

Beyond the Nation State

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The Dispute

THE Hungarian question has not been thought through yet. We do not see clearly what needs to be done in order to get neighboring states to pursue an acceptable minorities policy. Nor is there an agreement as to what should be considered such a policy. The parties of the Hungarians outside of Hungary commonly advocate a program of collective rights and ethnic autonomy, but they do not fully agree upon nor are they always very clear as to what collective rights and ethnic autonomy are. Even within Hungary, it is not clear which minorities policy of our republic would be commensurate with the minorities policies expected from the surrounding countries. There is not even a consensus within liberal public opinion.

A good example of the disagreements within the liberal circles is the dispute recently unleashed by a series of articles by G.M. Tamás (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d). In his opening article, Tamás recommends that the ethos of the new democratic republic be based on the concept of the political nation, a creation of nineteenth-century Hungarian liberalism. As Tamás formulates it, the idea of the political nation rests on three pillars: (1) There is "equality before the law and a rule of law" in the republic. Every citizen enjoys equal rights, regardless of ethnic affiliation, and no one is above the law. (2) (a) At the same time, the state "is not culturally neutral." "Rule of law and equality before the law—which in this respect act as constraints—are not harmed by the important and commend-

able fact that the nature of our political community is dictated by the tradition of the Hungarian people and not by the special tradition of the native ethnic minorities." Hence, (b) "although assimilation is not mandatory (and must not be compelled under any circumstances), it is a virtue from the standpoint of the Hungarian political nation. Voluntary assimilation is desirable and is to be seen as a virtue." (3) There are "no collective rights" in the republic. Human rights (including the right to cultivate a native language and nurture the particular traditions of the minorities) apply to all, but collectivities cannot enjoy permanent privileges.

In brief, the Hungarian Republic is a one-nation state. While "the Hungarian political nation is a political community of all citizens, it is still Hungarian"; and devotion to the community involves identification with the historical memory and culture of the Hungarian people.

Respondents to the Tamás article agreed that this was a dangerous idea. If we, in our own country, base the community of citizens on what Tamás calls the Hungarian political nation, then we cannot protest when the Slovaks make their political nation the basis of the community in Slovakia. If we hold the Magyarization of the Romanians living in Hungary to be a virtue, then we must acquiesce in the judgment of Romanian people, who hold the Romanianization of the Hungarians living in Transylvania to be a virtue. This logic predicts for the Hungarian minorities an unendurable short term future and slow extinction in the long run (Ungvary, 1996; Revesz, 1996; Eorsi, 1996).

Tamás answers this objection with three statements. First, assimilation varies according to the degree of its voluntariness. Coerced assimilation is, of course, unacceptable. What liberals should endorse is voluntary assimilation. "Assimilation is voluntary and conforms to the requirements of liberty when there exist alternatives to it." The concept of a political nation grants this alternative, since it assures equality before the law to every citizen and does not allow the state to interfere with

private relationships. If under such conditions one chooses to join the majority, then the other members of the minority may deplore the decision, but they must acknowledge it as a free decision of the individual. Second, the critics attribute an absurd premise to him, "confusing cultural hegemony with equality before the law." Culturally, the nation state is not neutral, but in terms of the law "the constitution of the political nation is colorblind, and has no sense for language." These statements provide an additional understanding of the thesis of a political nation, and I shall return to them when examining the idea of the nation state. But for the time being I shall stop to examine the third statement, which goes as follows. The idea of a political nation may entail that assimilation of minorities is a virtue and still allow us to disapprove of the trend toward the assimilation of the Hungarians in Romania, for example. For according to Tamás, Romania is "not a genuine nation state." "The Romanian nationalist policy is not to attract the Hungarian minority, but rather to frighten and intimidate it (sometimes, to drive it out)." Thus, the Hungarians of Romania have no other alternative but to seek "federalist-autonomist solutions" (which, naturally, "incites the majority's nationalism").

Perhaps it is more accurate to say that Romanian nationalism does not aim at something like an open nation, welcoming minorities into it, rather than that it has no claim to the status of a nation state. But this is a question of detail. Tamás is undoubtedly right in saying that if the governing forces in Romania adopted the liberal concept of a political nation, the situation of the Hungarian minority would improve significantly. It is also true that it is a more promising short-run tactic to assert demands which do not go beyond individual rights and thus comport with the plan of a nation state, rather than revendicate collective rights and ethnic self-government, because the first will be more understandable to the democratic public opinion of neighboring countries and will sound less threatening than the second. I believe the critics

have not been completely fair with Tamás in this regard. But while it is true that at present it is not wise to *demand* more from Romania or Slovakia than is consistent with the idea of a political nation, it by no means follows that the Hungarian state would not be wise to *offer* more to its own minorities. The choice of a tactic depends (also) on what goals and principles we follow, and, thus, the question inevitably arises as to whether the idea of a political nation offers a fair and impartial solution in the long run to the minorities question.

I shall proceed as follows. First, I shall deal with the nature of the nation state program, or *nationalism* (*Nationalism*), and try to explain what *liberal* nationalism consists in (*Liberal Nationalism*). After this, I shall take a look at the contradictions of liberal nationalism (end of *Liberal Nationalism, The Costs of Assimilation*). As a next step, I shall demonstrate that equal treatment in an ethnically divided society cannot be assured without minority rights, and I shall also define a program which includes the idea of the "co-nation state,"¹ or of *multinationalism* (*Multinationalism*). I shall then try to elucidate and respond to the arguments against multinationalism, demonstrating that it is possible to give a liberal interpretation to the concept of collective rights, and that *liberal* multinationalism is possible (*Liberal Multinationalism*). The concluding section discusses how to create a *political community* of the citizens of a co-nation state, and how the evolution of the international political order can help in transcending nationalism.

Nationalism

The subjects of dynastic states were loyal to the ruler, and their fidelity was based on the common belief that the throne was of divine origin. Secularization and democratization of the modern state destroyed these bases of legitimacy, and, by this, they inevitably raised the questions, "If power is of secular

origin, and if everyone is equal, how can individuals be asked to be loyal to the state on whose territory they live? On what basis can they be expected to be loyal to *just this* state and no other?" The only more or less clear answer to these questions has been offered, since the end of the eighteenth century, by nationalism. The nationalist thesis is that the subjects may consider the state their own, they can be expected to be willing to make sacrifices (and ultimately even to die) for it, if the following two conditions are met: First, the subjects are bound to each other by ties of solidarity independent of their political relationships and antecedent to these. And, second, the state is an expression of their pre-political, solidarity community. I shall try to explain these two conditions with the help of the concepts of modern sociology.

First, a community must be given with which individuals identify in a natural manner. That is, they do not belong to it because, while pursuing their interests, they come together with other similarly interested persons to form an association in the pursuit of their convergent goals. The fact of belonging together is a given for them and, moreover, something which is recognized immediately, with no special cogitation.

Language, the habits of conduct, the attitudes toward space, odor, or taste, the handling of physical proximity, and a number of other practices are all signals on the basis of which we find other people familiar to us and their gestures understandable or, on the contrary, foreign and inscrutable. The easier it is for us to understand the signals emitted by other people, the more easily we enter into a relationship of confidence with them, even if they are aliens to us, because there is less danger of our misunderstanding their statements and making erroneous expectations as to their behavior. The less we understand the signals of other people, the less likely it is that we can enter into a close and confident relationship with them. This is the basis of the distinction between "us" and "them" which operates constantly in everyday life. Where there is a division of the population into "us" and "them," it is

natural for everyone to start from the assumption that they can generally count more on those who belong to the "us" group than those of the "them" group. And if one gets involved in a conflict with somebody belonging to "them," it is an obvious expectation that members of the "us" group will be more willing to support him or her, while those belonging to the "them" group will be more willing to support the adversary.

Each person can belong to several "us" groups at the same time; an individual can recognize a group of people as belonging to his or her group from their speech, others from their religious practices, still others from their habits of dress, and so on. In a conflict, he or she may sometimes join the members of one "us" group, sometimes those of another. In the ethnically mixed regions of Europe prior to the centralized territorial states, the inhabitants of a village seldom asked themselves which of the many possible "us" groups they belonged to "really." Another possibility is for clusters of signals to go together in fully separating one group from the rest of society. Such communities, closed in every respect, were formed by the non-Christian (for example, Jewish or Muslim) inhabitants of Europe before the last century. A third possibility is that one of the many criteria predominates over the others: if religion, dress, or language class the individual with different communities, the priority will always be given to one system of signals (say, language), and, therefore, in a condition of conflict the individual will consistently stand with those who share this signal system (thus, for example, the Lutheran Hungarians stand with the Calvinist Hungarians, not with the Lutheran Slovaks).²

Two further distinctions are needed before we can define the basic concepts of nationalism. First, there are communities which are organized around a particular way of life and cannot embrace a plurality of different life-forms. Such communities are not able to extend to the social structure as a whole (to every occupational group, to every income category, to every territorial population) nor can they achieve a full institutional

system (from the family to the various types of economic, cultural, and political organizations). Ascetic communities living apart from the world are a good example of this category. Communities of a different type can allow for a wide variety of life styles, are capable of encompassing the entire social structure, and of bearing a complete institutional order. The ethnic community belongs to this second category.

The next distinction is as follows. There are communities not bound to territory (for example, the large world churches). Other communities include in their identity the territory on which they are located and which they consider as their own (it is in this way that the ethnic homeland belongs to the ethnic community).

We can now combine these conceptual elements to define a "people" and a "nation." Some communities expect their members to pay a loyalty to them which trumps any other commitment, while being able to encompass whole societies and viewing themselves as part of a geographical homeland. The early proponents of nationalism used to call such communities a *people*. They claimed that the state could count on the loyalty of its subjects if its territory coincided with the people's homeland and if its subject population corresponded to the children of these people; in other words, when every member of the given people lived within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, and when only members of the given people lived within its jurisdiction. In such circumstances, the primary loyalty of each individual is devoted to the community which spatially coincides with the state: no one is bound with stronger solidarity, either to communities of a smaller scope than the state or to communities of a larger scope than it or else to communities which cut across state boundaries. Thus, the first condition of political loyalty would be that the subjects constitute one and only one people.

The second condition is that the people take possession of the state. The two are closely intertwined. True, the

nationalism of the past century cherished the belief that the people had existed for centuries, for millennia, but the awareness of their belonging together was slumbering (and now is the time for the "awakening"). But, in fact, the claim that an ethnic loyalty, preceding every other bond, should bring together the inhabitants of a country into a separate community is only put forward with the setting of the task of creating the modern secular and democratic state. The ideal of nationalism was the peasant living in a traditional, personalized community with other people and with nature, but this ideal was presented to an urbanizing society, in which most of the bonds between people were impersonal.

Nor was the "awakening" a return to some primordial condition, but rather the creation of a new *high culture*. In this process, a single literary language emerged from the welter of dialects; the history of the people, teachable in schools, was constructed on the basis of its given traditions; the obligations of the members to each other and to their fatherland was interpreted; a model of the virtues expected of them was provided; politically useful symbols were offered; and the collective demands on the state were formulated. This community-forming high culture is called the *national culture*. The national culture molds the ethnic community into a "people," insofar as the creators of this culture succeed in having a sufficient number of individuals determine their primary affiliation with the help of the cultural models offered by them. The people formed in this way, as a political community which can claim to have its own state, is then called a *nation*.

The nation takes possession of the state in that the refined and unified national language becomes the official language, the national culture becomes the official culture, the national holidays the official holidays, its symbols the official insignia, its historical traditions the state tradition. The state is identified with the nation, and it further pledges to provide the advantages of sovereignty to the collectivity of the nation:

control over a territory, protection of law, services funded by tax collection.

If the first of the above conditions is fulfilled, the subjects of a state will be united in solidarity with each other against the surrounding people. If the second condition is also fulfilled, then the subjects have a reason to extend their mutual solidarity to the state as well.

Nationalism's program is ambiguous. On the one hand, it is democratic and egalitarian: the language of the state should be the language spoken by the entire people, not only the aristocracy; the entire people, and not just the nobility, should enjoy the rights stipulated by the constitution; every child of the people should be an equal sibling with every other. Hence, the double meaning of the term "people": sometimes it refers to the entire ethnic community, at other times to the commons. The "national awakening" meant that every child of the nation becomes equal before the state, whether living in a palace or a hovel.

Yet this egalitarian gist only extends to every citizen if the first condition of nationalism is met, whereby the territory of the state is identical with one and only one ethnic homeland. Unfortunately, this condition is almost never satisfied in the real world. Ethnic homelands are fluid and generally overlap, while the territorial claims of the states are fixed and exclusive.³ More than one peoples live on the territory of most states, and, therefore, the question arises as to the status of the members of other peoples within the nation state. Nationalism is of two minds on this score; its ambivalence is insurmountable and has decisive influence on the policies of the nation state.

On the one hand, it is egalitarian only inwardly, within the nation, but not outwardly, with respect to the other groups of peoples living in the territory of the state. This is not a defect in the implementation of its program; the priority given to the nation over the several nationalities goes to the very heart of the idea. The nationalists of the first half of the nineteenth century modestly concealed from themselves the duality of

their position, while those of the Age of Imperialism talked openly of it. But whether or not made explicit, the two faces of nationalism are inseparable. Nationalism is a strategy for determining the identity of the citizenry, but at the same time and inseparably of this it is a strategy for limiting the competition for "political goods." Thus, it describes the nation identified with the state in such a way as to guarantee distinct political advantages to the members of the nation against those who do not belong in their midst. In an ethnically divided society, the creation of a nation state simply means that the members of one group of people gain privileged access to the goods which can be distributed by the public authority (offices, educational institutions, legal services, and so forth), restricting the share of others in these scarce resources. Accordingly, from the standpoint of the members of the nation state, ethnic relations are ideal if the share of the minority groups within the overall population is relatively high and remains so, that is, if assimilation is negligible.

But, on the other hand, the success of the nationalist policy does not depend solely on the magnitude of the advantages acquired, but also on their solidity. Therefore, the question continually arises as to whether one can count on the loyalty of the minorities, especially if their proportion within the population becomes threateningly large, and (or) if there is a neighboring state in which the particular minority constitutes the majority. However, the loyalty of minorities to the majority nation and the state identified with it is always uncertain. For while the members of the majority group can naturally assume that they are in solidarity with each other and with their state, the basis of the loyalty of minority members is not so obvious: it is in need of constant, special proof. (It would be a joke to say that the Hungarians in 1848/49 proved their loyalty to the Hungarian people—while it has been usual to refer, for example, to the evidence of the loyalty of the Jews.) Therefore, from the standpoint of security of the nation state, it seems better if the minority ethnic groups merge with the majority.

and the collectivity of citizens becomes, strictly speaking, coextensive with the national community.

Thus, nationalism is continuously agitated by internal tensions. It wavers between egalitarian brotherhood and anti-egalitarian exclusion, the desire to assimilate the minorities and the desire to keep them apart. The problem is further complicated by the fact that nationalism does not revolve within the closed circle of intra-nation politics. The minority reacts to the alternatives offered, while the majority reacts to the responses of the minority. Often, whichever of the alternatives is accepted by the minority, it becomes impossible for it to remain with what it might have resigned itself to because of the lack of internal equilibrium in the majority policies. Therefore, it is not uncommon for the minorities ultimately to reject both courses and choose their independent cultural and political organization, instead of quietly accepting second class status or assimilating to the majority. This produces a sense of danger among the members of the majority nation, and the perception of threat may cause the majority to use coercion against or, what is worse, to try to drive out or even to exterminate the "foreigners." Fear of the minorities drives nationalism to preventive violence.

But not *liberal* nationalism, it may be objected by one who believes in a return to nineteenth-century liberalism.

Liberal Nationalism

Liberal nationalism is also nationalism. Its goal is a unified nation state. However, the means at its disposal do not include persecuting the use of minority languages, prohibiting minority culture, expelling members of the minority from their domiciles or destroying them. It permits, nevertheless, the identification of loyalty to the state with loyalty to the majority nation and official sanctioning of assimilation (strictly voluntary) to the nation that has the state as its own. Thus, one

could say that liberal nationalism is a nationalism constrained by citizen's rights, political equality, and the rule of law.

Liberal nationalists, however, would not accept such a definition. In their notion, the political principles of liberalism are not *external constraints* on nationalist policy. They would maintain that a properly framed liberalism and a properly framed nationalism point in the same direction, toward a nation state which ensures equality before the law to all citizens. According to them, liberalism, correctly understood, and nationalism, correctly understood, converge on the same set of political principles and differ only in the questions which they answer by the help of these. The problems are different, the solutions offered are identical.

The question of nationalism is *motivational*: it amounts to asking what reasons bring individuals to pay loyalty to the democratic state. The nationalist answer is that the basis of common political loyalty is the awareness of belonging to a pre-political community. Liberalism's question is *justificational*: it addresses the problem of the conditions a state must satisfy in order that its demand of obedience to law be legitimate. The liberal answer, for the purposes of the present article, can be summarized as follows: the state must ensure to all citizens equal freedom to form and pursue their own idea of the good life. The nationalist answer implies that a state should always be the state of one particular nation; that it should not accept the enduring persistence of communities which form a nation within the nation and a state within the state. Now, it was a commonplace among early liberals that the answer of liberalism to its own question leads to the same outcome.

The nationalist opposes political recognition of several co-nations in the state because it assumes that mutual solidarity cannot be expected from the members of separate national communities. The liberals were opposed to it because they were anxious to protect equality before the law against political recognition of a multiplicity of collective bodies within one state. They assumed that the state can only treat its citizens as

equals if each individual stands under the authority of the same laws. If the laws apply not to the individual, but rather to the community interposed between him or her and the state, then citizens belonging to two different communities will enjoy different treatments, and this is unacceptable under equality before the law, or so the argument runs.

In the autumn of 1789, the French National Assembly put the issue of Jewish emancipation on its agenda. Supporters of the proposal argued that in granting civil rights, the state is doing nothing but acknowledging the natural rights of human beings. Everyone is born free and equal and subject to the same natural rights. Therefore, civil rights (translating the natural Rights of Man into the political rights of the Citizen) cannot be denied to anyone living permanently on the territory of the state. Jews (as human beings) were born with the same rights as anyone else. Consequently, Jews living on French soil cannot be deprived of their civil rights any more than the other inhabitants.

The opponents of emancipation responded that the Jews had excluded themselves from the body of the nation, since they have a separate faith, their own customs, traditions, and institutions, and are obedient to their own religious laws and authorities. If the Jews were to acquire the rights of French citizens, the National Assembly would be acknowledging that a nation can exist within the nation, a state within the state, which cannot be permitted.

What makes the debate really interesting is the answer given to the opposition by the most eloquent supporter of the emancipation, the liberal Clermont-Tonnerre. He accepted the requirement that there should be no "state within the state," but denied that the emancipation would endow the Jews with legal and political privileges. "Everything must be denied to the Jews as a nation, he said, and everything must be granted them as individuals. They should not form within the state either a political body or an estate. They must become citizens separately, one by one" (quoted in Badinter and Badinter,

1989, p. 137). This thesis amounts to the same thing as the basic claim of nationalism. Namely, the state can recognize one and only one nation, that which coincides with the collectivity of the citizens. Liberals did not need the nationalist premises in order to get at nationalist conclusions.

The meeting of liberalism and nationalism promised a happy union. The liberal doctrine seemed capable of reconciling nationalism's democratic and egalitarian impulses with its discriminatory policy with respect to minorities. It seemed to do this in such a way as to overcome the conflict between the strategies of assimilation and exclusion. It claimed that the nation state can treat its majority and minority citizens as equals while assuring a particular status to the language and culture of the former, and it can combine this practice with the support of assimilation that does not infringe upon the liberty of the minority individuals. And it did all of this not in an *ad hoc* fashion, but by applying theoretical solutions which have already been tested elsewhere.

The distinction between nation and nationalities (the minority ethnic groups) was only one of a number of dimensions in which liberalism tried to harmonize equality before the state with individual freedom. Liberalism claimed that while every citizen must be invested with the same rights and subjected to the same obligations, not all citizens are alike. They have different convictions in religious matters, they belong to different cultural traditions; they class themselves and others into various occupational, linguistic, territorial, and ethnic groups, and they carry on diverse styles of life. If this multiplicity were to acquire official recognition, the state would not be treating its citizens as equals. But if the state were to expunge that multiplicity from society, there would be an end to freedom of religion, conscience, lifestyle, and association. The classical liberal answer to this dilemma consisted in drawing a systematic and clear-cut dividing line between the public and the private domains. As a citizen of the state, every individual is subject to the same rights and obligations. But in

their private lives, which are pursued in a sphere lying outside of the state's jurisdiction, they are left alone to differ from each other and to join as many communities and associations as they want. Thus, people are free to cultivate their particular life styles and they can foster their particular culture in the private domain without this freedom demolishing political equality. The state can treat all of them as equals without depriving them of their personal liberty.

It was this strategy of separation which furnished a conceptual framework for reconciling nationalist thought and equality of civil rights. In a liberal nation state, the public domain is that of a homogenous national culture, according to the liberal nationalists, but the private sphere remains open to the diversity of ethnic languages and cultures. The political nation constrains no one in speaking the language of their nationality in the vast realm of private life, in cultivating the culture of their group, or in fostering their particular traditions. When the demand was made to declare Hungarian to be the official language in Hungary, Lajos Kossuth wrote in his Editorial in the third issue of *Pesti Hírlap* on whether "we will banish the languages" of the nationalities. The answer is, "By no means." We only "want the language of government and public administration in the Hungarian fatherland . . . to be Hungarian." In the autumn of 1842, he added in a second Editorial that in the matter of language use, only one point must be upheld, namely, that "every branch of the public administration within Hungary should be, without exception, Hungarian." "To do anything less is cowardice, to command anything more is tyranny," and, therefore, "it would also be advisable for to declare by law . . . that Hungarian legislation has never intended to deprive the country's non-Hungarian speaking inhabitants of their languages, and indeed it recognizes that it would be unlawful to use compulsion in the language relations of private life" (quoted in Spira, 1992, p. 103).

Minority spokesmen often accused such declarations as

hypocritical, partly because liberal nationalists appeared in practice less tolerant toward "the language relations of private life" as they professed to be. Such reproaches are best left to the historian; they do not concern liberalism's theoretical position. If true, they proved that the nationalist liberals were not always faithful to their political principles, and not that a nationalist policy appropriately limited by liberal principles was not possible. But the charge of hypocrisy was partly based on objections which go to the heart of liberal nationalism. These are as follows.

The distinction used by Kossuth himself differs in one major point from the various instances of the separation of the public domain from the private one. Liberalism wanted to handle religious diversity by separating the church from the state, diversity of life styles by separating the state from personal morality. Apparently, it would propose the same solution for the handling of linguistic and ethno-cultural diversity. And, indeed, extending the analogy of the state's religious neutrality to language, Jozsef Eötvös stated, "That age which declared the complete equality of civil rights, which established equal freedom of religion with no denominational difference, also demands similar freedom in regard to usage of language of the citizens" (Eotvos, 1975, p. 716). But the program of the nation state was not a program of separation of the state language and the languages spoken by the citizenry, nor does this make sense when the official language is neither a dead language nor a foreign language nor an artificial language. In fact, the issue was how the official language should map the linguistic diversity reigning over the state's territory. Nationalism wanted a hegemony for the national language. Liberal nationalism believed that hegemony was acceptable as long as the minorities could use their language unimpeded in their private life and were entitled to their own schools. Later, the right to deal with government officials and the courts in their own language was added.

The religious policy of the liberal state institutionalized

religious equality. Its language policy, however, did not institutionalize linguistic equality, but rather linguistic inequality (although less extreme than what illiberal nationalism advocates and maintains). It is a politics of inequality because the majority is invested by the collective privilege of having their own mother tongue as the official language. So long as the right of the minority individuals to have their own schools and to communicate with official people in their own language is considered as their personal business, not a public responsibility of the state, the original asymmetry between majority and minority status is maintained.

All the same, liberal nationalists could think in good faith that their political principles were not in conflict with each other. For there is a major distinction between religious and ethno-linguistic affiliation. Although most people receive their religion at birth, faith is not something contingent. The believer, after being brought up in a particular faith, comes to a stage in personal development at which he or she is capable of examining the received dogmas and of either rejecting them or sticking to the conviction that they are true. This conviction entails that other religious teachings (and, of course, atheist doctrines), so long as they contradict to the claims of the true religion, are necessarily false. A person who breaks with her religion either repudiates a faith about which she has no doubt, in which case she is doing something for which there is no excuse, or she takes this step because she has come to the conviction that her previous faith was false. There is no such basis beyond contingent facts in ethno-linguistic affiliation; it is an entirely fortuitous circumstance. Because the Hungarian language is beautiful and Hungarian culture is valuable, it does not follow that the Romanian language is not beautiful and the Romanian culture is without value. He who changes his ethno-linguistic community, in whatever direction, is not choosing between true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, the choice made simply between "this" and the "other." Yet from the perspective of the "other" community it is the

abandoned community which is the "other"; no single ethno-linguistic group's viewpoint is privileged as the proper one. This distinction has far-reaching consequences.

Let us assume that the state distributes political advantages and disadvantages unequally between two (or more) religious communities. In such a situation, members of a disadvantaged community faced an unacceptable choice. Either they repudiate what they firmly believe is the true and proper faith in order to share in the benefits distributed by the state, in which case they will lose the chance of being decent and upright people in this world and possibly that of partaking in salvation in the next one. Or they stick to their faith and suffer undeserved disadvantages. The fact that every religion can be practiced freely in private life is no compensation for this. Religious tolerance is, of course, better than religious persecution, but it does not make up for the political discrimination. Only a separation of church and state, the state's religious neutrality, can ensure every citizen equal treatment with all the others.

Now let us imagine, instead, that the state unequally parcels out the political advantages and disadvantages among ethno-linguistic communities. This arrangement does not confront the members of minority groups with the same dilemma as religious discrimination. If they wish to lessen their disadvantages, and to share in the advantages offered to the majority, they simply go over to the privileged group. Indeed, they are not trading off the true against the false, the good against the bad, or the right against the wrong. In order for the choice to be voluntary, only three conditions must be fulfilled. First, the discrimination must have a rational goal, and it must not create more advantages and disadvantages than are necessary. (Such a rational goal, we might say with Eötvös, is to provide the state with an official language, which should coincide as much as possible with the living language spoken by the most people living on the state's territory.) Second, the avenues of assimilation must stand open for those who wish to join the

majority. Third, the discrimination may not be extended to the private sphere: everyone must be equally free to use their language and foster their native culture if they choose to do so instead of switching sides.

Understandably, the liberal nationalists could have thought that as long as the state is not interfering in "the relations of private life" and is not encouraging assimilation by coercion nor is it obstructing assimilation by coercion, the political advantages bestowed on the nation state do not violate the twin principles of freedom and equality. In such circumstances, no political privileges conferred on the ethno-linguistic majority can be permanent. Whatever the original distribution of benefits and disadvantages, in a reasonably short time the free choices of individuals will lead to such a distribution that everyone willingly accepts as being the best for themselves. And, incidentally, it follows from this that with due patience and openness toward the minority individuals, the nation state will in time become in fact the state of a single nation and the national community of all its citizens—for in the long run, it is rationally advantageous for everybody to choose assimilation.⁴

Thus, the formula of liberal nationalism is not hypocrisy. But it rests on a fatal misunderstanding.

The Costs of Assimilation

Surely, the changing of language and culture does not require a person to also change her convictions and beliefs. But this is not enough to describe the change as a morally indifferent process. First and foremost, liberal nationalists did not take seriously enough the fact that what is true for a member of their own nation is also true for the members of the other ethno-linguistic communities. The minority ethnic group is just as much "us" for those who speak its language, who have grown up in its customs, as the majority is "us" for its members. The minority citizen is not an isolated being. It is not

the atomistic life of a separate individual that he trades off against the advantages of belonging to the national community. He who chooses to enroll in the majority nation at the same time chooses to abandon his own ethnic group. This is a defensible choice: membership change is neither impossible nor impermissible. While an individual is born into a web of social relationships, and while it is true that his identity is partly determined by his belongingness, none of this implies that for him identity is something he can only discover and can never choose to change. As we grow up, we become capable of subjecting our communities to scrutiny and choosing between reinforcing our loyalty to them or opting out of them. It is our personal responsibility to make this choice, and we as individuals are the ultimate authority over it. Loyalty to the community cannot be expected from one who no longer considers himself part of it. But the decision to break with the "us" group, although voluntary in nature, jolts the entire personality, for it is not simply a matter of *what is better for him*, but rather *who he is*, where does he belong, how does he define himself.

Furthermore, like any other people, the minority ethnic group is distinguished from those who are the "others" by customs, ceremonies, its own peculiar material, visual, and musical culture, and with the help of this culture it gives form to the individual's life. Leaving it might entail a change in the entire lifestyle (different holidays, different rites, different networks of kinship, different relations between the generations) which may force the individual to radically alter his personality. Not everyone is capable of this change, and those who are nevertheless assume a heavy burden.

Third, successfully joining the majority demands more than assimilating to the high culture of the state-forming nation. In fact, the requirement is different. In order for someone to be accepted as belonging to the "us" group, she must first participate with faultless precision in everyday practices: she must speak the language with no foreign accent, she must not

deviate from the accepted procedures of physical contact, she must have nothing odd about her gestures, she must move around in space and pick up objects the way "we" have been accustomed or else she will be recognized immediately as an alien.

These things are not at all complicated, any child can easily learn them. Not by deliberate study, however, but by living with adults who provide models of behavior. Later on, for the most part, he does not even know what he acquired. Nor are we always able to say what we perceive as unusual in another's behavior, only that we react to it as being "alien." The individual assimilating as an adult does not have that familial environment in which he could learn everything by spontaneous practice, and, what is more, the learning skills necessary for such acculturation are age-specific: they vanish with the passage of youth so that most adults are not capable of acquiring perfect facility in a foreign ethno-linguistic culture, even in favorable surroundings. Thus, for many people, crossing over means losing their original community while not achieving full acceptance by the new, chosen community.

This may cause a heavy disadvantage, for as we shall see the majority is always ambivalent with respect to assimilation of minorities. Broadening of the "us" group and narrowing of the "them" group fill them with satisfaction, for there will be more of those whose loyalty can be relied upon and fewer of those whose political allegiance is not seen as secured. This encourages the majority to support assimilation, or even exert pressure on minority members in order that they give up their separate identities and loyalties. However, assimilation reduces the benefits the nation state provides to majority individuals, since it is necessary to share the goods acquired through the state with increasingly more people. Therefore, the diligently assimilating minority may soon find that new discrimination is confronting them but now within the national community. One man will count for a pure-blooded member of the nation, another will be considered a newcomer; and only the former will enjoy the advantages of membership in the nation as a

prerogative due to mere *belonging*, while the latter will be expected to give continuous proof of allegiance and, thus, will share the privileges of the nation as an *achievement* only. In other words, their status will not be unlike that of the citizens who have not forsaken their original community.

Liberal nationalism, of course, may reject the demand for such "accomplishment" as another form of arbitrary discrimination. But this is not enough for assimilating citizens to reach freedom and equality. Inequitable distribution of political advantages and disadvantages is not excused by the fact that theoretically anyone can choose the more beneficial affiliation for himself and his family. On the one hand, it is not true that assimilation can be carried out quickly and completely. It is a process involving costs and risks. On the other hand, it is not true that the choice of assimilation does not demand a morally difficult decision from the individual, that it does not jeopardize his self-esteem, and does not include, among its risks, that of losing identity. Just as not every apostate will live with a bad conscience (on the contrary, there are those who are liberated by rethinking their convictions and by their having had the strength of will to bring their lives into harmony with their new views), so too not everyone clashes with their conscience by changing their ethno-linguistic community. But just as abandoning one's faith can cause a serious crisis of conscience and personality, so too can the abandonment of one's original ethno-linguistic community.

The consequence is rather obvious, or so I hope. The difference between ethno-linguistic and religious affiliation is not of such a kind as to make political inequalities defensible in one of them which are indefensible in the other. One cannot be a consistent liberal and a consistent nationalist at the same time. But where does this insight lead?

One alternative would be to bring to its final conclusions the analogy of the liberal treatment of religions with regard to the ethnic groups, too. Accordingly, the liberal state should be a state separate from ethnic groups, an ethnically neutral state.⁵

This solution appears at first glance attractive, because it carries on the well-proven methods of liberalism—equality of citizens before the law coupled with a clear-cut separation between the public and the private—while removing an anomaly which is both morally and esthetically unpleasant. The second possibility is much less attractive at first glance. Instead of finally cleansing the state of all traces of ethno-linguistic differences, it provides an open political recognition of these differences and tries to balance the political privileges of the majority by privileges given to the minorities. Instead of getting rid of ethnic inequalities, the state would be forced to dole them out, deciding who enjoys undeserved advantage and who suffers disadvantages that should be counterbalanced.

Thus, it seems rational to choose the alternative of the ethnically neutral state. But there are serious flaws in this seemingly attractive solution. First of all, separation of state and ethnicity cannot be complete. The state cannot exist without official language: either it will raise one (or several, or all) of the languages spoken in its territory to the status of an official language, or it will adopt a foreign language (possibly a dead or artificial language), but there must be an official language. The state cannot leave unregulated the distribution of workdays and days off, nor can it leave it up to each ethnic community when the calendar holidays shall fall. It will either organize a calendar so that the official non-working days and the state holidays coincide with the non-working days and holidays of one (or several, or all) of the particular communities living on its territory, or it makes an arrangement such that this does not at all overlap with the special days of any community. The state cannot exist without historical remembrance, and it will either build its official traditions on the remembrances of one (or several, or all) of the particular communities, or the collective memories will be independent of any of these, and so on. The latter type of solutions implement ethnic neutrality of the state. It is enough to

consider these examples to see that in a modern democratic state there is a negligible chance that this method can be applied consistently. The official language cannot be divorced from the spoken languages; the traditional holidays cannot be made mandatory work days; the state's past cannot be separated from the past of the ethnic groups living on its soil.

But now let us further assume, for the sake of argument, that the program of the ethnically neutral state is feasible. What kind of a state will it be whose language deliberately differs from all of the mother tongues spoken on its territory, whose symbols no one can recognize as their own, whose history is strange to everyone? It would be a state which does not claim that the citizens consider it their own and form a political community with each other. It would not represent the power of the public but rather a company providing public goods. It would service consumers on whom it would not count for loyalty and willingness to sacrifice. There would be no stronger bond among the citizens than that which exists among mutually indifferent consumers who happen to be the customers of the same company. From this perspective, the ethnically neutral state is not such an attractive idea as first appeared. So long as human coexistence is authoritatively ordered within the framework of the state, it is not desirable that the state be an enterprise in public goods. Who would claim that we would have a better life by changing our status as Hungarian citizens to that of customers of Hungaria, Inc.?

Nationalism has an answer to the question of how a political community is possible, of how the citizens of a state can be in solidarity with each other and loyal to their state. The assumptions of an ethnically neutral state, apart from being extremely implausible, provide no answer to this question. We must seek a solution which, like nationalism, is capable of answering the questions of political loyalty while, unlike nationalism, is also capable of securing the harmony, aimed at by liberals, between freedom and equality.

But if we take this path, what will become of the pride of

classical liberalism, the separation between the public and the private? The plan of a co-nation state leaves less in the domain of private affairs than the liberal tradition would consider proper, no doubt about it. Nor does it draw the dividing line between the two domains as classical liberalism did. Yet, let us note that the separation of the two areas in liberalism is not a goal, but a means; not a basic principle, but a technique for achieving more fundamental values. The goal is for the political system to create an acceptable harmony between freedom and equality, and to do this in a way as to create the conditions for realization of the third great liberal value: that of fraternity among free and equal citizens. If this goal can only be reached in a more complicated organization than was contemplated by classical liberalism, then those who are committed to the liberal values must come up with a more complex solution.

Therefore, I propose that we put aside the idea of the ethnically neutral state and examine the second alternative for the nation state, which I called the co-nation state.

Multinationalism

I should like to briefly review three important problems: language use, schooling, and local public administration.

There is agreement among liberals that everyone has a right to use their native language. Such a right is held alike by all citizens, regardless of to which linguistic group they belong. But what does it mean to have a right to use one's native language, for example, in official transactions? It means more than that the state does not forbid anyone to speak their own language. In a multilingual community, the operation of the public administration entails special communication costs, and various regulations distribute these costs in different ways. Let us assume as a first step that one and only one state language is designated, the one which is spoken by the majority as their

mother tongue. This brings about a primary distribution of costs which imposes the full burden on the members of the minority: they must speak a language foreign to them with civil servants, and, moreover, they are at a disadvantage in competing for public service positions (since perfect mastery of the state language is a requirement). Now, let us assume that as the next step the minority acquires the right to use its native language in official transactions. In this way, the original cost (the communication disadvantage and competitive disadvantage borne by the members of the minority) is significantly reduced, or, more exactly, it is translated into a different kind of cost. For what does it mean when every citizen has the right to freely use their native language in official transactions? Either that every civil servant must speak the minority language, or that it is possible to communicate with civil servants not speaking the minority language by way of an interpreter. There is a price to both solutions. If the former is adopted, then this price is paid by the civil servants belonging to the majority. They must acquire the minority language and give up part of their competitive edge against minority candidates. This is not an objectionable burden, however, since they are now assuming the costs of the advantages from the original distribution (by being required to be multilingual) or losing an unfair advantage (by entering a job competition which is more nearly fair).

This solution does not work in every case, however. Let us imagine that the majority in a region is living with three or four minority groups. In such a situation, one cannot expect every official to speak every language. At least in a part of the cases, nothing else remains but the right to use an interpreter. But the procurement of an interpreter and the paying of their fee produce expense. The question, yet again, is who shall pay the bill? Is it fair for the state to shift the burden for providing an interpreter for citizens not speaking the language of the officials? Hardly so, since his fellow citizen of the majority at once enjoys an unjustifiable advantage over him: the official

communication would be organized so that some individuals can communicate immediately and without any difficulty with the officials while others cannot. Therefore, it is reasonable that the majority should pay a larger part of the costs for providing interpreters.

In a word, the right to officially use one's native language in both cases goes beyond the right of any citizen to freely speak his language in public offices. It entails the further right of the minority citizens to demand of the state the conditions for communication in their native language. It entails the further consequence that the majority will pay the greater portion of the costs of ensuring communication. That is, it posits that the members of the minority are entitled to a special, *group-related* right against the state and the majority. Without this privilege, the civil right to use their native language in this case would only mean that they are free to emit certain sounds in the government offices which are not unintelligible noise for the officials' ears. The law "without a sense for language" shifts the communication costs of state operations onto the minority. In other words, law "without a sense for language" breeds officials lacking an understanding for the minority language.

This is the simplest type of group-related right. As in the case of general civil rights, the subject here is again the individual who exercises it (by himself); the only peculiarity is that the possession of the right belongs to a group (the linguistic minority) which is narrower than the entire citizenry.

Schooling brings up more complicated questions. The minority's right to education in its own language admits, again, a formulation in terms of a general civil right: every citizen has the right to learn in their native language and to be brought up within the culture and traditions of their native community. In a country where the state provides free elementary and secondary education for all its citizens, this right entails that the state must also maintain minority schools. But such a statement says nothing about the conditions under which the minority schools will operate. In general, the state fulfills its

duty to fund public education by setting a quota for the commencement of each class; for example, it can declare that a separate class can be started if there are at least thirty applicants. There are, then, three possible cases. First, thirty persons is the threshold in both the majority and the minority schools. Second, thirty persons is the threshold in the majority schools, but a threshold higher than thirty is set for the minority schools. Third, thirty persons is the threshold in the majority schools, but it is lower in the minority schools. A state which understands equality before the law in a way excluding preferential treatment of any group of individuals, whether minority or minority, and whether based on benign or malignant reasons, will firmly reject the second alternative. But it will also refrain from a quota distinction in favor of the minority.

Now, what will be the result if one sets a uniform threshold for starting a class? Let us examine the following, very plausible situation. The majority is concentrated in dense urban agglomerations, while the minority is scattered among isolated village clusters. The majority will always fill out the thirty person quota at every establishment, the minority at none. Under such conditions, the minority is at a disadvantage with respect to the majority not only when a threshold higher than the general one is set for it, but also when it is expected to obey the general rule. Fairness requires special regulations for the minority.

To be sure, there is a price to be paid for reducing the threshold: if other cost factors stay the same, then the educational expenses for each pupil are in inverse proportion to the class size. The question is, again, who will pay the extra charges. If the minority can form classes with fewer than thirty pupils, then the state will bear the cost (and, through it, the body of taxpayers, that is, for the most part the majority). But if the quotas applied to the minority are the same as those which are adjusted to the demographic relations of the majority, then the extra burden will fall on the minority, either

because the minority children will have to travel large distances, or because instruction in their native language remains the task of their parents, or because the minority starts its own schools and pays the price of maintaining them. In short, there are only two options open for a community divided into a linguistic majority and a linguistic minority: either the state creates the same conditions for minority schooling as it creates for the majority, aware of the fact that minority schooling costs more, or it will be unwilling to pay more for minority than for majority education, and then it will cumulate the initial disadvantages of minority children. The latter is the policy of equal civil rights, interpreted as forbidding preferential treatment of linguistic groups. The former is a policy which combines equal civil rights with group-related minority rights.

Like the right to use one's native language, the right to schooling in one's native language is exercised by the individual himself. But this right is more complicated than the right to language use because of two circumstances. First, the pupils themselves enjoy this right but only jointly with their companions, and only if the number of applicants reaches the threshold for the minority. Secondly, the bearer of the right to a quota adjusted to the minority situation is not the minority individual himself, but his or her community. The individual's right extends to applying to a minority class, and to enrolling to it provided that the threshold is reached. Then and only then does the individual have the right to attend a class where the language of teaching is her mother tongue. She has no right to a class of 18 (if there are only 17 other applicants), or 20, or 25, or of any particular size for that matter. The rights regarding the threshold can only be meaningfully attached to the minority as a whole. It is only a linguistic community and not its members, one by one, that can be said to have a right to a preferential quota. And so the schooling issue raises the tangled question of where *collective rights* begin.

The idea of rights which pertain to people jointly is not new,

of course. The right of association, for example, is a right of the individual, but it necessarily impinges upon conducting certain activities jointly with others. This causes no difficulty, since the right of association pertains to every citizen, but only one who voluntarily joins an organization will become a member. Both the association and its membership are the result of acts of individuals who, in their turn, have the right to act in this way. Again, the associations themselves can obtain legal personhood, and in this capacity they can enjoy such rights as the members themselves cannot exercise, not even jointly (except through officers of the association). These, therefore, are not the associated rights of the members. But there is no difficulty here either, since it is the members who create and who can discontinue the legal personhood by their voluntary decision. In the area where these conditions are fulfilled, the state can be satisfied with investing each individual with the right to act jointly with others, elaborating the rules of the association and the rights invested in the resulting organizations and leaving it up to the citizens whether to associate with each other and (if so) what kind of associations to create. No public recognition needs to be given to groups narrower than the entire citizenry. The issue of association can be handled easily by the classical means of civil rights and the separation of the public and the private domains.

The minority rights with respect to schooling are not of this kind. The group of beneficiaries here is smaller than the citizenry as a whole, and it is not selected by the members' associating voluntarily with each other. We cannot say that the right to form a minority class belongs to those who jointly claim this opportunity. First, it is not necessary that only the children of minority parents will attend such a class. For various reasons, some majority parents might also choose to send their children to the minority school. Thus, the totality of pupils in the minority classrooms is not necessarily a true subset of the minority population; but it would not be serious to claim that

majority children, too, have a right to a preferential access to minority schooling. Moreover, the right to preferential quotas obviously pertains as well to those minority families which are not exercising it and which cannot be counted among the voluntary participants in minority schooling. But how is, then, the rights-bearer constituted in this case? Certainly not by way of association: the minority's right is not based on a certain number of people coming together and forming an organization. It is not this way that an ethno-linguistic minority is formed. Such groups are not bodies of associated individuals. They simply are given for members and non-members alike, by the signs used and identified, by mutual recognition paid by members to each other, and by the regard of outsiders. Therefore, if they have the opportunity to start native language classrooms under privileged conditions as their due, then the state must recognize this by an act of public law. The community invested with such rights cannot be treated by the government as belonging to the private realm only. It needs to enjoy a public status.

To summarize, collective rights are distinguished from the joint rights of associated individuals by two criteria. First, their subjects do not come into being by way of association but are simply given, and, second, in order for them to be capable of bearing rights, they need to be officially recognized by the state.⁶ I shall later add some further characteristics. But first, I would like to say something about our third topic, the local public administration.

In an ethnically divided country, it is an advantage to every citizen if his group is the majority in the place where he is living. The advantage is even greater if public administration is based on local self-government. The value of holding a local majority is further increased if the centralized state authority gives up as much of its purview as possible to the municipalities. But where the ethnic groups living within the jurisdiction of a state have unequal size and are distributed unequally over the country's territory, the advantages related

to belonging to the local majority mean one thing to the overall majority and another thing to the overall minority. On the level of central government, the overall majority enjoys a privileged position in any case. If it is also the majority in a local settlement, then its members will enjoy a cumulative advantage. But if it is the minority members who make up the local majority, then the reversal of the proportions—along with the self-governing system and decentralization of authority—somewhat offsets the disadvantage which falls inevitably to their lot on the level of the central government. Their representatives will have a say in the matter of local schooling, in sharing the local budget for cultural expenses, in establishing economic ventures, and much else. Therefore, from the standpoint of their future, nothing is so important to minorities as self-governance and decentralization. Yet this is not enough. In order for a strong self-government to favor the minority, it is necessary to draw the administrative boundaries in a way advantageous to it. For if the boundaries slice up the territory of the country in such a way that its minority is a minority in every location, then strong local self-government is not much of a help to them. But if the internal boundaries uniformly isolate those territories where the bulk of the minority is concentrated, then the local self-government can become a means of minority autonomy.

Once again, there are three cases: the boundaries of public administration are drawn regardless of the ethnic proportions; they are drawn in such a way that local autonomy of the minority becomes impossible from the outset; or they are drawn in such a way as to promote autonomy of the local minority. The classical understanding of equality before the law rejects those practices which aim at destroying local minority autonomy by redrawing internal borders. But it also rejects the practice of adjusting the internal borders so as to promote minority autonomy. It understands both as equally wrong, since neither satisfies the requirement that the state

should never privilege a group of citizens whether on benign or malignant grounds.

This might seem to be a fair solution, since ethnically neutral internal boundaries tend to create administrative units controlled by the country's majority and by the country's minority in roughly the same proportion as the two groups are represented within the entire population. But, in this way, the advantage of the majority is reproduced locally in unchanged proportion. Therefore, a nation state "without a sense for language" is a state in which the overall advantages of the state nation are preserved constant at every level, down to the smallest locality. If these advantages are not justifiable, then fairness requires that the state try to equalize the power relations instead of maintaining their asymmetry.

Thus, in a liberal state which treats every citizen as equal, regardless of affiliation, ethno-linguistic minorities need to have the right to an internal division of the country's territory maximally favorable for their local autonomy. Technically speaking, this is already a purely collective right: its bearers are not individuals (no one has the right to live in a settlement where the population distribution is most favorable to him), nor can the individuals themselves exercise it, whether separately or jointly (there is no point in saying that the members of a minority adapt the internal boundaries to their needs; this can only be done by the acts of an official authority). Furthermore, it is also a collective right in the sense that it is not enjoyed by associated individuals on condition that they manifest their intention of cooperating, but rather it is enjoyed by given ethno-linguistic communities on the basis that the state recognizes them as the collective bearers of the privileges in question.

Let us summarize our results up to this point. In an ethnically divided society, the state which treats every citizen as an equal cannot be a nation state; it must be a co-nation state. It cannot be identified with a single favored nation but must consider the political community of all the ethnic groups living

on its territory as constituting it. It should recognize all of their cultures and all of their traditions as its own. It should notice that the various ethnic groups contend with unequal initial chances for official recognition and a share of public authority, and it should offer particular assistance to the members of disadvantaged groups in approaching a position of equality. The privileges which are meant to countervail the initial disadvantages are inevitably lasting (since the inequality of the relationships of force between the state-forming groups are also lasting), and they might need to be expressed as rights. In every case, these are group-related rights, but not always collective rights (in the sense that their bearer is the community, and that they can be exercised only on behalf of the community). Some of them, however, are collective rights, strictly speaking.

In the East-Central European region, one usually means today by collective rights territorial autonomy, and by territorial autonomy one means a federal system. But this is an extreme simplification—one which sharpens the political debate between majority and minority to an alarming degree. Territorial autonomy is a limiting case of collective rights, and federalism is a limiting case of territorial autonomy. The array of special advantages to be pondered for countervailing the disadvantages of the minority position is much richer than this, as it should be. Innumerable contingent factors must be taken into consideration when approaching the demands of the real world. Different rights are needed by a minority when their absolute numbers amount to a few tens of thousand individuals than when they are several millions; different rights when they form a negligible part of the population than when they are a sizable share of the country's inhabitants; different rights when their members are grouped on the very bottom of the social hierarchy than when their sociological distribution is similar to that of the majority; different rights when they have a mother country outside the borders of the state than when they do not have such a background; and so

forth. Therefore, I find it important to make clear that the program of multinationalism is not bound to a particular institutional arrangement (the federal state) but can materialize in various solutions, according to the complexity of the situation. In general, it should only be noted that an honest enforcement of civil rights pertaining to each individual is not enough; a state which treats every citizen as an equal can only be erected on an ethnically divided society if the political community recognizes, besides the general civil rights, group-related (individual and collective) rights pertaining to structurally disadvantaged minorities.

But is this claim compatible with the political principles of liberalism? Is liberal multinationalism possible? Let us examine the objections.

Liberal Multinationalism

Traditionally, liberals propose three main arguments against the idea of the co-nation state. First, special legislature conferring particular privileges on a group narrower than the whole citizenry is said to violate equality before the law. Second, the recognition of collective rights of a particular community is alleged to lead to a curtailment of the civil rights of individuals belonging to other communities. Third, the collective rights of a community are claimed also to abridge the rights of the individuals belonging to it so that a community endowed with collective rights can become a tyrant to its own members.

These objections are not entirely unfounded. The claim to collective rights is often presented by the claimants as being in conflict with the liberal ideas of freedom and equality. Rights protect interests. If the individual's rights protect individual interests, so the argument runs, then collective rights protect the interests of the collectivity. If individual rights acknowledge the special moral status of the person, then collective

rights should be understood as recognizing the special moral status of the collectivities. In other words, collective rights are said to ensure for a community the ability to lead its own life and to pursue its own cultural values. The next step in the argument is to assert that the community's life is somehow superior to the lives of the individuals belonging to it, and that, as a consequence, collective rights always trump the rights of the individual, whenever they are in conflict with each other. For the communities stand in a different relationship with the persons forming them than do the associations, unions, or enterprises. They are not created by voluntary association of people coming together in order to achieve some antecedent goal, but rather they already exist for the individuals when they formulate their goals. They do not serve to realize restricted goals but provide a framework for identifying and implementing a very wide diversity of goals, and their meaning for the members cannot be exhausted by giving a list of the goals made possible by them. They do not stand in a relation to the individual's goals as the means of their execution; the material through which goals can be thought of at all is itself furnished by them. And only as a member of a certain community, only by assimilating to a particular already existing culture, does the individual become a person capable of leading an autonomous existence—thus, his independent goals can only exist if there is a given community, together with its own culture, in which he grows up as a child.

If this is an accurate interpretation, then it is indeed necessary to choose between liberalism and collective rights. I, however, think that this is not the only possible or even the best theory of collective rights. In what follows, I offer an outline of another (liberal) interpretation and justification of collective rights.

The role of communities in the individual's life is different from that of voluntary associations, there is no doubt about this. It is true that only in a social environment, only by internalizing an already existing culture, can the individual

become an autonomous person. Yet it does not follow that the community which is the vehicle of the culture is an ultimate source of moral claims, independent of and superior to the individual. First, only individuals have intentions, wants, and other mental states. Only they are capable of feeling pain and pleasure. Only they form thoughts about the good, the beautiful, the true, and the decent. Only the individual is a being to which interests can be directly attributed. The interests attributed to the community are *derived*. We can say that a community has an interest in its preservation and the flourishing of its culture if it is also possible to say that the individuals making up the community have an interest in the preservation of their community and the flourishing of its culture. If there is no one who expects a benefit *for herself* from the existence of the community, then we cannot reasonably say that there are interests in the preservation of the community.

Second, the statement that communities provide an indispensable framework for the life of the individual does not imply that the individual must necessarily belong to a single all-embracing community, or that we cannot make our belonging to it a subject for examination and criticism. Individuals acquire their own personal culture at the point of intersection of many different communities (and a network of connections not constituting a community or group), absorbing from many sources the rules, the knowledge, the emotional and behavioral models which are necessary to construct their personalities. They need social relations, but it is not clear whether what they need is one and only one particular community. During their development, there comes a point at which they become capable of revising their ties and loyalties (reinforcing, changing, or rejecting them), and although they cannot revise everything *at once*, there is nothing which would inherently resist critical revision (provided that much else is kept constant for the time being); and it is good for them to exercise this ability freely.

This insight gives support to our statement above: if no one

identifies with a community, if no one is willing to speak of its traditions in the first person plural, then that community has no justified claim to survival. When it is said that the community has rights against its members, and that these rights overrule the rights of the individuals, one is making, in truth, assertions about the claims of those *individuals* who wish to remain in the community and also wish to see it unchanged in the future, as opposed to those *individuals* who would like to leave it or to change its traditions, its internal and external relations. From the fact that without an ethnic community having collective rights, its members may be left without protection equal to that enjoyed by other citizens of the state, it does not follow that the rights pertaining to ethnic communities are of such a strength as to enforce the interests of some of the members at the expense of the rights of other members. I shall return to this point shortly. For the time being I would like to point out that collective rights, in the final analysis, also protect individual interests, namely, the interests of the individuals (and of their multitudes) making up the collectivity.

But if this is the case, would it not be less misleading to define the so-called collective rights immediately as individual rights? Yes it would—in every case when this is possible. Yet there are individual interests which are important enough to be protected by rights but which cannot be given protection by allocating the right directly to each individual. Consider the following example. It is a fundamental interest of all minority individuals that the ethnic group with which they identify be recognized and respected by the state and invested with the same stature as any other community. This requires, among other things, that the state treats the traditions of this group as its own, like those of the majority. Thus, for example, if the country has a national museum, then there must be a section in it exhibiting the culture and history of the minority (this would not be, of course, a national museum strictly speaking but a “co-national museum”). We might say the minority has a right to a place in the national museum. But how can we translate

this right into the language of rights of the individuals making up the minority? We cannot say that they are entitled, one by one, to the minority section of the national museum. Nor is it clear what this right would signify. Perhaps it means that they also can exhibit some object there? No citizen has such a right; the museums are administered by officials and experts. Or perhaps it would mean that they can visit their exhibit at no charge at any time? This would be a total misunderstanding of the purpose of the minority section. Naturally, it is good for the individuals belonging to the minority to learn, as individuals, that the state recognizes their culture and history. But it is at least as important to them, if not more so, to know that the other members of the minority, and indeed the majority, also experience this! It is not the primary interest of minority individuals to visit the national museum themselves and see the tokens of their culture and history, but rather to be sure that *other people* who come to visit also will see them. They do not draw pride from going on pilgrimages to the minority section of the museum on Sundays (perhaps they have never gone there), but from the knowledge that the state tells each of its citizens that the history and culture of the minority are equally important to those of the majority. Their primary interest *as individuals* is self-esteem, and the state protects this interest by assuring *their community* the right to a presence in the national museum (and in other areas where cultural traditions are officially recognized).

In order to properly protect the interest of the minority *individuals* in an equal recognition of their community, it is necessary to allocate part of the rights needed to protect this interest *to the community*.

A different kind of theory of collective rights emerges from this interpretation than from that which we properly suspected of being illiberal. Namely, if the collective rights protect the individual's equal freedom and worth, then their existence is only justifiable, and their content and scope are only acceptable in such a case when they rest on the same moral

principles which give a justification to the individual civil rights. Collective rights may be necessary to countervail the unfair disadvantages of minorities, but they cannot be legitimately interpreted so as to curtail the general civil rights either of the minority individuals or of members of the majority. Collective rights can only have legitimacy within the constraint that every individual (regardless of his or her ethnic affiliation) has the same constitutional rights and comes under the authority of the same civil code, the same criminal code, the same family law and contract law. In the liberal interpretation, collective rights are justified as means to secure additional opportunities to individuals suffering additional disadvantages—within the confines of a uniform legal system, not by breaking through its unity. Thus, the first objection, arguing the unity of the law, does not hold up against a liberal theory of collective rights.

Nor does it follow from the liberal formulation that the privileges secured for the minority restrict the individuals belonging to the majority in exercising their rights. To be sure, when the state provides an official interpreter for members of the linguistic minority, or allows the minority to start school classes with a smaller number of pupils than is customary, or establishes favorable administrative boundaries it is offering advantages which have a price, and this price is borne primarily by the majority. The question may always be asked whether the burden imposed on the majority is fair (whether it is not disproportionately large). But one cannot ask meaningfully whether the special support for the minority violates the right of majority individuals not to contribute in a larger proportion to the costs of the interpreters or the cost of minority schooling or not to bear the disadvantages of the administrative boundaries favoring the minority. For there are no such rights. Who would think to say that the tax system is only operating fairly if the taxpayers are contributing to the costs of maintaining the police force in proportion to which they require police protection (that residents of dangerous

districts should pay more than those living in quiet zones)? Who would claim that the state ought to collect a contribution for public education expenses from every taxpayer in proportion to the number of their school-age children? Likewise, every citizen has the right to choose their place of residence, but who would say that they also have the right to determine how the administrative boundaries of their place of residence run, and which group will form the majority there? No individual has such an entitlement, neither (as we have seen) a minority member nor a person belonging to the majority.

Lastly, the existence of collective rights (in their liberal understanding) does not mean that the persistence and flourishing of the favored community are acceptable reasons for restricting the rights of the individuals belonging to it. Consider the following problem. The quota for starting minority classes is set at fifteen, but for years now only fourteen applicants have been turning up everywhere. In this situation, the state has (theoretically) the following options: take notice that there is no suitable demand for minority classrooms, or further reduce the quota for forming minority classrooms while increasing the financial contribution per pupil, or require the minority parents (all of them or only some, selected, for example, by means of a lottery) to enroll their children in the native-language classroom and thereby assure the continuance of the schooling. We should see that the second route cannot be pursued endlessly. Suppose, for the sake of simplicity, that attendance at the minority schools is not decreasing as a result of population decline, but because an increasing number of minority couples are sending their children to majority schools. The declining demand for minority schooling under such circumstances (assuming that the majority is not declining either) will be coupled with an increased demand for majority schooling. If the budget of the Department of Education cannot be expanded, then there will be increasingly sharp competition between the majority and

minority schools for state funding. The time may come when it is necessary to say that the ever increasing support for a dwindling minority education is becoming unfair, because it demands a disproportionately large sacrifice from the majority. This is the moment when the question arises as to whether the state can require minority parents to send their children to the native-language classroom. The illiberal interpretation of collective rights certainly allows this practice. The liberal interpretation, however, excludes it. The survival of the minority community is not an end in itself; it is a goal only as long as the individuals making up the minority so desire it. In reality, of course, it is always the case that some of the minority individuals desire it, but others do not: they strive to opt out of the community (while there are still others tending to opt in from an outside group). The common interest of those willing to remain (and those opting in) is sufficient reason for special support of the minority, as long as the necessary privileges do not weigh unjustifiably heavily on the outsiders. But the interest of those wishing to remain in the minority is not sufficient reason to *compel* those desirous of opting out to remain or to return. Use of coercion would mean that those wanting to opt out are being deprived of their freedom of choice of their own and their childrens' ethnic identity and culture in order to secure a viable community to those wishing to remain. But no one has the right to be surrounded by a sufficiently large number of others to form a viable community. No one can demand from the state that it treat those wishing to opt out as a mere *means* to the life plans of those wanting to stay. And, therefore, the liberal theory of ethnic relations includes a limiting case when the community disappears, not because it is exterminated, dispersed, or coerced to assimilate, but because there are no longer enough members willing to remain in it *given a fair distribution* of the resources which the state can mobilize to support individual choices favorable to the preservation of the community. Dropping below the critical threshold is a tragic loss for those

willing to remain, but the state could not save them from this tragedy without brutal violation of the rights of others.

Liberal multinationalism does not differ from liberal nationalism in that while the latter approves of assimilation under certain circumstances, the former rejects it under all circumstances and wishes to obstruct it at any price. The difference can be summarized in two points. First, liberal nationalism considers assimilation to the majority a political desert, a civic virtue, while liberal multinationalism considers it a private matter. And, second, the two concepts have different definitions as to what is a fair distribution of the resources which the state can mobilize, and when we can say that the state (or, through it, the majority) is not forcing the minority members to assimilate, that the instances of joining the majority are strictly voluntary. Liberal nationalism claims that the distribution is fair and, therefore, assimilation qualifies to be voluntary when the public and the private domains are neatly separated, when all individuals are subject to the same law, and when no group of individuals is privileged either positively or negatively by the state. Liberal multinationalism asserts that a fair distribution includes privileges conferred on minorities in order to countervail their structural disadvantages, that some of these privileges are to be allocated to collectivities, not directly to the members of these, and that, as a consequence, under conditions of fairness the private and the public cannot be separated by a clear-cut boundary.

Political Community in a Multicultural Society

We have come to the view that neither group-related rights in general nor specifically collective rights are in conflict with the basic principles of liberal policy. A co-nation state is possible which protects the freedom of the individual and his equality with the other citizens. But is it also possible for such a state to be a state of people who are in solidarity with each

other, and who are loyal to the public authority under whose jurisdiction they are living? Is a co-nation state possible whose citizens form a political community?

According to the nationalist doctrine, this is not possible. Only that the state can count on its subjects being loyal to it, come what may, whose subjects recognize each other as "their own" immediately, without no hesitation. The community of values of the political high culture is not enough for this natural identification; it must operate in everyday life. The co-nation state comprises several cultures of everyday life (language, customs), and, therefore, its subjects cannot become a single natural community.

We have reason to treat this argument with suspicion, since (as we have seen) discrimination against the minorities and the use of coercion in the interest of their assimilation follow from it. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that it has some intuitive force. Perhaps it will be of interest to begin by examining where it draws its strength of conviction.

Certainly not from the claim that an ethno-linguistic culture would identify an exclusive community of individuals from the outset, before any political constitution of this group would start, because this claim is simply not true. As already mentioned, that which is called a nation is really a secondary construction, the work of interpretation and transformation of the ethno-linguistic tradition. What makes the nationalist thesis believable at first sight is, in my opinion, that it is intermingled with two other statements which are indeed true but independent of it.

The first is as follows: those people who do not in the least understand each other's customs and manners cannot form a community. We can tolerate what is to us a foreign culture, one which we cannot decipher without very great efforts, but we cannot accept it as part of our own tradition. Here lies the lower threshold for the possibility of making a political community. Yet this true claim does not entail the nationalist thesis, according to which this threshold is set so high that only

the members of the same ethno-linguistic group are able, indeed, to form a political community. It is not true that the other culture can only become transparent to us if it is not another culture at all; it is not true that a community can only exist among people belonging to two different cultures if the two cultures are really one and the same.

Modern societies are held together by rationalized institutions: the marketplace and the various bureaucracies. Those cultures which are not able to adapt to this common institutional basis can at best continue to survive as a fossil. The culture of communities which are capable of forming large and complex societies contain, without exception, an enormous set of rules of market and bureaucratic behavior, customs, values, and practices. And the marketplace and bureaucracies bring and take goods and behavioral patterns from one culture to another. They form an extensive common subsoil on which diversity can thrive. The same occupational groups, the same consumer goods, the same technical skills, the same forms of impersonal contact govern them, whatever ethnic traditions are also present. The culture of every modern community incorporates this rationalized infrastructure and unavoidably models itself after it. Therefore, modern cultures for the most part are incomparably more transparent to each other than were the cultures prior to the modern age. The possibility of easy understanding is given even when there is no single common language, no single set of common customs and habits extending to everyone.

But if two cultures are transparent to each other, then a feeling of belonging together can emerge among their adherents. Under such circumstances, people can form a solidarity community with each other whether or not their language and basic customs are common, and, thus, whether or not they do immediately see (feel "instinctively") that they belong together. For what does it mean that the citizens of a state form a political community? It means that all of them consider the territory of the state their own homeland, the

legal system of the state their own institutions, the insignia of the state their own symbols—and not their exclusive homeland, institutions, and symbols, but such goods as are *jointly* shared with all of the other citizens. For this to happen, it is not necessary that they recognize each other as belonging together antecedently to the building of their common political house. The ideology, symbols, and historical remembrance of the nation state are only one among the possible cultural narratives in terms of which the members of a political community can select each other, can conceive of and comprehend their belonging together. It is not clear why systems offering ideological, symbolic, and historical orientation would not be possible when the citizens do not associate them with a single particular ethno-linguistic group.

Something like this was suggested by Jürgen Habermas when he wrote that the patriotism of the citizens of a modern democratic state should rest on loyalty not to their ethnic distinctiveness, but to the constitution: it should be a “constitutional patriotism” (1992, p. 642). What he was trying to say is that the common political good of the citizens in a linguistically and ethnically divided society is not the ethnic culture of one of them, but the constitutional arrangement which makes it possible for them to live together and which governs them in a justifiable way. In this conception—which is my view, too—the political community is a community of the whole citizenry, held together by common efforts to identify and to realize the principles of justice and the ideas of the common good.

Of course, support for a constitution does not exhaust the attitude called “patriotism.” Yet it is not the constitution as a set of articles which is the object of loyalty. The creation, consolidation, and development of the constitutional arrangements is a *historical process*, it emerges from the joint efforts of many groups of people, from coordinated actions which marked out the territory of the state and fashioned its internal order. The political community—whether or not tied to one

single nation—is the work of common tradition, common activities, common interpretation, and common remembrance (and forgetting). Every population which organizes itself into a political community goes through a series of political struggles and social changes, different from those which mark the story of every other population, to arrive at the system which they later defend as valuable and pledge to uphold and to develop further. The content of political values is universal and not dependent on the unique history of the state, and, therefore, once formulated at some time and place it can be propagated elsewhere by borrowing. In the successor states of the Soviet world system a multitude of duplicate constitutions were produced in a few year's time, some of them in the same workshop. But while the constitutional provisions can be copied, the individual history through which a state is formed, consolidated, and evolved cannot be. Those people who say of a history that it is "our own" are members of the same political community, provided they also mutually accept each other as belonging to "us." Their common good is made up by the political values accumulated in the process of their history, as well as the high culture through which they interpret and debate those values: create, revise, judge, and defend the stories of the past, determine and discuss the possibilities of future history, evaluate alternatives for action, state the risks of a collective decision, and work up the lessons of previous choices.

The political community becomes monocultural (a single-nation community) if it is created in competition and strife between ethnic groups living on the same territory in such a way that one group succeeds in taking possession of the state. The political community will be multicultural if it is formed from a union of ethnic groups living together. Its official symbols, holidays, its cultural goods handed down in school, and its historical remembrance will absorb something from the tradition of all the ethnic groups belonging to it, so that everyone can see that the state is also theirs; likewise, everyone

can see that the state is not their exclusive possession but is held jointly with the other ethnic groups forming it.

But this leads to another objection, which is the second statement lending intuitive force to the nationalist thesis. Perhaps the political community, if already existing, does not really need a common foundation of a single ethnic culture. But if it does not have one, there is scarcely any chance for it to emerge as a distinct entity. More likely the different groups will vie for the resources to be acquired through the state than that they will join together and divide them up. The advantages of excluding the competitors are so great that there is very little chance of a simultaneous choice of cooperation. The common history of the peoples is full of precedents of conflict and strife, which give rise to mutual suspicion and rejection instead of trust and acceptance. And there is no guarantee that a moment will come when the advantages of union are so apparent that they can forget the grievances of the past, a moment which would give the starting push toward the formation of a multicultural political community.⁷

This argument points toward the claim that the co-nation state strategy is not inconceivable, but neither is it a serious rival to the nation state strategy; like it or not, he who wishes to see his people successful must devise nationalist solutions. What is more, if the argument is valid, then the consequences are even more grave. We must, then, adopt the view that the multinationalist program (despite every good intention) is really a nationalist program, except that it does not aim at creating relatively large nation state entities, but instead at toppling the already existing structures and inducing a progressive fragmentation of the international state system. For it will attain nothing other than the breakup of the already existing political community, splitting the consciousness of the unified citizenry into competing ethno-political identities. This fear is one of the chief reasons for the opposition to multinationalism, no doubt about it.

But let us not be hasty in drawing the conclusion. In the two

centuries since the French Revolution, the nationalist strategy has doubtlessly had the upper hand over non-nationalist strategies, but these two centuries of nationalism were also a time of contiguity of sovereign states. In that world, where, apart from nation states of unlimited sovereignty, the international state system knew only examples of dynastic and colonial empires, it was a distinct advantage for any ethnic group to acquire exclusive control of the state (or to acquire a state over which to exert exclusive control), and this made it likely that conflict and strife would prevail over reconciliation and union. But the world of sovereign states is temporary; the future belongs to larger agglomerations where some of the sovereign powers are delegated to interstate bodies. This process has already made serious progress in the western and northern parts of Europe. The European Union has a parliament, it has a legal system, it has courts of law, it has a budget, and it will soon have its own currency. Territorial states are becoming an intermediate level (a very important level, but only one level) between the Union and the lower administrative units. Movement across borders is becoming unencumbered. The economic and political importance of regions transcending borders is growing.

The more articulated the state system becomes in the vertical and horizontal directions, the less true it is that any ethnic group will have a definite advantage in monopolizing control over the state. If, as a result of taking possession of the state without sharing it with other groups, there are significantly fewer chances of utilizing the possibilities which lie in the higher structures and regional integrations, then the advantage of national exclusivity may become a disadvantage. A more promising strategy is to aim at joint optimization of the advantages of the overlapping systems at the cost of not exploiting to a maximum degree one system as a sole possession.⁸ This is the non-nationalist strategy, the strategy of limiting conflict and exploiting the advantages which come from inter-ethnic cooperation.

In our region, only a small number of states are free of large groups of linguistic minorities (relative homogeneity, in these few cases, is the result of brutal readjustment of borders and extermination and expulsion of hundreds of thousands and millions). However, slightly scratching the surface even of these countries, we may also find that they are farther away from the ideal of the "one nation, one state" than they themselves are prone to believe. If it is true that the nation state strategy, identifying the political nation with one and only one of the ethnic groups instead of molding an ethnically divided people into a political community, divides it politically, then the limitation of sovereignty may improve the chance of forming true political communities on the state level. Slovaks and Hungarians, Romanians and Hungarians may more easily become partners in making their common political fatherland flourish if their states are not the exclusive sovereign over its territory.

Nineteenth-century Hungarian liberalism considered the national question within the perspective of an international system of sovereign states; Lajos Kossuth's Danubian Confederation belonged to the world of fantasy. Within this framework, the idea of the political nation was a generous offer, indeed, the most generous which a majority could produce. Not counting such actions as the Paris agreement of Laszlo Teleki and Adam Czartoryski on federalization of Hungary, which no one took seriously, only those could advocate something better—Istvan Szechenyi at the depths of his doubts and despairs, Jozsef Eötvös—at the height of his intellectual career—who did not see the Habsburg empire as a constraint imposed coercively on Hungarian sovereignty, but rather an advantageous framework within which the historical Hungary could be preserved without brutal discrimination and oppression of the nationalities. The concept of the political nation certainly offered the nationalities a broad realm of private life, where they could cultivate their distinctiveness in return for accepting Hungarian hegemony in public life. However, as the crisis of 1848-49 and then the catastrophe

after 1918 revealed, this proposal was not to be taken seriously from the standpoint of the nationalities, and not only because the Hungarian nationalities policy in practice was not in keeping with its rhetoric about the political nation; just as it would not be acceptable to the Hungarians living in the successor states (although it would create a situation in many respects better than the present one) if the majority there were to make the same proposal to them.

Prior to Trianon, rare intelligence was needed for a Hungarian politician to look beyond the program of the nation state, and those who had this unique capacity of mind would surely have found themselves isolated. Seventy-five years after Trianon, it no longer requires extraordinary abilities to recognize that the interest of the Hungarian nation involves breaking up the absolutism of the nation state model in our region.

For present-day Hungarian liberalism, it is a vital question whether this turn from nationalism to multinationalism can be carried out. The handling of the national question causes a serious identity problem for liberals, as witnessed by the debate unleashed by G.M. Tamás. It causes an identity problem not because the right wing Christian nationalists used to accuse liberals of being indifferent to and hostile against the cause of the Hungarian nation. This accusation does not interest the public opinion in this country; the voters consider the Hungarian liberal party to be a patriotic force. The handling of the national question causes identity problems for Hungarian liberals because our relationship to nineteenth-century liberal nationalism is not clarified. The internal contradictions of liberal nationalism disturb us, yet no serious effort has been made to transcend them. This is the chief lesson of the present debate.

My article tries to confront the difficulties which the national question causes for liberal political thought. Its thesis is that a national policy in harmony with the principles of liberalism is possible if, and only if, we choose a co-nation state over a nation

state, a multicultural political community over a political nation, the possibility of group-related (individual and collective) rights over the exclusivity of individual civil rights, and the European Union over the contiguity of sovereign states.

Of course, what we mean by the fundamental principles with which liberal national policy should conform is also a matter of debate. Therefore, as a first step, I have tried to see how the old liberals thought of the political reconciliation of freedom and equality, and to show what is wrong with this view in ethnically divided societies. I then tried to advance a more attractive and more readily defensible concept of the relation between freedom and equality, which I hope is tenable in light of our knowledge of the contemporary world and history. I then showed how we (Hungarian liberals of the end of the twentieth century) can answer the national question.

This article started from the debate unleashed by G.M. Tamás. His suggestion that the ethos of the democratic republic should be based on the nineteenth-century liberal concept of the political nation has deep roots in his thinking. Since the beginning of the regime change, Tamás keeps asserting that the new Hungarian liberalism must go back to the Hungarian nineteenth-century liberal tradition. I, since almost the same time, claim that the nineteenth-century liberal tradition is to be looked at with careful criticism, from the perspective of ulterior history. The difference is not rhetorical. As shown by the debate which has flared up around the issue of the political nation, return to the past is not the solution to the problem of contemporary Hungarian liberalism, but rather is part of the problem itself. Only a rethinking of the fundamental questions of principle can make clear what the sense in the new Hungarian liberalism ought to be, indeed, a continuation of the old.

Notes

¹ The Hungarian publicist, Peter Kende, proposes the title "Commonwealth State." See Kende, 1994, pp. 141-45; 1995, pp.

123–27. After some hesitation, I decided not to follow this intriguing usage, because the term “commonwealth” in the Hungarian language traditionally conjures up a coexistence of several (sovereign or not) states.

² The Lutheran Petofi supposedly once professed himself a Calvinist. “His acquaintances knew he was baptized a Lutheran, and awaited an explanation with surprise, and perhaps a bit of scorn. ‘I did not want to be taken for a Slovak because of my religion,’ he said, drily . . .” (Illyes, 1963, p. 33).

³ In the elegant formulation of Rudolf Ungvary: “Only one state is possible in a geographical location, and (if we want it to be a democracy) only one indivisible citizenry. But there can be several homelands on the same geographical territory, or in the same state . . . Szentendre is also Serbian homeland, whereas Transylvania, the southern part of the Hungarian Highlands, and the Temes country are also the Hungarian homeland. The Szentendre Serbian homeland is not the same as the Szentendre Hungarian homeland. While the homeland of the Transylvanian Hungarians is very different from the homeland of the Romanians or ethnic Saxons of Transylvania.” See Ungvary, 1996.

⁴ Cf. Mill, 1910, pp. 391–398. Mill’s optimism was bolstered by two additional assumptions. The first was the belief, shared by every progressist author of the past century, that the large peoples capable of expansion were at the same time bearers of a more advanced civilization, compared to the smaller peoples being absorbed by them, and therefore the assimilation of the latter was in itself a powerful evolutionary benefit. The second assumption was that if, by chance, the situation still did not correspond to this optimistic picture, the minority still could win a separate state for themselves. The two trends jointly lead to the supremacy of the nation state system.

⁵ This is the view, if I understand him correctly, of the Hungarian political scientist, Csaba Gombar. Cf. Gombar, 1994, 1995, for a response to his critics.

⁶ Two difficult technical problems result from this peculiarity of collective rights: first, how to define the boundaries of the collectivity in a non-arbitrary and non-coercive way, and, second, how to designate the body which can exercise the collective rights on behalf of the group. Since this article deals with questions of principle only, I can stop at this point. I do not need to delve into questions of technical detail.

⁷ The author of this article, in the magnificent winter of 1989–90,

hoped that the collapse of the Soviet world system would be such a moment (Kis, 1990). It soon turned out that this was not so; but it would also be wrong to say that nothing was brought forth.

⁸ The terrible counterexample of the disintegration of Greater Yugoslavia naturally comes to mind. It is important to think through why neither the European Union nor NATO were able to respond in time to the crisis of the Yugoslav Federation, and why they chose to recognize Slovenia and Croatia and then Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1991/92, instead of insisting on the preservation of something like a loose confederation. But the analysis of these lessons does not change the general direction which points toward larger and more articulated integration, nor does it alter the logic of national conflicts which this change brings about.

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