, Romania), viii.Yr.No.

5, April 10, 1998. The Report is dated at Beregszász, February 5, 1998. .

Sub-Carpathian Ukraine lies between Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania. It is called "Kárpátalja" in Hungarian,

hence it is also known as "Sub-Carpathia". Sometimes it called "Ruthenia", after its major population the

Ruthens. Its other name, of recent usage, is "Sub-Carpathian Ukraine" because this region today belongs to

Ukraine, although it never belonged to it before throughout history.

As to the Ruthen nation: in the previous centuries, in a slow process, they immigrated from the Ukrainean side of the Carpathian Mountain and settled down in Hungarian territory. The cohabited friendly with the Hungarian

population. The Ruthen nation is made up the following branches: Huculs (in the valley of River Upper-Tisza);

Dalinyans (in the valley of River Borsa); Bojkos (in the valley of River Latorca) and Lemkes (in the region near by the Polish borders).

2. A Hungarian born in this region before 1920 was born a Hungarian citizen. After the First World War, the Peace Treaty of Trianon (Versailles) awarded this Hungarian territory for a thousand year to the newly created Czechoslovakia together with its substantial Hungarian ethnic population. Consequently Hungarians of this region became Czechoslovak citizens. Following the 1938 Munich Accord, after

Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, the Czech part became a German protectorate and the Slovak part gained independence. At that point Hungary occupied this region for historical reason and the Hungarians again became Hungarian citizens. After the Second World War, the Paris Peace Treaty ceded this territory to the Soviet Union and its Hungarians became Soviet citizens. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union this territory became a part of Ukraine, ethnic Hungarians became Ukrainian citizens. Some unfortunate old-age people changed citizenship five times without once leaving their homeland, and are expected to accept this abnormal situation as normal! This bizarre situation also points out the indifference of the Great Powers towards the fate and the suffering of ethnic minorities. The case of ethnic Hungarians in Sub-Carpathian-Ukraine is only one of a host of similar cases.

4. From the periodicals of *Magyar Egyház* (Magyar Church), Paramus, NJ, USA, 1998 Spring, 77, Yr, p.9.

the editor

Notes compiled by

Chapter 16

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN SUB-CARPATHIAN UKRAINE IN THE 1990s

László Horkay

A new period in the life of the Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine began in the year 1990. Communist rule collapsed without a finger being lifted. Forty-five years of “Babylonian” captivity were the judgement of God upon us, and now we were set free by the mercy of God. “O Lord, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence” (Ezra 9.15).

Since 1990, in principle, everything is allowed that until then had been banned – under threat of imprisonment – by the Soviet State. First of all we reopened the locked churches and renovated them. Our manses, schools, Church libraries and four Church printing presses had all been confiscated after the Second World War; we were given back only those manses that were uninhabitable. Until today, thirty-nine former Church buildings remain in State ownership, despite the promise given ten years ago that these would be returned to the Church.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union caused the population great financial damage. The value of savings, gathered through many years of heavy toil, was wiped out from one day to the next. The rouble, the Soviet currency, became worthless. In 1991 Ukraine separated from Russia, which resulted in further economic collapse. Co-operatives, already operating in the red, went bankrupt due to the severing of economic ties and the lack of raw materials. The bulk of ethnic Hungarians, who until then had worked in the *kolkhozes* for starvation-wages, became unemployed.^{lxxxvi} In this grave situation, in our great sorrow, we would have had reason “to hang up our lyres on the willows” (Psalm 137.2).

But in this situation God’s sustaining power became visible. The past ten years have been like the time of the prophet Nehemiah. Therefore we should talk not about the difficulties but rather about our gratitude for the mighty deeds and wonders of God, who after so much misery has yet remembered us and revived us.

Schools

Church and school belong together. Where they are separated, the children are separated from Jesus. In 1993 the Reformed High School of Nagyberég opened its gates with twenty-one students. In 1995 two other Reformed High Schools were established: one in Nagydobrony and the other in Tivadarfalva. Currently the three High Schools have 231 students altogether.^{lxxxvii}

In Nagydobrony, an elementary school with twenty-two students was opened in September 1999. Two other schools for gypsy children are under construction in Szernye and Nagydobrony. Hungarians live as a minority in 165 settlements, where not even elementary school education is available in Hungarian. We would like to establish Church schools in these “*diaspora*”^{lxxxviii} communities, since Ukrainian law permits the

opening of private schools if there are at least five children to attend them. The only problem is that such schools do not receive financial assistance from the State. In the High Schools, only the teachers who teach specialized subjects receive a salary from the State; all the other expenses of the school are paid by the Church. Church-run kindergartens exist in Szolyva, Búlcú, Kigyós and Beregszász.

Mission

The Word of God cannot be shackled. All Christians can be missionaries in their families, at their workplaces and in society. Even during the most severe persecution of the Church, Bibles reached us through the “iron curtain”. God opened a wide gate for mission once religious literature could cross the border into our country without limitation. In 1992 alone, we received 49,000 Ukrainian and Russian Bibles from the Netherlands and from Scotland. With these we launched a literature-mission, through which we sent thousands of parcels throughout the former Soviet Union. However, it is difficult to continue sending such parcels, because the mailing fees went up considerably. In 1999 we delivered 12,000 Ukrainian Bibles to Odessa using two trucks.

By the grace of God we started a three-year missionary training program in Tivadarfalva in October 1994. So far, thirteen graduates of this training program have entered the “harvest fields”. Two are working in Kiev one in Stepan, and the rest serve in hospital ministry, in youth work and among the gypsies. Five congregations have been formed among the Hungarian-speaking gypsies. New congregations were formed amongst those living in the *diaspora*. In 1990 we had eighty one congregations and today we have one hundred registered ones. “So neither he who plants, nor he who waters, is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (1 Cor 3.7).

In 1991, when we realized that the Soviet Union had eighteen hospitals for lepers, we launched the Leprosy Mission. The biggest of these hospitals is the Leprosy Research Institute centered in Astrakhan, and we immediately established a link with it. Together with the Leprosy Mission in Hungary, we sent lots of aid to these hospitals. Since Ukraine became independent we have primarily helped the Leprosy Hospital in Kuchurgan with food, clothes and money. The Leprosy Mission in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine is centered in Szürte.

The Alcoholics Anonymous mission (the Blue Cross) is active in Csongor, and is greatly blessed. Many of these addicts are freed from the bondage of alcohol during the ten-day courses that offer pastoral care and healing. The average attendance at such a course is 100 people.

Youth Work

In the area of religious education we have to overcome a gap of forty-five years. This is why, first of all, we have to provide well-trained teachers of religion. In 1990 forty eight students applied for a three-year religious teachers’ course, and in the following year forty five applied. In addition the students graduating from the Reformed High Schools also take an exam in religious education; those who pass receive a certificate. Today there are qualified teachers of religion working in each and every congregation. In our region 9,000 children attend religious education classes run by the Reformed Church.

Every summer we organize youth camps in each of the three Church districts. During a week of evangelism many youngsters receive living faith and, after returning home, become active members in their local congregations.

In thirty congregations “Good News Clubs” have been formed, led by young couples and by teachers of religion. We hold one-day retreats for young people on a regular basis, where young ministers proclaim the Word of God. At Ungvár and Szolyva we organize worship services for Ukrainian young people as well.

Diaconal Institutions

The Good Samaritan Reformed Home for Handicapped Children of Nagydobrony was established in 1995. At present fifty nine abandoned, orphaned and physically and mentally handicapped girls live in the Home.

The Reformed Children’s Home of Munkács was formed in 1997. At present eighteen children live in the Home. Our aim is to provide a Christian family-style home for children who live in a hopeless social situation, are displaced or who are orphaned.

The Diaconal Center of the Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine in Beregszász was founded in 1993 with the purpose of helping those living in difficult situations, such as the poor, the needy, widows and orphans. There is a charity kitchen that feeds some 200 people every day with a hot meal. During the devastating flood in November 1998 help from abroad reached the victims via this center. The work of rebuilding was also organized and directed from here.

Construction

“Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap” (Eccl 11.4). If we had looked only at the obstacles and the financial difficulties, we would never have ventured to construct even a barn. But when we “planned to build a tower”, we based our calculations on the endless riches of Almighty God. There was a tiny *diaspora* congregation that only had enough money for two truck loads of stones, but in 1991 they laid the foundation stone for the church they wanted to build; the church was completed by 1995. The Nagydobrony gypsy church was constructed in two months using the ruins of the old manse. On the balcony of the Reformed church at Nagydobrony we found an inscription about the old wooden church: “It was constructed in 1775 during the time of the faithful preacher Reverend Gábor Sima Turóczi, in the Fall, in the cold month of All Saints – a needy year which was stricken with many troubles.”

In the past ten years, needy years stricken by many troubles, twelve new churches and twenty four manses have been built. Currently, six manses and two churches are under construction: one of the churches is at Bakta, the other at the gypsy congregation in Munkács. We would like to complete them by the Fourth World Assembly of the Reformed Hungarians in July 2000.

With the help of the Dunamellék (Danubian) Reformed Church District in Hungary, a water plant was established in the flood-stricken village of Mezővári, which will provide clean drinking water to the part of the community beyond the River Borzsa.

Media

We have only one regular publication, *Küldetés* (“Mission”), which appears quarterly. Young ministers jointly edit it. Our paramount problems are the lack of paper and the cost of printing; this is why we are trying to establish our own printing facility. God willing, we will set up such a printing facility this year in Beregszász, for our own purposes, with the help of Dutch aid.

Church Music

The Synod of the Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine decided on the use of the Hungarian Reformed Hymnbook in every congregation from 1 January 1998. We received 400 hymnbooks from Hungary; Stichting Hulp Oost Europa of the Netherlands printed 5,000 copies; in Ungvár (Uzhgorod) in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, we printed 20,000 copies from our own resources, and with the help of the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage in Hungary, we printed 800 hymnbooks in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) in Transylvania, Romania. There is still a great demand for the new hymnbooks. Therefore it seems more expedient if in the future we print them at our own printing facility in Beregszász, in order to provide for a continuous supply.

In 1999, the training of Church-organists commenced in Beregszász, where 20 students trained amidst great difficulties. We would like to create the position of “organist and teacher”. Those working in this position would be teachers of religion, youth-leaders and public instructors, as well as teaching music. We have choirs in seventeen congregations and in the three High Schools. Our aim is to make known to the congregations the authentic Reformed treasure that we have in hymns, and to educate people in the rhythmic singing of the Geneva Psalms in Hungarian. Two choir festivals have been held, in Mezővári and Beregszász.

The Structure of our Church

Before 1990 the Church operated under the direction of the State-approved Bishop alone. The minister was supervised by the so-called “Council of Twenty”, appointed by the chairman of the local council, rather than by the elders of the Session. Informers were planted in every “Council of Twenty”. It was as if the minister was simply an employee, who wasn’t allowed a say in anything – his only task was to preach in church.

Since Ukraine’s separation, the Constitution has ensured the independence of the Church, and currently the State does not interfere in their internal matters. In 1991 free elections were held within the Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. Church government, based on the principle of the Synod and the elders or session, was restored. Three Church districts (*egyházmegye*) began operating with a senior pastor (*esperes*) at their head, and with the Bishop and the Council of the Synod at the head of the Church. This Council of the Synod has twenty members elected on the principle of parity, half from the ministers and half from the laity. A new statute-book had to be created for our Church, and committees and departments had to be organized. The elders had to be elected all over again, and they were installed in office after they gave their vows.

“See, today I appoint you... to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jer 1.10). First of all it was necessary to destroy, lay waste and weed; then to clear away the rubble; and only then to make a start on building and planting. The

work is not yet complete; this is only a little beginning. But we are sure that he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Before the Second World War there were 104 ministers and teachers of religion in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. By 1974 there were only twenty who were alive and who worked: many of them having grown old or become invalids; others of them were survivors of the Siberian prisons. From 1974 the authorities allowed us to accept two candidates every two years to be student ministers (studying privately) to replace ministers who had passed away. Thus a Correspondence School was launched in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine in Beregszász, where a number of ministers trained who are still serving today. This was enough to ensure survival, to ensure that the chain was not broken and that the churches did not become empty. In 1990 we were still only twenty four in number. Then from 1991 the opportunity arose to train ministers in Theological Seminaries in Hungary, our mother country, and later in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, in Transylvania) and in Komárom (Komarno, in Slovakia). Now, including assistant ministers, we are already forty nine – and forty six students are studying theology abroad. For this may the name of the Lord be praised.

Our Plans and our Aims

Our greatest need is for spiritual renewal, because the Church is strong when it has faith in the living, resurrected Christ. The purity of families is also needed, as is the ethical rebirth of the young people. We are preparing for the Fourth World Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Hungarians, and we desire closer links with Reformed Hungarians scattered around the world. We would like to train elders to be lay preachers, so that, if a new time of persecution should come, we will not be found unprepared. We would like to further develop the Church library and archives, both of which were founded in 1999; we ask for the support of our sister Churches in this. It is also necessary for the Bishop to have somewhere to live beside the Synod office in Beregszász, in order to ensure the smooth running of the Bishop's Office. Finally, the care of the Reformed Hungarians living in *diaspora* situations is a sore point for us, as we do not have workers whom we can send. There is no one to gather the Hungarians living scattered across the former Soviet Union.

We believe that our God will do everything by His power, if we ask for it by faith. May all the glory be His, for ever and ever. Amen.

Beregszász, March 2000

Translation by Martin M.

Robb

NOTES

1. Sub-Carpathian Ukraine is one of the poorest parts of Ukraine. Amongst all the Hungarians living outside the present day Hungary, the poorest are the Hungarian minority in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine.
2. Students study in the High Schools for three years, because the preliminary schools, including Junior High,

last for nine years. Every district of the Church has a High School, but students from the whole region can register at any of them, because each of the schools has special programs. Many of the High Schools graduates go on to University or Theological Academy; in total 80 % of them pursue higher studies.

3. "*diaspora*" is used here to describe a small number of Hungarians living amongst a larger non-Hungarian population. This is in contrast to settlements in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine where a significant part of the population is Hungarian.

Notes compiled by the translator

Chapter 17

THE SITUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN YUGOSLAVIA

(as Reflected by Current Proceedings Dealing with Regional Minority
Issues)¹

István Csete Szemesi

It is not possible to analyze the current condition of the Reformed Christian Church without describing the present situation of the Hungarian population of Voivodina, the Northern region of the country.²

From 1945 to the present, 40 to 50 thousand Hungarian-speaking persons belonging to the younger generation have left the country. Most of them took to the road during the 1991-1995 war, not wanting to take part in the fighting. They fled to, and settled in Hungary, or in one of the Western European countries, or across the Sea, to having had relatives working in one or the other. For instance, 10% of the former Greater Yugoslavia's 20-million population worked as guest laborer somewhere in the world.

The other group that left was the young educated class, most of them also during the hostilities. In this way left more than 100 journalists, approximately sixty actors (which is a great loss, having only two theatres, one in Szabadka (Subotica) and one in Újvidék (Novi-Sad), as many educators, more than a hundred scientists, the same number of physicians, etc.

Another sign of migration is the departure of masses of secondary school students, especially eighth-graders are leaving in order to pursue their studies in one of the bordering Hungarian cities such as Szeged, Halas, Csurgó, etc. This erroneous perception of the situation by the parents stems from the concern that because of the war, the educational standards of the country have fallen behind that of the Western European countries, whereas standards in Hungary have kept abreast. To counteract the migration of the student population, our educators are organizing Branch transfers from Hungarian Universities. Such one is the Horticultural College in Zenta (Senta), as well as the Dénes Gábor Polytechnical College in Szabadka (Subotica), the latter a division of the Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, Hungary. The activities of these two Institutions are sensitive indicators in two areas. Firstly, these are important indicators of the development of the Hungarian-speaking intellectual middle class that is just now testing its willingness to stay in the country. For instance, the Dénes Gábor College trains computer technicians with the most up-to-date equipment. The need for experts in the field in this country is as great as the need for daily bread. If these young people see the possibility of steady employment, they will not emigrate, not even the Horticultural College graduates. Secondly, the founding of these two Institutions produced loud protests from their local Serbian authorities and higher forums. They are unable – or unwilling to understand that these programs are educational and conducive to eradicating borders. This negative attitude was demonstrated when they attempted to evict the above Departments from the buildings they were housed in. That they were able to stay was due solely to the courageous stance of the autonomous regional governments, where Hungarians were in the majority. Further transfers of College Branches are planned for those autonomous regions where Hungarians form a majority – for instance a Branch of the Tatabánya training Center for Modern Business Administrators, Hungary.

The greatest problem however is posed by the conscious efforts of assimilation directed against us. Alas we are too full of human frailty to put up an effective defense.

The endeavors of our representative Association, in order to evaluate and represent the common interests of the more densely populated communities where ethnic Hungarians form an 80 % majority, are as follows:

Even if we ethnic Hungarians were willing to join the opposing factions to the ruling majority, we could wait for decades before any kind of internal change took place. In the meantime we would decline on several fronts and, in the end, those remaining would be endangered by assimilation. This includes the regions beyond areas of larger ethnic Hungarian population, such as South and Central Bánát, the South Bácska (Backa) region and Szerémség (Srem).

To prevent assimilation the President of our largest interest group the Mayor of Szabadka (Subotica), together with other officials initiated negotiations with the President of the Republic and the responsible Special Commissions. After the historic meetings that took place on December 23, 1997, and January 30, 1998 respectively, the case was taken over by a Special Commission with a one-year implementation deadline.

As its first mandate the Commission will investigate and remedy:

1. Our declining language rights. In public offices, in Registry Office documents and school reports the Hungarian text should appear next to the Cyrillic (Serbian) text. The same applies to documents issued by Police Stations and Taxation Offices.
2. Signs on public buildings, road signs, and other signs to be displayed in Hungarian.
3. Henceforth advantage in employment should be given to bilingual public employees.
4. The Teachers' College of Szabadka (Subotica) forcibly moved to Zombor (Sombor), should be transferred back to Szabadka in accordance with the Agreement, so that the new school year can start there in the Fall.
5. School curricula should be drafted by the respective minority's language specialists, and not by those of the ruling majority's. This would stop the elimination of subjects promoting ethnic pride and identity awareness.
6. They should reinstate our rights of the printed and electronic media, which were stripped of, or limited in their publishing practices and rights. The rights granted to national newspapers should also be granted to us.

If we were to wait for the foregoing while supporting the current government's opposition parties, who are unburdened by language problems, time would defeat us and we would gradually give up the use of our beloved mother tongue.

The Christian Churches can serve for a time as bastions of our language (albeit with limited terminology and means), and only within church-walls. The South-Bánát is already threatened by an unhappy situation: many of the children who were enrolled in non-Hungarian schools, by their career-conscious parents, developed a guilt complex about speaking Hungarian. This kind of situation prompts the vigorous struggle for the control of our schools and use of our language, even at the price of evoking strong criticism for our endeavors from so-called democratic, in-fighting, non-Hungarian groups. When we asked for support, they argued that we should wait until total democratization of the country, when the problem would solve itself. One could ask: how can such unexpected transformation possible on the part of the present administration? However, if they would grant us these rights in the Northern region of the country now, then it would prove to the international community that they intend to settle the situation in a peaceful manner. At the same time it would serve as precedent and an example to the turbulent Southern Province that language and national issues can be solved without going to war to achieve regional autonomy. The two negotiating parties were given one year in which to come to a settlement in accordance with the written terms of the Agreement.

All Churches, and in this instance the Reformed Christian Church, beg the Lord to grant progress in this matter. Most of our parishioners are members of the various Forums safeguarding our interests. As people of God, as well as that of this nation, we hope that this time they will not abuse our trust, and within the year we will be able to secure our basic human rights and the full right to use our mother tongue.

Translation by Éva Kossuth

NOTES

1. Appeared in the *Partium Közlöny* (Partium Gazette), viii. Yr., No.,5, p. 4, (April 10, 1998).

2. In Vajdaság region live some 400,000 ethnic Hungarians. The Reformed Church has 13 congregations and 35 diasporas.

Chapter 18

ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

Joseph Pungur

Generally speaking, we call ethnic minorities those groups which have independent cultures, language and history and, for historical reasons, were torn away from their compatriots of identical culture, language and history and are now living, as minorities, in a country made up of a culturally, linguistically and historically different majority. According to Pál Teleki, we can distinguish between three different kinds of minorities: “Traditional minorities” are those, who have lived together... for many centuries with the majority, without losing their ethnic character and customs. This would include such minorities as the Bretons, the Catalans, and the French or Germans in Alsace-Lorraine. A “voluntary minority” is one which immigrated to a country with or without invitation, but was not settled there by force either individually or in small groups – in our case, the Germans; or one that was driven out, as the Serbs were, and led into Hungary by the Orthodox Patriarch of Ipek. Then there are the “involuntary minorities”, which in Europe were mostly transposed by the First World War. These did not submit voluntarily to the laws of the majority State. New laws were created specifically for them, a situation they could not foresee. “The necessity of legal remedy comes into question here, if there is anybody who could provide such a remedy”^{lxxxix}.

The ethnic minority problem has been present in Europe for a good 150 years, and is generally connected to the formation of new national States. This is one of the determinants of the history of the 20th Century – if not the main one. The reason for the outbreak of the First World War was the assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Bosnia, which was in revenge for the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1908) that frustrated Pan-Slav ambitions. The Second World War started over German demand for the Danzig corridor to link East Prussia to Germany. Naturally, minority problems are present not only in Europe; it is a global phenomenon. The world is full of ethnic groups living among majority populations, such as the Albanians in Kosovo in the lesser Yugoslavia; the Welsh and the Scots in the United Kingdom; the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq; the Tamils in Sri Lanka, to mention but a few. Each of these – as well as the ones not mentioned here – is a unique case. For instance, after the First World War the newly created League of Nations handed down a decision in favor of founding an independent Kurd State. Nothing came of it however, and the Kurds have been bleeding for their cause ever since. A common feature of the struggle of the minorities is the fight for acceptance, autonomy, or even independence. However, discussion of these objectives would exceed the framework of this study, for we could write a book on each subject. Therefore we shall restrict our study to Central-Eastern Europe – in our case, to the situation of Hungarian ethnic minorities. We will look at it from the standpoint of their historical development in the Carpathian Basin, where they have been living as an ethnic minority, torn away from the motherland by the dictates of Peace Agreements, under the rule of national majorities, alien languages and

cultures, fighting for their language, their culture and for their very existence for the past eighty years.

Let us scrutinize the development of the situation. The Hungarian tribes crossed the Carpathian Mountain Range in 895, to settle in the Carpathian Basin. The area was sparsely populated, in part mostly by remnant settlements of kindred peoples, like the Avars and the Huns. The Hungarians only fought two battles for the territory: one with the Slav tribal Chief Svatopluk for the Northwestern regions, the other with the Bulgarian tribal Chief Zalán for the Southern region. Before Hungarians came, no other people had been able to settle permanently and establish a State in the region. The Hungarians were a welcoming nation. They welcomed the Slav elements in the North, as well as the kindred Seklers, already settled in Transylvania. A couple of centuries later, they welcomed and settled the Cumans and the Alans in the country.^{xc} In the middle of the 20th Century, the author has come across Cumans of advanced age who could still recite the Lord's Prayer in the Cuman language.

The early Hungarians tilled the land, and raised and bred livestock in great numbers. They also had a highly developed metal industry, and were famous for their beautifully crafted swords, which they also exported. During their first century in the Carpathian Basin, they led intimidating raids into Western Europe in defense of the new Land, but by the time of the rule of Prince Géza (971- 997), negotiations began with the Western neighbors for a more peaceful coexistence, and for Christian missionaries. His son István, who became the first Christian king (later known as St. Stephen of Hungary, 997-1038), continued his policies, and the conversion of the Hungarian people to Western (Roman) Catholicism began in earnest. Aligning his people with the West and with Western culture secured the future of the country, for the Christian West would not have tolerated for long a pagan nation on its borders. The unhindered development of the country was disrupted only by a growing feudal oligarchy, and by the devastating Mongol invasion of 1241. Under the Royal houses of Árpád and Anjou Hungary became a great power in Europe, and achieved the height of her greatness under the great Renaissance king, Matthias (1458-1490). The population of the country at that time was 5 million, the same as that of France and England. However, the disastrous defeat by the Turks at the Battle of Mohács in 1526 sealed the fate of the country; it was broken into three parts. The Turks ruled the central part, including the Capital, Buda. The Northern and Western parts remained within the Kingdom of Hungary under the rule of the Austrian Habsburgs. In the East, only the autonomous Principality of Transylvania remained an island for, and the support of the Hungarian nation. In the meanwhile, the ideals of Reformation were rapidly spreading. In the Turkish-occupied region and in Transylvania, Calvinistic, and in the north, Lutheran Protestantism, gained ground. In Transylvania, the Diet of Torda decreed the free practice of religion in 1568.^{xcii} By the end of the 16th Century 90% of the population was Protestant. But due to the 150-year long Turkish occupation, as well as religious and other wars, most of the country was destroyed. After the recapture of Buda in 1686, and the consequent retreat of the Turks, the population was reduced to 2.5 million.^{xciii} Central Hungary, the most Hungarian part of the country, suffered the most serious devastation. Although Hungarian settlers were brought in from the peripheral regions in defiance of Austrian prohibition, the Austrians in turn settled foreigners in great numbers in the vacant territories in order to curb rebel Protestant Hungarians following the Rákóczi- and Thököly-led insurrection against Austrian oppression. This

resulted in the appearance of numerous Serbs and Germans in Southern Hungary (now Voivodina). In Transylvania, the Vlachs (now called Romanians) were coming in a steady flow from the Trans-Carpathian Wallachia and Moldova, fleeing poverty and the cruelty of their feudal overlords, similar in their methods to the infamous Drakula. The Hungarian ruling Princes of Transylvania ordered the printing of the first Vlach language prayer books, thus becoming the founders of the Vlach-Romanian national literature. Following the Turkish occupation, the era of Austrian colonization began. Following the termination of the autonomy of the Principality of Transylvania, the population ratio started to alter in favour of the Vlachs. The Hungarians were suffering the effects of an aggressive Counter-Reformation, the plundering and Germanization of the country and the impact of foreign settlements.

The Hungarian awakening to national consciousness was connected to the Reformation, the advancement of education, the ideals of the Enlightenment and the rise of the bourgeoisie.

Writers, poets, teachers, the members of the clergy and nobility, led the people in their national awakening, and in the movement for political, as well as linguistic and cultural, independence. The opportunity for political independence came during the 1848 War of Independence from Austria, which was ultimately lost in the face of Czarist Russian military might. Although legislation was passed in 1849 making the Hungarian language compulsory for all ethnic minorities, technically it remained only on paper, but nevertheless contributed to the awakening of dormant ethnic consciousness of the minorities. The Hungarian ethnic policy was mostly *ad hoc*, never reaching a fixed resolve. What they Hungarianized was the agricultural land.^{xciii} The ultimate determining factor was the formation of independent States to the South, such as Serbia and Romania, made possible by the retreat of the Turkish forces from the Balkans, and by the Congress of Berlin (1873). Since these nations also formed some of the ethnic minority groups on Hungarian soil, first they demanded autonomy, then secession from Hungary, and finally unification with their newly formed national States. The opportunity for the realization of their efforts came after the First World War, at the Peace negotiations at Versailles near Paris. The Hungarian delegation was made to sign the Peace Treaty on June 4, 1920, at the Trianon Palace. By the terms of the Treaty, the 1000-year old historic Hungary was dismembered. Transylvania and the neighboring area known as Partium was annexed to Romania, a territory larger than what remained of Hungary. Thus 3.0 million Hungarians came under Romanian rule. Upper Hungary and Ruthenia, with its one million Hungarians, went to the newly created Czechoslovakia. Southern Hungary (or Voivodina) with half a million Hungarians went to the similarly newly created Yugoslavia. Even Austria was awarded Hungarian territory along the Western border. Thus Hungary lost two-thirds of her territories, which included the best agricultural lands, mines, the greater part of her forestland, as well as historic regions and cities, with a total of 4.5 million native Hungarians.

How can one justify, explain and make sense of such a severe Peace dictate? Did they want to penalize Hungary for not preventing the outbreak of the First World War? It has been revealed since that the prime minister of Hungary, István Tisza, opposed to the very last the ultimatum served to the Serbs. It was also he who earlier objected to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which ignited the hatred of the Pan-Slav circles against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The Western Powers – France and England –

signed the Peace dictate, all the while ignoring US President Wilson's 14-points Peace Proposal (also supported by the Central Powers) which could have been the basis of a just peace. In the end, it was revealed that the whole thing was a sham. The Hungarian army did not engage French or English troops, they only fought on the Russian, Serbian and Italian fronts. At the same time, the Romanians committed two acts of aggression against Hungary: first in 1916, then in 1919, when they advanced as far as Budapest and plundered the country in the process. The Czechs invaded Upper Hungary. All this was made possible only because, in 1919, the revolutionary Károlyi government disarmed the Hungarian forces, rendering the country defenseless. Some hold the view that the Entente Powers wished to create borders where the troops of the neighboring countries stood and from where they would not retreat anyway.^{xci} The fact is that the Western delegations, who prepared the terms of the Treaty, were unfamiliar with the history and the ethnic circumstances of the Central Eastern European region, and were listening only to their Czech, Romanian and Serb advisors, who deliberately misled them. Lloyd George, member of the Peace delegation, later admitted as much. He said in a speech in 1928: "All those documents, which were submitted to us by certain of our allies during the Peace negotiations, were untrue and misleading. We made decisions based on false information."^{xcv}

We can find at least three different explanations for the Peace dictate that dismembered Hungary. The first is rooted in the Western Powers' fear of the spread of Communism. It is true that Hungary was under Communist rule for 133 days in 1919; however, the country was sufficiently incapacitated by the terms of the Peace Treaty to pose no serious threat. The second: by the creation of the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia), they surrounded Germany on the East with hostile nations, making it seemingly impossible for Germany to start another war. The member States of the Little Entente, in an effort to enhance their power, demanded and received territories from the historic Hungary. The third possible explanation is the following: the victorious Powers believed they had found the reasons for the First World War in the existence of national States. Consequently, by the terms of the Peace Treaties, they drew the new borders with the purpose of creating *multinational States* which would be unable to start aggressive wars, being too occupied with their own internal problems. So they created Czechoslovakia, where 34.5 % of the population, besides Czechs and Slovaks, was made up of Germans, Hungarians and Ruthenians. Yugoslavia was composed of 15 different nationalities where, besides the Serbs, there were Croats, Slovenes, Hungarians, Bosnians, Roman Catholic Serbs, Montenegrins and others, comprising 18.8% of the population. In Romania – apart from Hungarians – Sakers, Saxon-Germans, Hungarians from Moldova, Bulgarians and others were trying to coexist, 17 nationalities in all, with a 1:3 ratio.^{xvii} After the Peace Treaties, only three homogenous States remained in the region: Germany, Austria and Hungary.

The Wilsonian principle of self-determination was included in the Treaty with the strength of a few sentences; the victors, however, never took them seriously. They believed in, and accordingly applied, the old Roman principle: "*Vae victis!*" – woe to the conquered. This attitude manifested itself in the way they viewed the annexed Hungarian territories and its ethnic Hungarian population as simply spoils of war, and were thus free to treat them any way they pleased, for these people had no rights and, besides, were not protected by anybody. How their new masters chose to treat them was the internal affair

of each respective State. Thus began the oppression, dispersion and systematic destruction of the Hungarian ethnic minorities in the successor States.

In Transylvania, their rights were restricted, their cultural institutions and schools were closed, teachers were dismissed. The use of the Hungarian language was forbidden or suppressed. Hungarian lands were expropriated and sold to Romanians. Settlers were brought in from Romania proper into areas settled by Hungarians. The persecution resulted in nearly 200,000 Hungarians fleeing from Transylvania into Hungary during the first years of Romanian occupation.^{xcvii} In 1930, the situation of the Hungarian minorities in Transylvania was summed up as follows: "They have spurious legal rights, are subjected to cultural oppression, deliberate agricultural devastation, disproportionate taxation, reactionary voting laws, economic and police terror, the banishment of their Hungarian language, religious and educational persecution, and disregard for the Gyulaféhérvár points."^{xcviii} These, earlier, had promised equal treatment to Hungarians.

The Romanians had three reasons for acquiring Transylvania. The first is that in 1916, the Entente Powers promised them the territory if they would invade it. This they duly did, but then they were driven out again during the war. The other is that the Romanians gained a 52% majority in Transylvania. The third one was a historical distortion: the Daco-Romanian origin theory, invented in the 18th Century by Greek Orthodox theologians in Rome. According to the theory of Gheorge Sincai, Samuel Micu Klein and Peter Maior, the Romanians are the supposed descendants of the indigenous Dacians. It is indeed a fact that between AD 106 and 275 Transylvania was a Roman Province known as Dacia. According to the above theory, the Romanians lived there as Dacians before the Hungarians occupied the territory and subjugated them. Therefore, Transylvania belonged to Romania by ancient right. However, this theory is not supported by archeological findings of any kind. No towns, villages, monuments or graves of Vlach-Romanian origin have ever been found. In other words, there is no trace whatsoever of Romanian civilization in Transylvania. The presence of Vlach-Romanians is the result of an insidious and tenacious infiltration from Trans-Carpathian Wallachia (later called Regat, meaning Royal Romania).

In the 14th Century, there were only 389 Vlach villages in Transylvania. The number of Vlach immigrants grew considerably during the 17th Century, when Vlach settlers were brought in to make up for the greatly reduced Hungarian population. The Vlach population in 1700 was only 250,000; by 1784, it had increased to 787,000. Experts have proved that the "Romanian" designation has been known only since 1861; until then they were known as "Vlachs" among themselves and to foreigners, the word meaning "nomad". The name "Ruminyi" means "slave" or "serf". This was later altered to "Rumanian", and lately to "Romanian".^{xcix} The Vlachs are not mentioned in written sources until 1200, which is curious if they were native to Transylvania. "The neo-Latin speaking Wallachians and Moldavians, inhabiting modern Romania, are first mentioned in local sources in the 13th Century. Their later claim to be descendants of the Roman colonists planted there in the 2nd Century AD seems to be tendentious and improbable, for the Romans' withdrawal from the territory (270 AD) and the appearance of the Vlach States are separated by a millennium in which the country was the property of Slav and nomads, and which is devoid of all evidence of Roman survival. Almost certainly the Vlachs came from the Western Balkans and only migrated into Romania as the nomads

abandoned it in the late 13th and early 14th Century.”^c Their language has an affinity with the Albanian, with 3,800 Slav loanwords besides 2,600 Latin words.

The Czech are the most westerly Slavs who, at one time they had a kingdom known as Bohemia, but later they came under foreign rule. Until the end of the First World War they were under Austrian rule and their soldiers fought for Austrian military interests. However, Masaryk and Beneš persuaded the Allied Powers to create an independent Czech-Slovak State, which was accomplished by the end of 1918. It was made up of Bohemia, Upper Hungary, with a Hungarian and Slovak population, and Ruthenia, with a Hungarian and Ruthenian population.

A former Czech Senator has written about the Czech rule in Ruthenia.^{ci} He said of this region, also known as Sub-Carpathia, basically the following: “This wedge-shaped territory formed part of Hungary for a thousand years. Beside the Hungarians, it is also inhabited by Slovaks and Ruthenians, who settled in Hungary in the latter part of the 14th Century but were still filtering through in the 18th and 19th Centuries from Trans-Carpathia. Until 1912 it never occurred to these people to secede from Hungary; if it did occur to them, it was for reasons of Orthodox religion only. The Czech Masaryk demanded, from 1915 on, the detachment of the Territory from Hungary and its annexation to the future Czechoslovak State. The Hungarians gave autonomy to the region at the end of 1918, at which time the Ruthenian National Assembly declared a union with Hungary. The Czechs also promised them autonomy – as they were obligated by the terms of the Peace Treaty – but it was never granted. After the Treaty ceded the Territory to Czechoslovakia, together with a strip of land along the Hungarian border, it became one of its colonies. Today ethnic Hungarians make up 12% of the population.

Staying within Hungary had, besides its historical reasons, political and economic advantages. The Ruthenians received better treatment in Hungary than their brothers were afforded on the Trans-Carpathian side of the border. Economically, the area was dependent on Hungary in the dairy and lumber industries and in the labor market. When it was unable to find markets for its commodities in their new country, the impoverishment of the region began. The Ruthenian National Assembly consisted of 18 members. Some were elected but most of them were appointed. In most cases, the Czechs were successful in dictating the terms, inflicting upon the Hungarian minority discriminating regulations. They were unable to, or had great difficulty in securing a passport, including the Hungarian Members of the Assembly. Czech became the official language everywhere. In the Ruthenian region twice as many people’s votes were needed to elect a representative to the parliament than in other regions of the country. Procurement of Czech citizenship for the Hungarian minority presented an opportunity for serious discrimination by creating many obstacles and charging exorbitant fees. At the same time, those who did not possess such a document lost their jobs and pensions. Hungarian teachers who did not have Czech citizen papers were dismissed by the hundreds. The Hungarian Press was censored, Hungarian newspapers were banned. The exchange rate for the new Czech currency was as follows: in Bohemia 2-1, in Slovakia 4-1, while in Ruthenia 10-1. Under the guise of agrarian reform, lands from Hungarians were expropriated and given to newly settled Czechs. Through such policies they attempted to thin out the purely Hungarian regions. The Czechs successfully colonized both Upper Hungary and Ruthenia.

The Kingdom of Croatia came into being in the 10th Century, in a territory between the Drava and Sava Rivers – but it soon disintegrated. In 1091, through a royal marriage, it became Hungarian Crown Territory during the reign of King László (Ladislav) I, and remained one for 800 years. Their nobles took part in the fight against the Turks, then later against the Habsburgs. During the 1848 Hungarian War of Independence the Austrians sent Jellasics, the Governor of Croatia, against the Hungarian troops; he was routed by them. 1868 saw the birth of the Hungarian-Croatian Agreement, whereby Hungary recognized Croat-Slavonia and Dalmacia as Provinces with local self-government.

However, from 1903 on, Croatian radicals, together with the Serbs, set the goal for the creation of an independent Southern Slav State. Annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy only intensified their zeal. When, in 1917, they laid the foundations for the creation of a united Serb-Croat-Slovene State based on the Corfu Agreement, the majority of the Croats opposed a common Monarchy with Serbia. Although they adopted the “Yugoslav” designation for the new State in 1929, the Croat-Serb discord always remained and, what is more, increased over the years, twice leading to the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The Serbs are also a Southern Slav people, like the Croats, whom the Avars settled in Balkans in the 6th and 7th Centuries from the Vistula-Dneper region. The Serbs organized themselves into a nation between the 7th and 10th Centuries, became adherents of the Eastern Orthodox faith, and adopted the Cyrillic script. Because of Turkish military advance, they began to move more and more to the north, and started to filter into Hungary from the 14th Century on. In 1420, King Sigismund gave permission for a group to settle in Hungary, and the Turks were also settling them on vacant Hungarian lands. In 1690, under the leadership of Arzen Csernojevic, the Orthodox Patriarch of Ipek, 200,000 Serbs settled in Southern Hungary. Empress Maria Theresa gave permission for temporary settlement to 20,000 Serbs who, in the end, stayed there permanently. Pan-Slav ambitions turned the Serbs against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, especially after the retreat of the Turks from the Balkans and after the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. When, in 1914, Gavrilo Princip assassinated Crown-Prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo, the First World War broke out. The Austro-Hungarian forces occupied Serbia, but when the war seemed lost, the Serb general, Misica, proceeded to occupy Southern Hungary between the 8th and 21st of November, 1918. The Versailles-Trianon Peace Treaty awarded Croat-Slovenia and Southern Hungary to the Serbs.

Let us summarize how the Serbs treated the Hungarian minority, forgetting that in the past the Hungarians accepted and gave asylum to a great number of fleeing Serbs and Croats. After occupying the Hungarian territories, they closed down all Hungarian cultural and other institutions and gave the buildings and all equipment in them to Serbian institutions. They expropriated Church land, Abbeys, schools and other properties. They also expropriated and closed down Hungarian rural elementary, as well as secondary schools, and prohibited the use of Hungarian education books. The contents of Hungarian libraries had to be shipped to Belgrade. Hungarian historic monuments were destroyed. The Hungarian theater company were expelled. Hungarian newspapers were banned, although later a few were allowed to operate under strict censorship. All these anti-Hungarian measures were made in contravention of Article 19 of the Peace

Treaty, which guaranteed all ethnic minorities the right to schools, a term approved even by the Serbian Assembly.

Serbia was awarded Southern Hungary with a three times larger non-Serbian population, with the stipulation of self-rule – but without a national referendum. Had it come to a referendum, the Serbs would have received only a quarter of the votes, based on which Southern Hungary could not have been ceded to Serbia.^{cii} Let us cite a section from the American Presbyterian Mission Report: “We have concluded that the occupation and administration of the territories ceded from Hungary to Serbia is characterized by grievous and brutal behavior, and vengeful ethnic hatred that has evoked and tolerated the dirty politics of terror, abuse, brutality, plunder and coercion. They are imprisoning and beating members of the clergy and civil servants in large numbers, and are threatening them with torture and death... They are holding people in jail for months without trial, or even charge. Appeals are disregarded, or held back, the appellants penalized.”^{ciii}

On June 7th 1921, the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom, as it then was, together with Romania and Czechoslovakia, formed the so-called Little Entente. This was created partly in the fear that Hungary would demand the return of her territories, or parts thereof, that had been seized in an underhanded manner. Even a Soviet historian remarked that the Little Entente “was created in defense of territories acquired illegally.”^{civ} Count Albert Apponyi, the leader of the Hungarian delegation to the Versailles-Trianon Peace negotiations, refused to sign the Peace Agreement and handed in his mandate. When on June 4, 1920, Hungary was forced to sign the Peace dictate, the whole country went into mourning. Church bells rang, people demonstrated in the streets against the unjust peace. The Hungarians could not, and will never, come to terms with it since, with the stroke of a pen, 4.5 million Hungarians were turned into a minority in alien, hostile countries.

The United States Administration did not recognize the Peace dictate, and negotiated a separate peace with Hungary. Lenin’s Soviet Union disapproved of it too, qualifying it an imperialist peace. Strong criticisms were heard in the Parliaments of the Entente States during their debates on its ratification. In 1921, several Members criticized it in the British House of Commons. In the House of Lords, Lord Newton characterized the annexation of 3.5 million Hungarians and 1.5 million Hungarian-speaking Germans as “transferring the same number of animals from one country to another.” He then observed that the Peace Treaty “was the most unfortunate and senseless act that responsible statesmen ever committed.”^{cv} Lord Montagu of Beaulieu said: “The present division of Hungary is not only pointless, but too cruel as well.”^{cvi} According to Lord Weardale: “The noble principle of self-rule, for which – I believe – we fought this war, was in several instances disregarded, but never as rudely as when they drew the future borders of Hungary.”^{cvi} Lord Seydenham declared: “I view Hungary as one of the many great tragedies of the peace...”^{cvi} French Senator De Monzie said: “What we have done to Central Europe is irreparable ... Hungary was more severely penalized than the chief enemy. They mutilated it, dismembered it, destroyed it, expelled it from the League of Nations; it was thrown as spoils of war...to the Little Entente...who, after convincing the World of racial and ethnic rights, annexed cities from Hungary in which, with a few exceptions, the entire population spoke Hungarian, was of Hungarian extraction, and was Hungarian in its sentiments and culture. Why? Why?”^{cix} According to Nitti, Prime

Minister of Italy: "Hungary suffered the most severe territorial and economic losses. This great and unfortunate country, which saved European civilization and Christianity, was the recipient of such severe treatment that cannot be explained in any other way than by the plunder of those who surround it... The division of the people of Hungary is one of the most shameful pages in the history of modern civilization."^{cx} The British statesman Lloyd George, already quoted above, wrote: "We see that the minorities' rights are violated shamefully, openly on every level... The policy of the Successor States is aimed at robbing the minorities of their ethnicity. This policy is in contravention... of the responsibilities agreed to in the Peace Agreement."^{cxii} Lord Rothermere strove for decades to show how untenable was the Hungarian Peace dictate, and fought against it.^{cxii} Charles Danielu, who tabled the Peace Agreement, in its Parliamentary debate emphasized France's responsibility towards Hungary. He wrote: "Those who wanted to employ the principles of ethnicity expelled from Hungary 3 million Hungarians. The ratio of 3 million to 8 million is very high. Who would believe that the Hungarians will be resigned to live apart from their brothers forever."^{cxiii} Charles Tisseyre, Parliamentary Representative declared: "They tore apart a nation which had retained its political and administrative unity for 10 centuries, with the excuse that it is made up of diverse ethnic groups. What did they do afterwards? They created three new States with even more diverse ethnic groups than Hungary ever had."^{cxiv} As soon as calm was restored in the country following the lost war, the short but cruel Communist dictatorship, the Czech and Romanian intervention and the traumatic Versailles-Trianon Peace dictate, the new government of Miklós Horthy, under the diplomatic leadership of István Bethlen, began to make serious efforts to have the terrible peace terms re-examined. At first, the revisionist policy held out some promise. Not long before, Paleologue, the leader of French foreign policy, wanted France to line up the Hungarians against the threat of Communism. In 1920, he held out the prospect of the return of purely Hungarian territories, asking for economic concessions in return, but the plan came to nothing. In 1920, at the time of the Polish-Russian War, there was also a possibility for revision. It happened that, under the leadership of Marshall Pilsudski, Poland attempted to restore its Eastern borders to what they were before the 1772 division, by occupying the Western borders of White Russia and Ukraine, including the City of Kiev, whereupon Russia launched a strong counter-attack. The campaign promised to be successful, and Lenin entertained great hopes for extending the Revolution to the West. All at once Hungary became important to France. They held negotiations in secret and agreed that Hungary would supply Poland with arms shipments, as they were in desperate need of ammunition in the defense of Warsaw. It arrived just in time; the Poles gained a decisive victory over the Soviets at the River Vistula. The French held out the prospect of the return of a significant portion of Hungarian territory. However, after the Bolshevik danger passed, it was once again forgotten.^{cxv} The Peace Treaty promised international guarantee for the new Hungarian minorities. They tried to conform to it, but without success. The Hungarians vainly turned with their grievances to the League of Nations; it did not offer any relief. Let us demonstrate the situation with a case in Ruthenia. In September of 1921, the local Hungarian Party submitted a grievance to the League of Nations with the complaint that the Czechoslovak government does not fulfil its obligations agreed to in the Peace Agreement. An answer arrived in 1922, stating that the rights of the minorities were being protected in every way. In the same year the Ruthenian emigrants, whose

numbers grew to 168,000 between 1922 and 1926, also sent a complaint to the League. Their Parliamentary representative submitted numerous petitions to the League – but the lot of his people did not improve. Ruthenians in the United States also objected to the oppression of their people in the old country, demanding realization of the promised autonomy. The answer was that the matter was the internal affair of Czechoslovakia. The Slovaks too sent numerous petitions to the League. The most were sent by the Germans of the Sudetenland, about 23 in all. After the Hungarians accepted the fact that it was useless to petition the League of Nations they stopped the practice.

Patient and persevering Hungarian diplomatic efforts with the Entente Powers to ease or revise the harsh terms of the Peace Treaty by returning Hungarian-inhabited areas, met with failure. So did the efforts to assure the rights of the Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries guaranteed by the Peace Treaty. Only the wording of the Treaty offered a faint hope for revision. According to Lloyd George: “We all recognized the possibility that certain provisions and clauses could become the subject of discussion, decision and perhaps revision... by the League of Nations.”^{cxvi} However, all petitions of this nature were unanimously rejected by the French, English and American political leaders. There were leading Western diplomats who regarded Hungary as the last bastion against Communism. Attempts were made to come to an agreement with the neighboring States as well; however, these were unsuccessful.^{cxvii}

Hungarian diplomacy was forced to find understanding and support elsewhere. Towards the end of the 1920s, Mussolini, the Italian dictator, showed some willingness to seriously review and perhaps solve the Hungarian territorial issue. He several times supported the Hungarians^{cxviii}, notwithstanding the fact that the Italians fought tough battles with the Hungarians during the war. Mussolini was still “*persona grata*” in those days in the West, right up to the time of Italy entering the Second World War.

With Hitler’s rise to power in Germany, the entire European scene underwent a radical change, including the Hungarian. They saw in Hitler a strong leader, who wanted a revision of the Versailles Peace Treaty as well as a more equitable rearrangement of Europe according to national affiliations – at first, by peaceful means. Eastern European nations, dissatisfied with the post-war situation, among them Hungary, began to shift towards Germany in the hope of improving their lot. The Government of Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös gave up the 15-year struggle with Western democracies for relief from the Peace dictate, and began to orientate towards Germany. Germany demanded the return of those German-inhabited territories that were taken away from her, such as Sudetenland with its 3.4 million Germans, awarded to Czechoslovakia. The critical situation was resolved by the Munich Agreement on September 29, 1938, which re-awarded the territory to Germany. With this Agreement, the Western Powers *de facto* admitted the absurdity of the territorial divisions of the post-war Peace Treaties. Under pressure from Italy, they attached an Appendix to the Agreement, directing the normalization of the situation of the Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia through bilateral negotiations. This was accepted by the signatories with the hope that they would not have to deal with the matter any longer. England and France did not concern themselves with the matter, leaving it to Italy and Germany. Bilateral negotiations duly began – but they soon got bogged down over the matter of the border cities. Finally, the First Vienna Award of November 2, 1938, awarded the cities with a majority Hungarian population to Hungary; the territories with a mixed population were divided between

Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Czechs themselves offered to return a large part of the annexed territories. In the end, along the 800 km-long Hungarian-Czech border, 680,000 Hungarians were repatriated. “This Award validates without doubt the principle of ethnicity ... with a precision never seen in Europe before, or after.”^{cxix} The Award was not the result of military threats, and was put into effect one year before the outbreak of the Second World War – in other words, in peace time. Hungary’s demand for the return of her lost territories was recognized, but not signed by France and England.

The aim of the Munich Agreement was to save the peace in Europe, but it gave rise to greater problems. On March 14, 1939, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. Under President Tiso, Slovakia became a willing satellite of Germany. Hungary claimed Ruthenia. This was based on historical right, having been part of historic Hungary, and also on the fact that the territory had a large Hungarian population – about 200,000. Another reason was that it would again create a common Polish-Hungarian border. The two nations had always been on friendly terms, even having a common king in the past. Consequently, a great number of Polish civilian and military refugees found asylum in Hungary when the Germans overran Poland. On March 21, 1939 the Hungarian forces marched into Ruthenia, and the autonomous region was returned to the motherland.^{cxx}

The loss of Transylvania, the Partium, and a wide belt of the Flatlands to Romania was a very sore point with the Hungarian nation. Romania acquired a larger and more valuable Hungarian territory than what remained of Hungary. In 1940, the wheels of history accelerated. Germany overran six countries in three months, including France. As regards Romania, the Soviet Union first demanded the return of those parts of Bessarabia and Bukovina that came under Romanian rule in 1918 – then simply re-occupied it. What is more, they declared Hungary’s demands on Romania justified, and urged the re-occupation of the territory. Bulgaria laid claim to South-Dobrudja, then re-occupied it. Hungary, too, could have resorted to military force; however, the government of Prime Minister Teleki accepted Romania’s offer to negotiate, which got underway in Turnu-Severin. In the end, under German and Italian adjudication, the Northern part of Transylvania was returned to Hungary on August 30, 1940, by the provisions of the Second Vienna Award. Although the south, the largest and more valuable part, remained under Romanian rule, the majority of the Hungarian population was reunited with the motherland.^{cxxi}

The issue of the territory ceded to Yugoslavia came up unexpectedly in the Spring of 1941, as a result of the dramatic changes that took place in German-Yugoslav relations. In 1939 Yugoslavia became an ally of Germany. The Hungarian Teleki-government concluded a Permanent Friendship Agreement with the Yugoslavs. However Simonic, the Air-Force general, staged a *coup d’état* on March 21, 1941. He terminated Yugoslavia’s adherence to the Tripartite Agreement, ordered the mobilization of the military and counted Hungary among the enemies. Germany, who was already preparing to invade the Soviet Union, attacked immediately, and occupied Yugoslavia in eleven days. Hungary, however, did not make a move until Yugoslavia fell apart and Croatia seceded. The latter was realized under Ante Pavelic, leader of the Ustasha movement. When Yugoslav forces attacked Hungarian border patrols, Hungary had no other choice but to move into parts of the former Hungarian regions. Hungarian forces crossed the border on April 11th and within three days reached the area between the Danube and Tisza Rivers, and stood at the old border line in the Baranya-triangle. Some 500,000 Hungarians were liberated from

foreign oppression. However, the guerilla attacks of the Chetniks and the partisans went on for a long time.^{cxix} Prime Minister Teleki, the author of the Permanent Friendship Pact, was very deeply affected by the political *volte-face* of Yugoslavia; and when he learned that England and France were ready to threaten Hungary with sanctions, or even with a declaration of war, if Hungary aided Germany, he committed suicide: in the early hours of the morning of April 3, he shot himself. Churchill promised to “reserve a chair for him” at the post-War Peace Conference – a gesture never to be fulfilled.

Hitler’s attempt for redrawing the map of Europe under German rule failed. The Allied Forces defeated Germany and accepted its unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945. The fate of East Europe had already been decided at Conference of Yalta between the 4th and 11th of February of that year. Besides dividing Germany into four occupational zones, in Eastern Europe they re-established, with some modification, the post-World War I borders. In the interest of Soviet Russia’s expansionist intentions toward the West, the borders were pushed westward. From Poland some Easternly regions came under Soviet rule. At the same time, Polish borders on the West were extended some 200 km into German territory. The Baltic States were once again swallowed up by Russia, who also acquired North-Bukovina and Bessarabia, as well as Ruthenia. By this move the Soviets got a foothold west of the Carpathian Mountains, a strategically important territory. They restored Czechoslovakia. Transylvania was re-awarded to Romania as a reward for changing sides at the last minute, and Yugoslavia was reconstructed. In the end, Hungary lost the territories she had earlier regained in Upper Hungary, Ruthenia, Northern Transylvania and Southern Hungary (Voivodina). The Hungarian population in these territories once again became a minority under foreign rule.

Although forward-looking politicians between the two wars had foretold the possibility of another war due to the injustices of the Peace Treaties of Versailles, with the new Peace Treaties after the Second World War the victors nevertheless reinstated the old *status quo*. There are at least three possible answers to the question: why? (1). The legacy of Hitler had to be destroyed. (2). The Soviet Union had to be rewarded with the influence over Eastern Europe for its great sacrifices in the war. (3). As Eastern Europe, and especially Central Europe, was made up of a number of small nations all fighting each other, they let these countries come under Soviet *internationalism* to be cleansed of nationalism. We wish to remark that it was doubtless necessary to destroy a destructive, genocidal Nazi Germany. However, they left intact some of its legacies. Should they not have ploughed up the Autobahns? Or stopped the production of Volkswagen cars, the prototype of which was introduced by Hitler back in 1936? Or stopped the production of jet propelled aircrafts and guided missiles with which Nazi Germany caused so much human and material damage to the Allies? From the Hungarian standpoint, both Vienna Awards restored a considerable number of her oppressed minorities to the motherland. Why was this a problem? Even Pál Teleki never entertained the reinstatement of the 1000-year old borders, for he was a political realist. But he did entertain the possibility of reconciling the borders of the country with the borders of the nation. This would have served the interests not only of the vanquished but also of the victors, for it would have made the closer and more united cooperation of these countries possible.^{cxix} However, this principle had to be sacrificed in the name of the Western Powers’ reward to the Soviet Union. The irony is that the Soviet Union “liberated” – or rather *de facto* occupied

– the East European countries. With the exception of Yugoslavia, the Red Army set itself up in these countries for a long stay, and was instrumental in drawing these countries under complete Soviet rule by imposing upon them Communist puppet governments and successfully turning them into “satellite States”. It would not have been possible over the negotiating table to force the Soviet Army to retreat from these countries, only through another war, something the West was not willing to risk. In the mind of Stalin, advancing as far West as possible was the key to the victory of world Communism. From this angle it becomes clear why he rewarded Poland with German territory, Romania with Transylvania, and himself with Ruthenia, after annexing the Baltic States, East Prussia, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia and Bukovina. The Western Powers were not interested in all this, for they never had any interest in Eastern Europe. Churchill earlier entertained the possibility of an invasion from the Balkans, from where it would have been possible to save the Eastern European countries from Soviet occupation right up to the Baltic Sea. However, he soon abandoned the idea. The Allied Armies would have encountered stiff resistance in the rugged territory of the Balkans, something they had come to know through bitter experience during the Italian campaign. Logistic problems would have been difficult to solve as well. Besides, a Western campaign in the Balkans and in East Europe would have enraged Stalin. In the end, Churchill and Roosevelt may have hoped that Soviet presence in Eastern Europe would put an end to the nationalistic tendencies of these quarreling nations, and allowed Stalin to take possession of the territory. With respect to Central Eastern Europe, the Peace Treaties at the end of the Second World War reinstated the *status quo ante*: the pre-war borders with modifications. Although Slovakia took part in the war on the side of the Axis powers, as did Romania, the latter with better-equipped and greater military power than Hungary, Romania nevertheless regained Northern Transylvania, and Czechoslovakia Upper Hungary, all with a considerable Hungarian minority. Romania was able to change sides in August of 1944, only because of her more favorable geographical setting. Hungary was again more severely penalized. She lost the territories restored to her by the terms of the First and Second Vienna Awards well before she entered the war, again placing the Hungarian minority population under foreign rule by the terms of the Paris Peace Treaty, signed on February 10, 1947. The case of the Hungarian minorities did not hold any interest for the victors, as it did not 27 years earlier. The new Treaty was the mirror image of the one that, in fact, caused the outbreak of the Second World War.

If Western politicians expected Communist internationalism to radically stamp out the nationalism of the small nations under its rule, they miscalculated. First came the years of reprisals. There is no space in this study for detailed enumeration of the consequences of the reprisals the Hungarian minorities had to endure. Let us give only a brief summary.

As soon as reconstituted to its previous status, Czechoslovakia lost no time charging the Germans and Hungarians with collective guilt. This meant that they were stripped of their civil rights and citizenship. In 1945, the Czechs planned the expulsion of 650,000 Hungarians native to the region for ten centuries. Of this number, 20,000 were resettled in Silesia in an area vacated by a displaced German population. Another 120,000 were forcibly transported to Hungary without compensation for their property, under inhuman condition in the middle of the winter. In exchange, they brought 73,400 Slovaks from Hungary, although many of them opted to stay behind. Hatred for the Hungarians reached a crescendo. Hungarians in Slovakia lost their employment, their homes and movable

property were expropriated, including the tools of their trade. As many as 90 young men from a paramilitary unit returning home from Germany, where they were evacuated, were taken to a forest and shot, simply because they were Hungarians.^{cxxiv}

In 1945 the Soviet Union annexed Ruthenia, although it had never formed part of either Russia or the Ukraine. Hungarians of the region numbered 200,000 in 1990, almost 16% of the population. Of these, 120,000 were Reformed and 60,000 Roman Catholic. In 1940, 104 villages and 3 cities had a majority Hungarian population. At the end of 1944, at the beginning of Soviet occupation, almost 40,000 Hungarian men and women were deported to Soviet camps, only because of their nationality. 160 members of the clergy were also deported; most of these people never returned.

Because Romania changed sides towards the end of war, the Soviet Army was able to make a detour around the Carpathian Mountain Range and approach Hungary from the South; thus Southern Hungary came under Soviet occupation already in August of 1944. Hot on their heels came the Serb partisans, who began massacring the Hungarian and German population on a grand scale. The pretext for it was the execution of 1049 Serbian partisans in Újvidék (now Novisad) who for six months ran amok, committing murders and serious atrocities against civilians, and who were caught in a massive *razzia* and executed by the German military, but not before the Hungarian military commander of the town was surreptitiously removed. The partisans collected the men and women whose names appeared on their hit list and, after subjecting them to torture and mutilation, executed them – some were even impaled. Twelve Roman Catholic priests were also killed. Discussion or mention of the executions was prohibited, the mass graves were guarded. Entire populations of Hungarian villages were accused of collective guilt and were executed. There is almost no Hungarian settlement without its own horror story. Based on 1990 statistics, the mass graves of 22,712 victims are known but the whereabouts of the graves of another 18,000 is unknown. In 1946, 50,000 Serbian families were settled in the territory emptied of Hungarians. During Tito's rule, regrets were expressed for these atrocities; they even started a program under the name "Fraternity and Unity", mainly for propaganda purposes aimed at the West. At the same time attempts began for the assimilation of the 504,000 Hungarian population through intermarriage with Serbs. Children born of these marriages were allowed to attend only Serbian schools. Concurrently they scaled down the number of the Hungarian schools. While, during the 1958/59 school year, 47,849 Hungarian children attended multilingual schools, by the 1986/87 school year the number fell to 27,308. The situation in the secondary schools became even worse.

In 1944, Romanian and Soviet forces occupied Northern Transylvania. The Romanians were committing such severe and violent acts of reprisal among the Hungarian population that even the Soviets found it excessive and, in an effort to put a stop to it, placed the region under Soviet military control. The 1947 Paris Peace Agreement returned Northern Transylvania to Romania, despite the fact that two thirds of the population was Hungarian and only one fifth Romanian. Although in 1950 they created the Maros Hungarian Autonomous Region, it existed only as a formality, and was terminated in 1968. Under Ceaucescu, the oppression, dispersion and persecution of Hungarians accelerated. Hungarian schools and Universities were closed down, only a few newspapers were left, chiefly for propaganda reasons. Intellectuals and Church leaders were persecuted. Ecclesiastical objects and registries were confiscated, even

Hungarian cemeteries were closed. Hungarian speech was prohibited, even penalized. While Hungarians could be employed only in Romanian regions, Romanians moving to Hungarian regions and cities received rewards. The aim of the plan for “systematization” and the destruction of 8000 mainly Hungarian villages was to force the Hungarian population into slum housing and to “agricultural centers”. At the same time, the entire population suffered acute poverty, starvation and lack of commodities. From this bleak situation more than 50,000 Hungarians fled to Hungary. Romanian border guards shot many of them. Dramatic changes took place when Romanian security forces attempted to arrest the Hungarian Reformed minister of Temesvár (now Timisoara), the Rev. László Tőkés, who bravely defended the rights of the oppressed Hungarian minority. When his parishioners, with some sympathizing Romanian citizenry, wanted to prevent his arrest, the peaceful objection developed into a demonstration, then into revolution against the Communist regime, claiming many victims. Finally, in 1989 at Christmas, the Revolutionary Tribunal executed the murderous Communist dictator and his wife.^{cxv}

In 1989/1990, the Eastern European Communist dictatorships collapsed one after another, even the Soviet Union. Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia seceded from Yugoslavia – albeit at the price of a civil war – and became independent States. Czechoslovakia separated into the independent Czech and Slovak Republics. From the Soviet Union seceded, among others, the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine, who also annexed Ruthenia. Only Hungary, the victim of the Paris Peace Treaty and Soviet expansionism, did not ask for, and did not get back, any of her lost historical territories, or parts of them, with their essential Hungarian ethnic minorities. Small States like Estonia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia gained independence; the two Germanys were reunited. All this brought with it the creation of new borders. But the lot of 4.5 million Hungarians under foreign majority rule did not change; everything remained as before. In fact, in some instances their situation in the 1990s, instead of improving, got even worse, due to the resurgence of chauvinistic nationalism.

International Communism was not able to resolve the problems of ethnic minorities. On the one hand, it did not want to acknowledge the problem. On the other hand, the Communist regimes, urged on by their own imperialistic interests, pursued vigorous nationalistic policies, the purpose of which was the annihilation of ethnic minorities by whatever means. If the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring States lived through difficult times between the two World Wars, their situation became even more difficult under the Communist regimes.

It is not our task to search for the reasons that caused the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. However, it is safe to assume that besides ideological, economic, financial and militaristic factors, the unresolved problems of the ethnic minorities played a significant role. The ideology of international Communism, unable to find a satisfactory solution for the problem, simply swept it under the carpet.

In the post-Communist era, the new principle and method of governance, as prescribed by the West, is *liberal cosmopolitanism*, which seemed to promise a final solution to the problem. This idea originates from the North American sociological experience, where all nationalities coexist peacefully. The United States and Canada, as well as other countries made up of immigrant societies, guarantee the same rights to all their citizens, and hope that democratic principles and laws will endure forever. For

American politicians, nationalistic sentiments, politics and attitudes of the Eastern European nations are incomprehensible and senseless.

According to this new concept the successful solution of the problem has at least three criteria. The first is a democratic political structure with a multi-party system, free elections, parliamentary democracy, personal freedoms including free speech, freedom of religion and conscience, the freedom for union of persons and the observance of human rights as guaranteed by the United Nations Charter. The second is integration of the Eastern European countries into Western Europe, the creation of a United Europe and full membership in the European Union and NATO. Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic have already joined in on March 1999. The third is: finally removing the borders between these countries. Borders should serve not as barriers separating people, they to bring them closer together instead. In other words, the aim should be *globalization*.

The Eastern European nations have to satisfy many requirements before they can aspire for membership in the European Club. For our subject, two are important. The first is the settling of tensions between these nations through Bilateral Agreements. The Hungarian Government – both the Antall and the Horn Administrations – signed hastily constructed bilateral “Charters” with Romania, Ukraine and Slovakia concerning the Hungarian minorities in the respective countries. The other requirement is the absolute guarantee of human rights, which have been promised. However, it was not clarified whether the principles of human rights should also be interpreted as collective rights. Countries with minorities did not want to hear about collective rights, for they were afraid it would nurture separatist aspirations. At the same time, denial of collective rights will inevitably lead to the disappearance of minorities. Other conditions are economical, financial and military, and eventually the democratization of society.

The means of solving the problem discussed above have a few basic weaknesses. First their having been based on a different historical and political correlation which seems to have worked successfully in the case of Canada and the United States. We should not forget however, that the histories of these countries are relatively new, and every national group with the exception of native Indian populations is a recent newcomer. Their history, or the ethnic minority problems of Eastern European nations, are only superficially familiar to the average Canadian or American - unless his roots happen to be in one of those countries. Their interests usually extend no farther than the former Iron Curtain. Their impression of the affairs of the small nations beyond that demarcation line is one of chaos, and they are best ignored. Numerous politicians take the same stand, with the excuse that these problems are the concern of European politicians and the United Nations. The interesting thing is that they fought for decades against South African apartheid. They recognized its injustices and were galvanized into action. At the same time, when they see similar injustices committed against ethnic minorities elsewhere, they hesitate to take effective measures against them. In view of this attitude, it becomes clear why they tolerated for years the Bosnian genocide, and later the rapidly deteriorating situation in Kosovo. The key to the question is that responsible Western politicians are only interested in upholding the *status quo*, and not in effectively solving the acute minority problems.

The other problem is that, as opposed to ambitions for a United Europe, we can observe a strengthening tendency in the opposite direction, which is *separatism*.

Separatist movements are springing up like mushrooms all over Europe. In Spain the Basques, in France the Bretons, Corsicans and Alsatians, seek independence or at least autonomy. Italy's Northern League Party stands up for the separation of the country into Northern and Southern States. Belgium is split between French and Flemish-speaking parts, and in the Netherlands the Friesians want to separate. In Great Britain, the Scots and the Welsh have formed their own national assemblies, the first step towards the longed-for separation. The fight has been going on for decades in Northern Ireland for its independence from Britain and for union with the rest of Ireland. In Canada, a large portion of Quebec's French-speaking population with French cultural background wants to separate and establish its own independent State. After the collapse of the Communist system and the break-up of the Soviet Union, a dozen new national States were formed in Eastern Europe from the Balkan Peninsula to the Baltic Sea. In what are the aspirations of nations rooted for separation and independence? Mainly, in that they were living under the oppression of another nation or nations for several centuries, or even millennia. Or that, at one time, they were great and independent nations with their own culture, language and traditions. And when the rights of a group of people are threatened, they look to a radical solution. In the light of these to call the future man a "*global citizen*" is only a rhetorical flourish. The results of the struggle between these two precepts are yet to be established.

The further problem is that the new solution does not seem to work in Eastern Europe. Following the signing of these Charters, there was cautious hope that the situation of the Hungarian minorities would improve in the newly formed democracies, and finally they would be treated in a just and humane manner. However, this has not happened. What happened instead was that the suppressed nationalistic sentiments of nations living under Communism were suddenly liberated, and exploded into flagrant nationalism. Charters, solemn promises and human rights notwithstanding, the majority population States did not really want to hear about, let alone improve, the lot of the Hungarian minorities under their jurisdiction. On the contrary, if their lot was difficult between the two World Wars, and even more difficult under 45 years of Communism, it became altogether impossible and unbearable in the post-Communist "democracies".

Let us see how the situation of the Hungarian ethnic minorities stood in neighboring countries after the signing of the Charters. In Slovakia, Meciar openly pursued the elimination of Hungarian minorities, especially along the common border. Already, there was ambiguity in the interpretation of the Charter. Anti-Hungarian regulatory decrees weighed heavily in the matter, such as the language legislation that declared Slovak the sole official language. This meant that Hungarian was disallowed even in Church services. There was the constant postponement of minority language rights, which resulted in the creation of a "language police". These were followed by the elimination of Hungarian-Slovak bilingual school report cards, the lay-off of protesting Hungarian school principals, the withdrawal of State subsidies from Hungarian cultural institutions and the downsizing of Hungarian political parties. However, the most serious ruling was the rearrangement of the administration of the civil districts, drawing the new district lines in such a way that, in each, the Slovaks formed the majority.^{cxvii} Perhaps there is some hope for the future, for in 1998 an opposition coalition Government came into power, in which the Hungarian Coalition Party is represented with 15 members. The unjust lay-off of the Hungarian school principals has also been rectified.

In Ruthenia, despite the Ukrainian-Hungarian Charter, the activities of a Joint Commission, ethnic and language legislation, minority rights are not secured, because the minorities have not been granted collective rights. Especially the Hungarian minority populated area was hit hard by the flood of late 1998.

Inner tensions and civil wars in the disintegrating Yugoslavia determined the situation of the Hungarians in the 1990s. Today there are Hungarian minorities in the following Yugoslavian Successor States: In Slovenia, where the Hungarian minority forms only a small part of the population; in Croatia, where the Hungarian population suffered a lot during the war, having lived in a region occupied by the Chetniks and Serbian army in 1991. During the fighting in the Vukovar-region, three Hungarian towns were destroyed: Szentlászló, Kórógy, and Haraszti, from where the majority of the population fled to Hungary, others to the West. This was unfortunate, because the situation of the 40,000 Hungarians was more favorable compared to that in Serbia and Slovenia. They had their own language schools, as well as bilingual schools. Their local newspaper was published with a federal subsidy. There were Hungarian-language radio broadcasts from several urban centers. Until 1991, the Croats' relations with Hungary was good, and in 1989 they formed the Hungarian National Party of Croatia. It comes as no surprise that the Hungarians sided with the Croats during the ensuing war, for which the Croats paid a heavy price.

Although autonomy was granted to the Province of Voivodina in 1974, it was revoked during the civil war. Conscription of Hungarian young men into the army between 1991 and 1995 resulted in the defection of many, mainly to Hungary. Ethnic Hungarian soldiers were deployed in the most dangerous war zones, so that the percentage of their casualties was 20%, far in excess of their population ratio. The Serbs deployed ethnic Hungarian soldiers in the war with Kosovo as well. While autonomy for Kosovo is still a central issue, it is not even contemplated by the Serbs for Voivodina. Although the Serbs allowed the creation of a Teachers' College in Szabadka (Subotica), there is no progress made in the improvement of the situation of other schools and the media. The problems are mounting from day to day, but the Serbs give only lip service to improving the situation. Under these conditions there is no possibility for a Bilateral Agreement ^{cxxvii}

The Hungarians of Transylvania had a large share, and shouldered much of the responsibilities in the overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu's Communist dictatorship at the end of 1989. Reverend László Tőkés's unyielding opposition to the dictatorship was the spark that ignited the Revolution in Romania. After the changeover and following the hastily drawn-up Romanian-Hungarian Charter, the Hungarians entertained high hopes for political change and that the 80-year long discrimination would finally end. However, the Iliescu regime continued with the policies of the former nationalist-Communist regime, Charter agreements notwithstanding. The situation of the Hungarians, instead of improving, in certain respects became even worse, for the right-wing national extremist group was now "free" to stir up trouble against the Hungarian minorities. The Romanians, too, instituted new discriminatory language laws. No change occurred about the restoration of expropriated Church, school, institutional and community properties. The Hungarian Romanian Democratic Alliance's votes assisted the election of Victor Ciorbea to the head of government and Emil Constantinescu to the Presidency. However, the government intending to bring about the much hoped for changes was overthrown. The succeeding government of Radu Vasile even had two Hungarian cabinet ministers;

so has the Mugur Isarescu's government. The Hungarian minority have been waiting for a resolution to their grievances since 1990, viz: expropriation of institutional, communal and Church properties, restrictions on native language use, curtailment of the autonomy of self-governments; postponement of the reinstatement of religious instruction in schools, discrimination against ethnic Churches, the continuation of anti-minority, nationalist-chauvinistic incitement against the minorities and the hindering of the adoption of legislation pertaining to religious issues.^{cxxviii}

The Hungarian minority demanded the reinstatement of the previously eliminated Hungarian University. There was also some talk of the possibility for the creation of a German-Hungarian University. For the resolution for all of the above, numerous promises have been heard to date from the Romanian side, but in reality nothing happened. Of the 1,300 Hungarian schools expropriated by the Romanians, not even a classroom was returned to their rightful owners. In this background understandable that a Church-based Christian University was established at Nagyvárad (Oradea) in 1999.

The above description demonstrates the real situation of the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries. These people have been condemned to live under discrimination, oppression, exploitation; they have been impoverished and without basic human rights, subjected to dispersion and the loss of their ethnic identity, language and culture for the past 80 years. Rights granted and guaranteed by the Peace Treaties, Bilateral Treaties, and by international law, remained paper rights so far. The Successor States sabotaged these, while the international political agencies neglected to satisfy themselves if the provisions of these treaties or human rights were in fact complied with.

There is ground for cautious hope in the neighboring States of Hungary aspiring for membership in the European Union. One of the requirements is the correct treatment of minorities; another is the restoration of expropriated institutional and Church properties in the foreseeable future.

Nobody believes as much in the European Union as Hungarian politicians, who expect the solution to all their problems from this membership, including that of the Hungarian ethnic minorities. This "escathological" expectation promises a comfortable pillow for their inactivity in the matter of the minorities; in the meantime they forget that the West has always deceived and abandoned Hungary. Let us cite the 150-year long Turkish occupation, the unsupported Rákóczi-Thököly-led insurrection against Austrian oppression at the turning of 17th Century, the 1848-1849 War of Independence from Austria, the Versailles-Trianon and the Paris Peace dictates in 1920 and 1947 respectively and the 1956 Revolution against Communist tyranny. The Hungarians always made every effort to be the "good boys" of the West. Let us remember that in 1919, Mihály Károlyi and his revolutionary government disarmed and dispersed the Hungarian Army, leaving the country defenseless against Romanian invasion, followed by the devastating Trianon Peace Treaty. The Hungarian politicians were "good boys" from 1990 on, by not wanting to notice that the map of Eastern Europe was being redrawn following the fall of Communism. Borders were changed, nations like the two Germanies reunited. Others became independent, like the Baltic States, Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia and many others. Slavonia and Esthonia have some 1.5 million inhabitants respectively. They assumed the right to form their own independent countries and the international community has accepted them. How then can 4.5 million ethnic Hungarians – the largest ethnic minority in Europe – forcibly separated from their nation and

suffered under alien yokes for eighty years, be denied the right to reunite with the bulk of their nation? Is it right to have two different standards of measurement? Will the international community continue to take its operational stand on the basis conceptualized in the ancient Latin proverb: “*Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi?*” For instance, how did Ukraine have a right to Ruthenia, when it was never in its possession? After the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Republic, was the Trianon/Paris Peace Agreements as regards Czechoslovakia binding only as it pertained to Slovakia? The Hungarian governments did not make the slightest move, presumably because of promises made by the West. For these came in abundance, only to lull the Hungarians into inactivity. They were well aware in the West that anybody, particularly the Hungarians, could present not unfounded demands, which could create serious storms. It was simpler to disarm the Hungarians with promises, that it was only a matter of time before the rightful demands of the Hungarian minorities would be satisfactorily solved by the magnanimous European Union. The Hungarians again proved to be “good boys”. After the danger of the expected storm passed, and hastily drawn up Bilateral Agreements materialized, everything remained the same. Would that it had only remained the same! Their lot, instead of improving, actually deteriorated.

Even if the European Union were able to solve the problems of the Hungarian minorities, at least three difficulties would still remain. The first concerns the dissolution of State boundaries, which would unavoidably lead to massive “invasions”, *ie*: settling of foreign nationals on Hungarian soil. It would also lead to the continuing purchase of agricultural land by foreign citizens, which has already brought about the condemnation of the whole nation. If it intensifies, then we could face a situation where the Hungarians live on reservations in their own ancient land, like aboriginal Indians in North America. The second problem would arise in the light of the European separation movements mentioned earlier: will a United Europe, in fact, be realized? If not, then how, and who, will solve the acute problems of the ethnic minorities. Finally, if a United Europe is, at present, in its nascent stage, the question becomes time-dependent: when will it become fully functional? Hungary, who has first chance among the Eastern European States for membership, will have to wait for at least another two to four years for preliminary membership, and another ten years for full membership in order to fully satisfy the requirements. We wonder how many years it will take for Romania, Slovakia and Lesser Yugoslavia to acquire preliminary membership. It will probably take decades. This means that they are not obligated to improve the situation of the minorities any time soon; on the contrary, they could use the intervening time to liquidate them. Taking all this into consideration, there is a good chance that by the time Europe is ready to resolve the minority problems there will be nothing to resolve as far as the Hungarian minorities are concerned, for by then there will be no Hungarian minorities left to speak of because the majority has swallowed them up. Before uniting Europe, especially Eastern Central Europe has to be *atomized*; without that a “united Europe” remains just a fiction, because only nations on equal footing can be successfully associated with each other.

What are the chances of survival and improvement in the situation of Hungarian ethnic minorities? It should be stated that of the democratically elected post-Communist Hungarian governments, the Antall Administration had done much in their interests. József Antall did not hesitate to declare that he considers himself Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians – a number that includes the Hungarian populations in the Successor

States. The next Prime Minister, the socialist Gyula Horn, was not ready to acknowledge as much. The policies of his government effectively wrote off Hungarians outside the borders. He signed two hastily drawn up Charters, largely in the interest of eligibility for NATO membership and integration into Western Europe. It was not difficult for the former internationalist Horn to switch over to cosmopolitanism, as neither ideology believes in national affinity. So far the coalition government of Viktor Orbán has been doing the most effective in the interest of Hungarian minorities. In a carefully worded statement he expressed the view that the borders of Hungary do not coincide with the borders of the nation. His government's stated goal is: "The unification of the Hungarian nation without the modification of State borders". This statement directly suggests a high sense of responsibility for Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin as in other parts of the world. Viktor Orbán takes the problems of minorities seriously, does everything in his power to improve their lot within the frameworks of binding international and bilateral agreements. This is the most the Hungarian government can do for the fragmented Hungarian nation in the present circumstances and for the time being.

In our contemplation for a solution for the above problems we have identified several possibilities.

Firstly, that the Successor States *should be forced to observe international conventions* with regard to ethnic minorities. They should also be made to conform to the terms of Bilateral Agreements and, last but not least, they should conform to the high-minded paragraphs in their own Constitutions concerning ethnic minorities.

Secondly, collective rights for all ethnic minorities should be guaranteed through International Forums, such as the UN or the European Parliament. Countries with minority populations would be oppose this, as it would make survival of the minorities possible, and that would implicitly cancel their plan for assimilation. Therefore they grant *personal* human rights for the minority citizens, all the while extending *collective* rights to their majority population, thereby rendering the minority citizens second class citizens.

Thirdly, we should fight for and if possible achieve cultural autonomy for the Hungarian minorities. Not surprisingly, out of selfish interests the Successor States do not want to hear about such an eventuality, being concerned that autonomy would lead to secession. They forget, however, that previously they granted autonomy for the Maros Hungarian Province in Transylvania, and to Voivodina in the former Yugoslavia, which never even contemplated the idea of secession. Even so, they were both stripped of their autonomy. It is foolish on their part not to recognize that autonomy for minorities is the firmest guarantee for maintaining the status quo. ^{cxxix}¹ The autonomy of South Tyrol would be a good pattern to follow.

In the *fourth* instance, the solution would be to find new resolutions to the problem. In the 20th Century, they deigned to employ only two kinds of solutions. One was military threat, or even war; the others were the post-war Peace dictates. But history provides examples for other solutions. One is to mortgage, lease or lease-out a territory. The other is the purchase of territories. The US bought Alaska, a 586,000 sq ml area, from Russia in 1867 for 7.2 million dollars. International Agreements make peaceful territorial rearrangements possible. The author submitted one such plan respecting Ruthenia to the Hungarian foreign minister in 1993, which is reproduced in the APPENDIX.

The *fifth* possibility, in the case of Transylvania, would be to make it one of the autonomous Provinces (of Romania), where all citizens enjoy equal rights, as in

Switzerland. According to certain indications, popularity for such a plan is gaining ground even in Romanian intellectual circles.

The *sixth* possibility for the normalization of the situation presented itself with the recent Kosovo crisis. The Western Powers hesitated for ten years to resolve the Balkan crisis. Genocide and deportations finally provided the necessary incentive to redefine the role and mission of NATO. The military intervention in Kosovo gave rise to a higher moral ideal, which means that NATO will not tolerate acts of genocide committed under the guise of sovereignty, and will intervene militarily if necessary - although for the moment only in Europe. The future of this political development is not yet clear.

It would be worth while to develop and realize a plan for a “*Protectorate*” under the aegis of NATO for Kosovo and Voivodina, which would not alter the State borders but would remain in place until a democratic government could guarantee equal rights for the minorities. This “Protectorate” could be applied in countries where there are oppressed minorities, and could last until the State in question guarantees personal and collective human rights for them

In the *seventh* instance, we should consider the eventuality that even if, in spite of Hungarian diplomatic efforts and negotiations, none of the aforementioned proposals for solving these problems in the Carpathian Basin met with success, there is still one other possibility left. That is submitting a petition with all necessary documentation (collecting and documenting all grievances, injustices, broken Agreements) to an International Tribunal such as the UN, as well as to World Leaders, for the return of Hungarian populated territories to Hungary by peaceful means, based on the 1913 census reflecting the pre-World War I population ratio. Realistically, the new borders could be the same as they were between 1938 and 1941, *ie*: the pre-Second World War borders. These would include recovered Hungarian-populated territories: the Southern strip of Slovakia, Ruthenia, the Northern part of Transylvania, and Voivodina with the Baranya-triangle in the South.

It is a generally accepted maxim that the Versailles Peace Treaties – among them the Trianon Treaty – were unjust and led to the outbreak of the Second World War. The post-Second World War Paris Peace Treaty, as regards Hungary, reinstated the Trianon Borders with modifications that were detrimental to Hungary. If the first Peace Treaty was unjustified, then so was the succeeding one that replicated the previous one. History proves that because of human progress, introduction of human rights and a better sense of justice, unfair laws were revoked and replaced with fairer ones. Example for this is the repeal of the race laws in the United States, the end of apartheid in South Africa and the extension of the vote to women in civilized countries. The time has come for re-examination and modification of the unjust Peace dictates that Hungary was dealt, as conceptualized by current international conventions and human rights legislation. For there is nothing with which they can prove or make comprehensible why close to 4.5 million Hungarians had to be condemned to suffer under foreign rule, torn away from the main body of the Hungarian nation, where the Successor States have been doing everything for the past 80 years to oppress, humiliate and assimilate them, changing political regimes and climates notwithstanding.

In the contemporary Europe the solution described above has a slight chance to succeed. Today’s Western politicians reject the modification of borders, albeit dissolution and alteration of some European State-borders did take place in the early

1990s. This began after the break-up of the Soviet Union, but never came to completion – at least not in the case of Hungary.

Saving the Hungarian minorities from eighty years of oppression, second class citizenship, dispersion, many attempts of annihilation, forced assimilation and even uniting them with the majority of their nation will be a long and arduous task, but one that Hungarians should never abandon under any circumstance, because of the following reasons:

1. The dismemberment of the thousand-year Hungary by the Versailles-Trianon Peace dictate of 1920 was done without the application of the wilsonian principle of self-determination;
2. It was done exclusively on the basis of political consideration to create a strong “Little Entente” in order to check Germany from the East and the South;
3. The 1947 Peace dictate, which dismembered Hungary for the second time, was based on the expansionist policy of the Soviet Union;
4. Today, neither the “Little Entente” nor the Soviet Empire exist any more, but their monstrous creature, the dismembered Hungarian nation is still a tragic reality;
5. The Iron Curtain fell, the Berlin Wall disappeared, the two Germany united, new, formerly oppressed nations emerged from the Balkans to the Baltic Sea, State borders have changed in Europe in the 1990s – only the Hungarian problem was not addressed by the governments of those nations, who initiated and executed the dismemberment of the Hungarian nation and who should have assumed the responsibility to heal the wounds they inflicted upon a thousand years old, once mighty nation, the defender of Europe against the Ottoman Turks;
6. The successor States, where Hungarians are living as ethnic minorities, proved during the past eighty years that they always treated the 4.5 million Hungarians under their authority inhumanly in every respect, and did everything for their final elimination. Then how one can expect that from now on they would treat ethnic minority differently?
7. Keeping the Hungarian nation forever in the state of dismemberment is unnatural, unjust, and even criminal both by human and divine law.

The time has come for the restoration of the artificially fragmented unity of the Hungarian nation within reasonable borders, without creating another multinational State, this time under Hungarian rule. Having accomplished this, then can be talk about genuine co-operation between the nations of the region.

This problem has to be addressed and solved in a peaceful way by the respective governments, international organizations, as well as the communities, because it is critical for the peace, well-being, success and the future of a civilized new Europe.

Translation by Éva

Kossuth

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