II. EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY

NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY

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According to a generally accepted conception, members of a nation foster their national identity through assorting their memories of the past, elaborating and preserving their symbols collectively. We have to look for the original unity forming the basis of national unity either in the cohesive force of common origin and residence, or in the self-conscious contracts of the individuals, or in both. The European Union as such does not have sovereignty; those of the Member States overrule its legislative and executive institutions. Perhaps we can speak about the European Union as a community on a cultural basis. This will raise the question of multiculturalism. Recently an interesting polemic has been developing on the concept and role of *Leitkultur*. In antiquity the Imperium Romanum, in the Middle Ages the Republica Christiana seem to have been the multicultural forerunners of the European Union.

Keywords: culture, Leitkultur, nation, sovereignty, state, union.

Certain individuals can be successful in performing such a common activity only if they have experienced some kind of togetherness beforehand. People who do not belong together will not assort memories of the past together, or elaborate or preserve their symbols or traditions collectively. Typical landmarks and expressions of identity like *I am Hungarian* or *I am Dutch*, which we naturally often encounter, must have some kind of a basis for the development of identity. Subjective cognate beliefs are also the facts that must be interpreted in accordance with this – however, an approach, whose sole objective is to register the data without trying to achieve any kind of interpretation, cannot be scientific. The demonstration of the belonging to one nation may well be the expression of a subjective cognate belief but it must be based on a previously developed common ground of unity or togetherness, which is closely connected to it.

According to Ferdinand Tönnies's theory (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft 1887), the family and the house(hold) are the basic patterns of any kind of organic community. Modifications and specific interrelations of these patterns then appear in the traditional types of communities like clans, tribes, nations or villages, towns, countries. In all these patterns of community, the comprehensive unity of which is secured by the common faith (of the folk) and the institutions of the clergy, it is the common origin and residence that represent the basis of the community. Humans according to Tönnies will however,

contact each other not only organically but also mechanically, so being able to develop an intelligent society in spite of the individuals originally being alien to one another. Their systems of interrelation can then be characterised with terms like market, civil society, or political state. This was the academic concept of all the theories regarding the "social contract" of modern history and is expressed in Georg Hegel's philosophy of law (Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts 1821: § 258). According to Hegel, the individuals who leave a family contact one another in the network of connections of the civil society, but only obtain their real rights and ethos through being members of that society, by which their unity becomes a contract regardless how exactly it came about. Not only did Hegel characterize the family as the cell of civil society that logically precedes the systems of connections forming in society (different relations exist of course within and outside the cell), but also he labelled any organic community resembling the family as one belonging to premodern actualities that come before modern civil society. This, however, was also known to Tönnies.

We have to look for the original unity forming the basis of national unity either in the cohesive force of common origin and residence, or in the self-conscious contracts of the individuals, or in both. In fact: in Tönnies it is the people and the country having specific cultural tradition, in Hegel the state having specific political independence that appear as nations observed from the outside. Friedrich Meinecke, however, unites the two abstract categories developing his theory on the difference and connection between the so-called culture-nation (*Kulturnation*) and nation-state (*Staatsnation*) (Meinecke 1907: 1–19; 20–35). According to Meinecke, nations in the first approximation can be conceptualised as big life-communities formed by history whose unity is secured by the common residence, origin or amalgamation, common language and spiritual life, and common state or political alliance. This does not, of course, mean that all nations should or could share all the characteristics enumerated above. Meinecke differentiates two basic types: the culture-nation on the one hand, in which the common basis is the common culture experienced collectively, and the nation-state on the other hand in which the common basis is the political constitution formed historically. Nevertheless, these two basic types can and will transform into each other. There are nations that have been both culture-nations and nation-states since the beginning (France and England). It may happen that the nation-state loses its independence and continues to exist as a culture-nation, like Poland at certain times, and there are culture-nations who successfully fight for the status of the nation-state like Germany or Italy. It very often depends on circumstances or conditions for a certain group of people to belong to a nation-state and who also want to belong to a different culture-nation (Meinecke 1907: 2–5). Thus we must agree with Ernest Renan, who, in connection with the Alsatians, argues that to secure the existence of a nation we symbolically need a referendum on a daily basis in his essay "Qu'est-ce q'une nation?" (1882).

According to Meinecke, both the nation-state and the culture-nation had a period of early development when the nation-state existed without any real content and the culture-nation was merely vegetating. The real development of the state took place when the framework of the nation-state had become impregnated with elements of culture

and those of the culture-nation had found their ways to become integrated in the institutions of the state. In this process the elements of the nation-state helped the development of the culture-nation and the values of the culture-nation facilitated the evolution of the nation-state. The concept of the nation, however, is a modern notion, the evolution of which is closely related to the development of modern individualism. Earlier the individual had been connected to premodern communities as Tönnies argues, but now the individual, as Hegel put it, became independent and needs community provided by the nation. In the end, Meinecke's theory suggests that the normal existence of a nation assumes the presence of both the nation-state and the culture-nation (Meinecke 1907: 12–14).

In our modern civil societies, the prevailing opinion is that the unity and the basis of a nation are determined by the common political institutions such as constitution and common political culture; while common origin and language, though very important, only contribute to them emotionally. Both factors have their significance: with a formulation of Immanuel Kant, emotions are blind without institutions and institutions are empty without emotions. Typical ideals of such concept of the nation are represented by Switzerland on the one hand and the US on the other because the Hegelian ideal of the political contract, which unites citizens on a moral basis, is best reflected in the constitutional existence and its spiritual reflections in these two countries.

This ideal has usually been referred to as *republicanism* since it was coined by the three paramount authors who signed their publications as "Publius" (or "The Federalist"). They confronted Jean Jacques Rousseau's "pure" democracy with the concept of representative democracy (*republic* or *commonwealth)* based on a kind of pluralism in the framework of which different interests – such as those of the federalist–regional – can be balanced in the constitution. The words *republic* and *republicanism* do not refer to a specific kind of government. These principles can also be effective in a constitutional monarchy, as the crown is the symbol of the nation's sovereignty (Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay used the pseudonym *Publius* to write their series of articles called *Federalist Papers*, 1787–1788; the above-mentioned differentiation can be read in Article 10). The authors had followed a very old tradition. Aristotle made a difference between the ideal political system of *politeia* (*res publica*) and the degenerated democracy. (It was only the malignant experience of the Hellenistic and Roman Caesarisms that resulted in the nostalgia towards the old system of democracy and it was Polybios who compared the by then positive term of democracy with the degenerated ochlocratia # mobocracy). That is why Dolf Sternberger and Jürgen Habermas kept emphasising that for Germany, which from the concept of culture-nation, fell into the cul-de-sac of racism and only through tremendous hardships managed to develop a true democracy, after the 2nd World War the only possible patriotism that did not create antagonism with the West was that of the constitution (*Verfassungspatriotismus*) (Habermas 1986).

Embarking on the investigation of European identity, I must emphasize, first, that being a European does not mean having European identity simply because one inhabits this continent. I am going to use the term *Europe* in the sense of European unity that is referring to the European Union (EU), which of course will at once state the question whether those European countries that are not Member States of the EU can be included

in the concept above. The answer is naturally *yes* and the application of the concept is only justified if all the founding members, recently accessed countries and potential candidates are equally understood when the concept of Europe is referred to. According to the well-known statement by General President Charles de Gaulle, which generated a geopolitical concept from a geographical commonplace, Europe spreads from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains. There are two countries in this area, Russia and Turkey whose being part of Europe is problematic due to their Asian commitments and influence. Russia, however, used to be the member of the system of the Republica Christiana in the Middle Ages just like Byzantium, which is commonly accepted by the intellectuals in Turkey as the forerunner of the present Turkish state. If, however, we want to conceptualize Europe as representative of the modern Western civilization – as it is quite common nowadays – it spreads from Vancouver to Vladivostok. So America must be considered part of such a "Great Europe", but then what about Russia and Turkey? Before answering the question, let us examine what features of the nation-state or national identity apply to the EU. In no way can the EU be regarded as a nation-state and it can be questioned whether she is a state at all. There is no denying that the EU has a well-defined territory with solid ground and confinable borders, as well as unique political characteristics. She has a customs union and common currency – though not valid in all Member States – of her own. She has her own Parliament and Constitution, though significantly different from the corresponding institutions of the Member States.

The EU as such does not have *sovereignty*; those of the Member States overrule her legislative and executive institutions. Although the Member States have dedicated some of their sovereignty to the Union, in practice they have kept its majority to themselves. We have known since Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes, however, that the most important attributive of a real state is its sovereignty. Sovereignty is the impelling force and animator by which "the great Leviathan" fills with life and without it the state is nothing but spiritless machinery. In fact, the EU is an association of several practically sovereign states. It is not a federation; its parliament or government does not overrule those of the Member States', as the *Bundestag* or the *Bundesregierung* does in the case of the different local governments in Germany. Their position is more similar to that of the central institutions of the 18th century confederations of Switzerland or the Netherlands, which were rendered to overrule without any existing power practically sovereign cantons or regions. For the time being, we cannot speak of a real political community, at least not in the definite sense, such as in the above-mentioned case of the existing political frameworks of the early nation-state. Here we can only speak about it relatively, as about a real political community whose formation is in progress.

Perhaps we can speak about the EU as a *community on a cultural basis*, as in the case of the culture–nation and its beginnings. Here again we have to face the question whether those nations, which have not yet gained accession to the union, could be segregated from the common cultural community of Europe. That is why we must speak about Europe as a cultural community in general first. Doing so we cannot avoid awakening memories of the Republica Christiana, which established itself into a Christian community originated in the ancient Greek–Roman traditions. The common faith of the Republica Christiana

functioned as a common religion of the peoples and gave a solid basis of a European cultural community to which the cultural communities of the member states can be compared. This concept had been so obvious for many that it was planned to be incorporated into the Preamble of the Constitution of the EU. In spite of all this, others, me included, have rejected this concept, instead arguing for a modified, secularised version. Europe had been "Christian" in a religious sense only in the beginning of its development, i.e. in the Middle Ages. Later, in the modern period, it could be called Christian only in an abs-tract, "cultural" sense. Furthermore, belonging to Christian culture did not necessarily mean (in the Middle Ages, too) the confession of the Christian faith or the following of its teachings even then. It could also represent a general social and cultural establishment, such as respect for organisation and forms of feudal state or scholastic science. Modern civil society and scientism have developed from feudal state and scholastic science. However, they have also acquired modified and disendowed forms of these, and in the comprehensive system of the Enlightenment this developed into a new European Christian culture.

The Christian character of the European culture does not necessarily mean that a good European – *ein guter Europäer* as Friedrich Nietzsche put it – would really believe in what they had learnt from the *Credo,* which they would have been able to recite with no difficulty, though. Those who think that Benedict de Spinoza and Voltaire, or Nietzsche and Karl Marx, or Martin Buber and Hannah Arendt – just to mention only a few – are not "good Europeans" because they are not believing Christians, well, they themselves can be, however, in no way in the modern, but only in a medieval sense like a Copt-Christian in Egypt or a Thomas-Christian in India. They are certainly Christians but have nothing to do with Europism. A Muslim, for example, a Bosnian living in Europe who does his best to acquire the modern spirituality of Europism will be a part of Europe not only geographically but spiritually as well. The condition of accession for Turkey is not that the faith of the population is to be Christian but how steadily its government secures the observance of human rights. This is a criterion for the "Christian" candidates – like Croatia – as well (and this refers to Russia, too). While medieval Europe can be defined and characterised with Christianity the modern one is defined and characterised by secularized Christianity and Enlightenment, above all the respect for human rights and democratic state governed by law.

This will raise the question of *multiculturalism.* How multicultural can Europe be? Recently an interesting polemic has been developing on the concept and role of *Leitkultur* (Göhler 2005: 312). It seems inevitable that the world and Europe in it can be or rather stay multicultural. There must exist some common spiritual cohesive force in a political formation as the example of nation-states that were not able to develop into a culture-nation too has taught us (Switzerland *vs.* Yugoslavia). The EU, as we have seen, is a confederation of sovereign nation-states that can develop into a federation in the future but unlikely to become a nation ever. At present, it resembles a nation-state that has its political frameworks but they are lacking necessary emotional content. Identification with the EU and common European consciousness can only develop to the extent to which the citizens of the Member States can feel and consider, through their immediate experiences, that the

EU is their real common home. If this takes place, the political frameworks and institutions which are rather unstable at present, will fill up with *emotional content* from both the citizens of the old and newly accessed Member States and the immigrants, provided they are offered real chances for integration perhaps only after several generations, and become more and more deep rooted and enduring. The cultivation of such common identity is impossible without the presence of *democratic publicity*. In antiquity the Imperium Romanum, in the Middle Ages the Republica Christiana seem to have been multicultural forerunners of the EU. The Imperium Romanum represented a political, the Republica Christiana a cultural formation.

In both, there existed a *Leitkultur* and its agency a *lingua franca*. At present, nobody knows which *lingua franca* will help to solve rather intricate problems of communication in Europe. *Leitkultur* in the European Union, nevertheless, must be based on the political and cultural traditions of Europism (Lepsius 1999: 218).

Conclusions

National identity has political and cultural grounds: not only a common state, but also a common language, a common history etc., i.e. the unity of the so-called "state nation" and the so-called "culture nation". The European Union has – at the moment – only political and economical grounds; and perhaps some historical grounds, too. The real European community and identity need also cultural grounds. The character of the Union is multinational and multicultural. But it is possible to have a "lingua franca" and a democratic publicity: so the European historical, cultural and political tradition can be the ground for European identity.

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TAUTINIS IR EUROPIETIŠKASIS TAPATUMAS

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Reikšminiai žodžiai: kultūra, *Leitkultur*, tauta, suverenitetas, valstybė, sąjunga.