

Nationalism and Minority Questions
in Central and Eastern Europe
in the Context of EU Enlargement

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Abstract

This article deals with minority questions in the Central and Eastern European countries that have concluded "association agreements" with the European Union. The author discusses the extent to which these applicant countries fulfil the EU's requirements for the protection of minority rights (one of the so called Copenhagen criteria). She furthermore argues that the engagement of the EU in minority questions in Eastern Europe has had an impact on the minority politics in the existing EU member countries. The article contains an analysis of the historical factors behind the sensitivity of national minority questions in Central and Eastern Europe and the character of nationalism in the region. The author discusses how the specific historical experiences of the applicant countries influence their view today about European integration.

Nationalism and Minority Questions in Central and Eastern Europe in the Context of EU Enlargement

At the beginning of the 1990's the EC/EU concluded "Association Agreements" with a number of Central and Eastern European countries. This was interpreted as a sign of the EU's readiness to enlarge the organisation in future, to include that part of Europe which during several decades of the 20th century had been isolated behind the "Iron Curtain". The beginning of the 1990's was however not only a "time of hope" in Central and Eastern Europe - it was also a time of anxiety when a number of long submerged ethnic and national conflicts welled up to the surface. Czechoslovakia divided. So too did Yugoslavia, and in this latter case it led to long drawn-out and bloody wars. These events caused the political élite in the EU to realise that a possible EU Enlargement might entail the risk of "importing" ethnic trouble-spots and border conflicts. The war in Yugoslavia was a warning signal which obliged the EU, OSCE and Council of Europe to become more closely engaged in national minority questions. At the EU Summit in Copenhagen in 1993, which formulated the criteria the applicant countries would have to meet in order to become EU Members (known as the "Copenhagen criteria"), respect for human rights and the protection of national minorities were mentioned as an important requirement. In 1995 the Balladur Plan, directed towards the future applicant countries, was formulated. Its objective was to put pressure on the Central and Eastern European states proposing to seek EU Membership to conclude bilateral treaties with their neighbours and thereby to solve their border and national minority problems. There was also a series of initiatives from the Council of Europe. In 1992 the Council of Europe (of which most Central and Eastern European states are now members) adopted the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, and in 1995 the Framework

Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. These Conventions apply in all members of the Council of Europe. In addition the OSCE (the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) established the special post of High Commissioner for National Minorities, whose task was to watch over the rights of national minorities in Europe. All of this indicates that the question was accorded high priority.

What results have been achieved through these efforts? What is the situation of national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe today? In view of the limited scope of this article there is no space here to give a detailed account of current ethnic relations in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. In this presentation I will therefore limit myself mainly to those countries in Central and Eastern Europe which have begun negotiations for accession to the EU in the so-called “fast track”, that is to say those at the head of the queue for a future EU Enlargement. The countries in question are Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia. I shall also partially touch on the situation in the remaining Central and Eastern European states which have applied for EU membership: Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

1 National Minorities in Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Baltic States

Descriptions of the ethnic situation in a given country normally begin with statistics about the size of the various ethnic groups. That is a logical enough way of proceeding, provided one is clear about the traps lurking in any statistics of that kind. No statistics about national minorities should be accepted uncritically. That is not only because that type of information is not infrequently falsified, or is produced under duress when census returns are collected. There are also many other obstacles in the way of reliable statistics of national minorities, for example those built into the classification system on which a census is based. Since censuses are conducted by Governments, the state in question controls the choice of criteria to be applied in ethnic classification. This creates great scope for all kinds of manipula-

tion. Depending on whether, for example, the criterion chosen for determining ethnic membership is “native tongue”, or “the language most frequently used”, or religion, different results can be obtained and in that way particular groups can be made to appear, or not to appear, in the statistics. Roma (Gypsies) and Jews, for example, scarcely figure in the statistics of Poland and Hungary, since they generally give Polish or Hungarian, respectively, as their mother tongue. Whole ethnic groups can in that way disappear. The state can however also promote or recommend particular ethnic identifications during the collection of census data, by allowing people to choose from a range of ethnic categories determined from above. In that way a number of different objectives can be achieved. One is to promote the emergence of new nations, which can be brought off successfully as was the case with the Macedonian nation in Yugoslavia, or the Moldovan nation in the former Soviet Union. Another objective can be to try to blend two national groups into one, as happened for example between the Wars as regards “Czechoslovaks” or “Serbo-Croats” and “Yugoslavs”. A further goal which can be achieved by letting people choose between the categories determined by the authorities is to break larger national minorities down into smaller groups in order to make those minorities appear numerically weaker and thereby to reduce their political significance. An example of this is the proposal by the Romanian authorities to divide the Hungarian minority into Szeklers, Csangos and Hungarians.

It should however be observed that even if the statistics on national minorities are based on information freely declared by individuals, that is to say on the individuals’ subjective experience of their own identities, there can be surprisingly wide fluctuations in the statistics. People living in culturally mixed border areas can often be unclear about their identity and can change their perception. In that way, for example, the number of “Germans” in Polish Silesia can jump from approximately 150,000 to one million, or the number of Gypsies in Kosovo from a few thousand to 600,000.¹ All this should be borne in mind when considering ethnic statistics. André Liebich, a political scientist specialising in questions of national minorities, and the author of a very interesting article entitled “Counting and Classifying Minorities”, rightly pointed out that “Minority Rights begin with the right to be counted, the right to appear in the statistics”.²

1.1 Poland

Because of the population losses, enforced migrations and boundary changes which occurred during and after WWII, Poland today is a relatively homogeneous country, with minorities totalling approximately 5% of the population as a whole (approx. 39 million). The biggest minority groups are the Germans (300,000 - 800,000), Ukrainians (approx. 300,000), Belorussians (approx. 250,000) and Kashubians (approx. 200,000). In addition there are a relatively small number of Gypsies (approx. 30,000), Ruthenians (approx. 30,000), Lithuanians (20,000), Slovaks (20,000), Jews (approx. 15,000) and Czechs (2,000). The statistics greatly vary, *inter alia* because they are not based on any census (none has been conducted in the last decade) but on estimates by the Polish Ministry of Culture.³

The most difficult to estimate is the number of Germans because they are a minority whose very existence was not acknowledged until 1989, i.e. after the collapse of Communism. After WWII it was decided that virtually all Germans should leave Polish territory and move to Germany. Many inhabitants of Silesia, the Polish-German border region, elected to declare Polish nationality to avoid compulsory transfer. It was not particularly difficult for them since the inhabitants of Silesia, a typical frontier people who had occupied a multi-cultural region for centuries, have always had an indistinct, "fluid" national identity, often described as a "schweibendes Identität". However, the Polish authorities' attitude of suspicion towards them, together with the difficult living conditions in Communist Poland, led many inhabitants of Silesia to regret their decision to remain in Poland. They again began to identify themselves with Germany. Numbers of them emigrated and were able to obtain German citizenship without difficulty on the basis of the German law according to which all those who had German citizenship before 1945 and their *descendants* (the "blood" principle) had the right to regain it. But many of those who remained in Poland also began after 1989 openly to identify themselves as Germans. When Germany was re-unified and signed a treaty with Poland on the inviolability of their frontiers, the Polish Government recognised the German minority. In the 1991 German-Polish Treaty on Good Neighbourliness, Partnership and Cooperation, Poland guaranteed the rights of the German minority. The emergence of the "new" minority aroused anxiety at the beginning of the 1990's and also certain tensions among the population

groups in Silesia.⁴ Today, at the beginning of the 2000's, the atmosphere is calm. The German minority are among the most active minorities in the country. Since 1991 they have been represented in the Polish Parliament and have well-developed and active political parties and national associations. They receive financial and political support from Germany. By no means all of their demands have been met (not, for example, their demand for regional autonomy), but many are well on the way to being solved (such as their demand for dual citizenship).

The Polish constitution of 1997 guarantees the rights of national minorities and the Parliament is in the process of elaborating a special law on the national minorities. Poland has signed special border agreements with all her neighbours, which guarantee the inviolability of frontiers and establish the principle of reciprocity as regards the treatment of national minorities. By that means Poland wishes to protect the rights of the Polish minorities in the neighbouring countries. There are approximately 30,000 Poles in Slovakia, 60,000 in the Czech Republic, 250,000 in Ukraine, approx. 300,000 in Belorussia and roughly the same number in Lithuania. In general it can be said that in its treatment of minority questions Poland observes all the Agreements it has entered into. At the same time there is no sign that Poland wishes to promote multi-culturalism. The national minorities have "individual rights", by means of which every individual has the right to maintain and develop his/her language, culture and so on, but there is no discussion of the minorities' "collective rights", such as that of "positive discrimination" in favour of all who belong to a given ethnic group.⁵ It is the majority population which wholly characterises the state. This finds expression in for example the 1999 law on language which declares Polish to be the only official language in the country and which imposes a linguistic purism in public life in order to diminish the influence of foreign languages (including English) on Polish.

1.2 The Czech Republic

Like Poland, the Czech Republic is a relatively homogeneous state, with national minorities forming less than 10% of the total population (approx. 10 m.). The Germans, who before WWII were the largest minority, disappeared almost completely as a result of the expulsions which were com-

pleted in 1948. Today, between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants of the Czech Republic declare themselves to be Germans. In addition there are 60,000 Poles, 20,000 Hungarians, 5,000 Jews plus approximately 300,000 Slovaks and a roughly equal number of Gypsies.⁶ In the 1990's the German minority was boosted with support from the re-unified Germany. They are well treated though with a certain suspicion founded not only in historical memory, but also because this group supports the demands by Sudeten Germans living in Germany for "Heimatrecht", i.e. the right to compensation for the property confiscated from them in 1948, for the right to settle in the Czech Republic, and so on.⁷ A large, but silent, minority in the Czech Republic are the Slovaks who are particularly exposed to pressure to assimilate, given their cultural and linguistic proximity to the Czechs. In general, however, the Czechs' relations with minority peoples can be considered good, with one exception - the Gypsy People. In Communist Czechoslovakia during the period 1948-65 the Gypsies were refused all recognition as a separate ethnic group and in addition there was discrimination against them by the authorities (in 1958 they were forbidden to travel).⁸ In the Czech Republic they are recognised as an ethnic minority and discrimination is forbidden in law. The Czech citizenship law of 1994 was, however, criticised by many international actors as being discriminatory and directed against the Roma. It provided that people with criminal convictions could not become Czech citizens. It was 5 years retroactive in effect, i.e. people could be refused the right to citizenship on the grounds of crimes committed before the law was enacted. In that way many Gypsies were deprived of the right to Czech citizenship and became stateless. Under pressure from the international community the law was toned down, but the Gypsy minority is still very exposed. Its problems remain unsolved in the Czech Republic, Hungary or Romania where they comprise major groups.⁹ It is a politically and socially sensitive question which one day may put the democratic system in these countries to the test.

1.3 Hungary

In Hungary the national minorities comprise less than 10% of the total population (of approx. 10 m.). There are many of them, but they are small and hence politically weak. Most of the minority groups do not exceed

10,000 members. There are, however, several larger groups, among them being Croats (approx. 60,000), Slovaks (30,000 - 100,000), Germans (65,000 - 150,000), Jews (80,000 - 100,000) and Gypsies (400,000 - 800,000). Hungary has the most generous policy towards minorities in Eastern Europe, with "collective" minority rights, cultural autonomy and generous financial support for the minorities organisations. However, the motive behind this policy is quite transparent. In the neighbouring countries beyond Hungary's borders live some 3 million Hungarians, and the Hungarian Government expects its policy to be reciprocated by an equally generous treatment of the Hungarian minorities in Romania, Serbia, Ukraine and Slovakia. It is explicitly stated in the Hungarian Constitution that the Hungarian Government is responsible for Hungarians resident abroad, and the Prime Minister of Hungary declared early in the 1990's that he was the spiritual leader of all Hungarians beyond the country's borders.¹⁰ All this is regarded with great suspicion by Hungary's neighbours, particularly by Romania and Slovakia who remember Hungarian revisionism in the period between the Wars. This revisionism resulted in Hungary's annexation, with the support of Nazi Germany, of the Hungarian-inhabited territories in Romania and Slovakia which were not relinquished until after Germany's defeat in WWII. Today some 2 million Hungarians live in the Romanian province of Transylvania which for historical reasons is of importance to the Hungarian national identity and legendary among Hungarians in general.¹¹ In addition there are about 600,000 Hungarians in Slovakia where they comprise some 10% of the population. The Hungarian minorities in Hungary's neighbouring countries live closely concentrated together, are well organised and make claims to autonomy, both cultural (in Slovakia) and territorial (in Romania). They are dissatisfied with their situation and will not content themselves with the "individual" minority rights which Slovakia and Romania guarantee them.¹² In view of the large number of people involved in these minority disputes and their close connection with border questions the international organisations had long urged Hungary and Slovakia on the one hand, and Hungary and Romania on the other hand, to conclude bilateral agreements and to guarantee the frontiers and the rights of minorities. Agreements were reached between Hungary and Slovakia in 1995, and between Hungary and Romania a year later. However, the future of these Treaties may be considered uncertain, since the parties to them have different interpretations of Council of Europe Rec-

ommendation no. 1201 to which the Treaties refer.¹³ The Hungarians maintain that the Recommendation implies a guarantee of *territorially* based minority rights, including territorial autonomy. Such an interpretation is unacceptable to both the Slovak and Romanian Governments. The Treaties have thus not solved the problems. On the positive side, however, the parties to them show willingness to negotiate and to find a peaceful solution satisfactory to all.

1.4 Slovenia

The minorities in the tiny country of Slovenia (approx. 1.9 m. inhabitants) are mostly small and divided, numbering a few thousand each. The groups of political significance are the Italians, and Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs (i.e. Muslims from Bosnia). While it is true that the first-mentioned are only about 3,000 in number, they are economically important and enjoy the support of the Italian Government. This support applies also to the claim for restitution made by the Italians who were driven out of Slovenia in 1945 and who were stripped of their property. Slovenia responds by referring to the inadequate minority protection afforded, according to the Slovenian Government, to the large Slovenian national minority in Italy. It numbers about 60,000 and by Italian yardsticks is so small that is of local political importance only. A potential problem for Slovenia is presented by the “post-Yugoslav” minority, i.e. Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs, mainly refugees from the Balkan wars, now totalling about 150,000. To avoid conflicts in future the OSCE is urging Slovenia to devise a system for the political representation of the national minorities.¹⁴

1.5 Estonia and the other Baltic States

The Baltic States, which regained their independence in 1991, are significantly more multi-national than the other EU applicant countries. In Lithuania the minorities make up about 19% of the total population of 3.7 million, in Estonia 37% (of 1.6 million) and in Latvia 47%, i.e. almost half the 2.7 million inhabitants.

In Lithuania Russians and Poles are the most numerous minorities (with, respectively, 350,000 and 260,000). During the early years after Lithuania regained independence there were a number of conflicts and tensions between the Lithuanians and the Polish minority. The Lithuanians regarded the Polish minority as an unreliable political force and endeavoured, by means of changes in the administrative structure, to deprive the Poles of local administrative rule in the areas where they are settled.¹⁵ There was also opposition to their cultural demands. However, during the second half of the 1990's the two sides struck a number of compromises and the situation became calmer. The Russian minority, on the other hand, appear content with their situation in Lithuania, perhaps because they compare it with that of the Russian minorities in the other Baltic States. Whereas the Russians settled in Lithuania were automatically offered Lithuanian citizenship after the Republic had seceded from the disintegrating Soviet Union, the Russians in Estonia and Latvia were confronted with very restrictive citizenship laws. In accordance with them, only those who had been citizens of Estonia and Latvia in the inter-war period, and their descendants, could become citizens of these re-born states. Everybody else had to apply for citizenship which was granted only if they met certain conditions, including a lengthy residence qualification, and passed advanced language examinations in, respectively, Estonian and Latvian. Most Russians were unable to pass the language test during the greater part of the 1990's. They thereby became stateless and were deprived of political influence in states where they comprised more than a third of the population. Despite the Estonians and Latvians' arguments that the Russians had come to the Baltic as occupiers and therefore could not automatically acquire citizenship the international community was not prepared to accept this "ethnocracy".¹⁶ During the 1990's the OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities made many journeys to the Baltic and Russia to mediate in the conflict between Estonia and Latvia on one hand, and the Russian minorities there plus Russia (which defended its fellow-countrymen) on the other hand. To put pressure on Estonia and Latvia, Russia declined to ratify the border agreements with these countries, which heightened the tension in the region. In the end the EU made modifications of the restrictive citizenship laws a condition for opening negotiations with Estonia and Latvia on accession to the EU. The laws were relaxed as regards the length of the required period of residence (Latvia) and the right to citizenship for chil-

dren born of stateless parents resident in Estonia and Latvia.¹⁷ The citizenship question is gradually being solved, as Russian-speakers learn Estonian and Latvian to meet the language requirements of the citizenship laws. There is nonetheless reason to believe that the national antagonisms are not thereby disappearing, but are assuming another character. As more and more Russians in Estonia and Latvia acquire citizenship of these countries, there is growing anxiety among the Balts that the Russians will form ethnic parties, develop into a politically significant force and exploit the democratic system to demand that these countries should become bi-national and bi-lingual. That is today wholly unacceptable to the Estonians and Latvians who wish to assert themselves as nations and make up for the years of Soviet and Russian oppression. The question is whether they can succeed in preventing such a development and at the same time preserve the democratic system. It is their great challenge for the future.

1.6 Differences and similarities between the countries in the region.

The picture of the national minorities' situation in Central and Eastern Europe is differentiated. While Hungary conducts a very minority-friendly policy, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia take a fairly neutral position, Lithuania tries to find a "modus vivendi" with the minorities, and Estonia and Latvia quite clearly pursue an assimilationist policy. At the same time there are also differences between the situation of various minorities in one and the same country. The Germans and the Jews have a relatively good standing thanks to the support of the Western world. Those minorities which in general can count on backing from their "home countries", for example Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia, or Poles in Ukraine, Belorussia and Lithuania, have a certain political weight which they can exploit. The politically weak are those minorities which are small and lack a "protector", for example the Ruthenians in Poland and Slovakia. The Gypsy minority in Central and Eastern Europe is both the largest and the most exposed. Contrary to the deeply rooted stereotype in Western Europe of the great ethnic variety in Eastern Europe, most of the countries described above have quite small minorities.¹⁸ Of the Eastern European states now negotiating accession to the EU only the Baltic States and Bul-

garia are truly multi-national, with minorities comprising about a quarter (Lithuania and Bulgaria) or more than a third (Estonia and Latvia) of the total population. In the remaining countries, namely Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary the minorities do not even exceed 10% of the population (and in Romania they are just over 10%). There are countries in Western Europe which have significantly greater ethnic variety. Why then do minority questions weigh so heavily in Central and Eastern Europe and in its relations with the West? The reason is not the size of the minorities but the attitude of the majority populations to the minorities. They are seen namely as a potential threat to the identity of the majority population. To understand this and to obtain any insight at all into the significance of identity questions in Central and Eastern European politics, one must go back in history and examine the roots of today's political behaviour. In what follows I will indicate the factors that influenced the processes of nation-building and nationalism in Eastern Europe, and determined the region's specific development in relation to Western Europe.

2 The development of nationalism and the nations in Central and Eastern Europe

In Western Europe it is common to equate the concepts "state" and "nation". We see that in the case of certain international organisations such as the "United Nations" which, despite its name, is a union of states, not nations. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, there is a profound awareness of the distinction between the concepts "state" and "nation". That is because the emergence of most nations in Eastern Europe preceded the emergence of the modern states in the region, whereas in Western Europe the process was often the converse. The modern nations in the West were created within territorial states which had already emerged in mediaeval times, and though their boundaries were certainly modified in the passage of time they were never radically altered. In the West nationalism was a centripetal force which reinforced the already existing states and hastened the homogenisation of Western societies. In the East, on the other hand,

modern nationalism proved to be a centrifugal force. The modern nations in this region were created not through integration within the existing states but through the disintegration of these states into smaller units based on separate ethnic and cultural communities. This process was the result of a mass of factors combining together to determine the development of the region.

2.1 National political factors

In the Middle Ages there developed in Central and Eastern Europe, as in Western Europe, a number of territorial states. For many centuries two large monarchies were dominant in the region: the Hungarian and the Polish-Lithuanian. Whereas the states in Western Europe established quite powerful authority within relatively stable territories, in Eastern Europe development went in the opposite direction. The Hungarian state collapsed after 1526 when the Turks annexed large parts of the country and the rest of Hungary became a part of the Habsburg Empire. The Polish-Lithuanian state still flourished in the 16th century but was decidedly weakened during the recurring wars of the 17th and 18th centuries, until it finally disappeared from the map of Europe in 1795. The country was divided among the neighbouring states of Russia, Prussia and the Habsburg Empire. The fall of Hungary and Poland had major consequences for the future processes of nation-building in this region. In both Poland and Hungary there were élites consisting of a nobility which identified itself with the state (respectively, Poland and Hungary) and which bore within it the idea of the state. In Poland the nobility called itself the *Natio Polonica* and in Hungary the *Natio Hungarica*. They were not nations in the modern sense since they were socially limited (comprising only the nobility), but they can be seen as the embryo of modern nations with a potential to develop into them. In that way, integration processes had begun in these states which were similar to the processes in Western Europe. The military aggression of neighbouring states interrupted those processes. What was the consequence? When modern national ideas and nationalisms were born in the 19th century in connection with increasing modernisation and democratisation the *Natio Polonica* and *Natio Hungarica* were bereft of states of

their own and their continued process of nation-building had in consequence to take place without them. The memory of the quite recently lost states and institutions meant that the Hungarian and Polish-Lithuanian élites could not identify themselves with the imperial powers (Russia and Habsburg). Both the Hungarian and the Polish élite questioned the legitimacy of the state authorities to which they were subject. Moreover these élites began to compete with the imperial powers for loyalty and support from other ethnic groups living within the empires on the territories which were previously part of, respectively, Poland-Lithuania and Hungary. In this tug-of-war many ethnic groups elected to formulate their own national ideologies and to proclaim the existence of their own nation (e.g. Slovak, Romanian, Ukrainian), on the basis of their own language and ethnic culture. Different national cultures confronted one another – the political (which was proclaimed by the peoples dominating the empires: Germans, Russians and élites with state authority traditions from the past, such as Poles and Hungarians) and the ethnic. In these circumstances the empires were incapable of integrating their population into nation-states and gradually declined towards the collapse which culminated during the First World War.

During the peace negotiations at the end of WWI the attempt was made to repair the incongruence between state and nation in Eastern Europe, by taking into account the new ethnic nations' right to self-determination, but it did not meet with success. The states that emerged in East Central Europe after WWI contained large minorities whose loyalty they had difficulty in winning. They were moreover threatened by the demands of neighbouring states for boundary revisions which materialised in 1938 (Czechoslovakia) and 1939 (Poland). The people of Hungary, in turn, suffered from the trauma of the 1920 Treaty of the Trianon, as a consequence of which Hungary had lost about 2/3 of its territory, and a third of the Hungarian-speaking people ended up within the territorial boundaries of neighbouring states. This situation in Central Europe reinforced ethno-national defence mechanisms. The politicians in these countries could continually mobilise the population ideologically with the aid of nationalistic slogans.

WWII brought new upheavals. The frontiers in Eastern Europe were re-drawn once more and there was extensive population transfer and ethnic cleansing. During the years of the Communist régime which followed,

the pressure for homogenisation increased in most of the states affected. National minorities were marginalised, while both the state authorities (despite lip-service to so-called internationalism) and the opposition had recourse to nationalistic slogans to mobilise the population politically.¹⁹

In summary, it can be observed that the historical development in Central and Eastern Europe was characterised by the lack of continuity in the processes of state-building and by radical changes in the territorial status of the states. The emergence of modern nations in this region came before that of modern nation-states, and when the latter finally came into being they found themselves for long periods under constant threat. The congruence between state and nation was imperfect. The existence of the nation-state has therefore never been taken for granted in Central and Eastern Europe in the way that it has in the West. On the contrary, the nation-state is seen as desirable, but fragile, weak and exposed, a goal and a value in itself which requires protection.

2.2 Socio-economic factors

Until the beginning of the 20th century the social and economic divides largely coincided with linguistic, ethnic and religious differences. The majority of Slovak or Romanian speakers, for example, belonged to the peasant class, while the landowners spoke Hungarian. The same relationship existed between Ukrainians and Poles in Galicia, and this structure could be found in many places in the region. Socio-economic conflicts could in that way fuel national conflicts. It was because the processes of democratisation and the elimination of inequalities in the long antiquated empires of Central and Eastern Europe were late and slow, that ethno-nationalism became a weapon in the struggle for social, economic and political emancipation. National ideologues could re-interpret social and economic conflict as a national antagonism. That gave the nationalist movements a particular force which could be drawn from the strong feelings of hate, envy and impotence which were aroused by the injustices and economic oppression they had experienced. The memory of these injustices and conflicts was preserved in the historiography and other cultural products (e.g. folk-songs, proverbial expressions, literature, art, films and so on) of the

various peoples, and can still be used today to mobilise opinion against the “eternal enemies”.

2.3 Socio-psychological factors

The above-mentioned “ressentiment” facilitated the demarcation separating these peoples from those against whom such feelings were directed (e.g. the Hungarian, Polish and German “gentry”). In the mid-19th century, when the ideology of equality and democratic ideas took root in Eastern Europe, assimilation into the culture of the dominant group (“the gentry culture”) became an ever less attractive alternative even if, rationally seen, it could provide an easier path to social advancement. Instead it became important for many ethnic groups to accord a higher value to their language and culture, to make them equal in status to the language and culture of the dominant group. By making sympathetic use of the culture and language of the ordinary people, the national ideology gave those who felt themselves humiliated and exploited a new self-respect drawn from the collective national identity which had been created.²⁰ There arose a great need for self-assertion, while the well-established national groups which wanted to assimilate various ethnic groups were felt to be a threat to the relatively newly created ethno-national identities. The feelings of insecurity grew in strength and gave rise to defensive attitudes and suspicion towards “the others”. These negative attitudes and emotions became still more profound during the first half of the 20th century after the Empires had fallen and during the struggle, over territories and states, between different ethnic groups. To cool these inflamed nationalistic emotions the states and nations in this part of Europe would have needed a longer period of democratic development free from security-policy threats, but that was denied them throughout the 20th century. It must be hoped that these conditions may at last be met in the new democratic Europe that is on the road to integration.

2.4 Demographic factors

When the modern processes of nation-building began in this part of Europe the ethnically highly mixed population was divided among several multi-national Empires: the Russian Empire, the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire. These Empires were incapable of providing an ideological foundation for the creation of nation-states in the region. The dominant peoples in them (Russians, Germans, Turks) were at a disadvantage demographically. They were weaker in number and in the matter of status they faced a certain degree of competition from, for example, Poles and Hungarians, who belonged to the élite but also had their own, different, concepts of the nation. There was thus no ethnic group which self-evidently enjoyed greater demographic strength and ethno-linguistic vitality than the others, and which could thereby establish its own concept of the nation as the sole supreme.

2.5 Cultural factors

The political and national dividing lines in Central and Eastern Europe did not come about with the state as the point of departure but with ethnic cultures as their basis. Culture became a store of national markers and symbols when the national identities were constructed. The function of culture became to create and preserve national identity, to define what is “ours” and what is “theirs”. As a result culture became highly politicised. In an ethnically highly mixed area it is, however, often difficult to draw boundaries between different cultures, and that was also the case in the East-Central European region. For example, the Slavonic languages in the area form a continuum of dialects in which it is very difficult (if not impossible) to say where one language ends and another begins. For example, even today many Russians will maintain that Belorussian is a dialect of Russian, Bulgarians that Macedonian is a dialect of Bulgarian, and so on. The identity markers are therefore imprecise and many individuals can have ambivalent identities, hesitating for example to identify themselves as Czechs or Slovaks, Poles, Lithuanians or Belorussians. That has always disturbed the national ideologues and political leaders in the area, and led to a

strong fixation on such national symbols as language or religion, and on the concept of “national culture” in general. “National culture” is seen in the East European perspective as a beleaguered fortress under siege which must constantly be reinforced and defended. This fixation is a sign of insecurity as regards the strength of one’s own national identity and culture. It explains why the minorities’ cultural demands, such as for bi-lingual signs or the right to use their own language locally in contact with the authorities, can arouse such strong opposition on the part of the majority population. The conviction that the majority population’s culture is threatened and requires compensation for past injustices leads in certain cases to imperative demands that the minorities must be assimilated. Examples of this are to be seen today in Estonia where a knowledge of Estonian is an inescapable condition of citizenship and opportunities to participate fully in social and economic life.²¹ In the national cultures of Central and Eastern Europe there are embedded defence mechanisms for the identities of the different nations. These national cultures developed in circumstances which were interpreted as threatening and as a result they were imbued with a sense of the impending threat. We therefore find in them many expressions of defensive attitudes, inferiority complexes, negative stereotypes and hostile images. These cultures, which have a bias towards creating cohesion within an ethnic group, are also exclusive. Groups and individuals who do not share the culture in question automatically find themselves outside the national communities. They become undesirable minorities whom the dominant group regard with suspicion because they (the dominant group) bear memories of the conflict-filled past and feel themselves threatened or insecure.

2.6 The “demonstration effect”

A well-known phenomenon, which has been noted by a number of experts on nationalism, is the fact that nations in the building-process spurred on one another and adopted action models from each other. This is usually called the “demonstration effect”.²² Even those who had been the opponents during the nation-building process could serve as ideological prototypes and action models. The German definition of the nation as a com-

munity based on language and culture was especially influential in Central and Eastern Europe. The Czechs in particular were fascinated by the German example and made use of it in competition with German culture in Bohemia. But the German model was also attractive to the Poles, the more so when it resulted in the emergence of a unified German state.

The success of the Czech national movement was admired in turn by small nations in embryo - the Slovak, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Belorussian. Many small nations followed the Czech model of national development in two phases.²³ The first, the cultural phase, witnessed the codification of the language and its establishment as a national symbol, the creation of literature in that language, the construction of national history, and the propagation and diffusion of national ideology. Then came the second phase - the political - in which political demands were advanced, national parties were formed and efforts were made to mobilise the broad masses of the people in the pursuit of national goals.

The importance of the “demonstration effect” should not be ignored in the future national development in Central and Eastern Europe or in Europe in general.

3 The consequences for national minority questions of Central and Eastern Europe’s specific national development

The historic development in Central and Eastern Europe has resulted in a lack of congruence between nation, defined in ethnic terms, i.e. an ethno-nation, and state. At the same time, congruence between the two is seen as an ideal by the peoples in the area. This is a source of frustration for the dominant peoples. They consider that their states are not completely developed nation-states, and that they are therefore weak and exposed. This is a conflict-generating situation. It can be described as a kind of “triangle drama” which, according to Roger Brubaker, is played out between three actors: nationalising states, national minorities (in these states) and external homelands (the minorities’ homelands).²⁴ Nationalising states are those which

see themselves as incomplete nation-states and strive to become complete. National minorities for their part seek the majority population's recognition of their separate ethno-cultural identity, together with particular cultural and political rights founded on this separate identity. At the same time they seek recognition as full members of the ethno-nation which forms the core of their external homelands, the protection of those homelands and sometimes also dual citizenship. External homelands tend in their turn to assume responsibility for their "ethnic brothers" in the neighbouring countries and to treat them as a part of their own nation. They support the minority organisations and their claims to rights, and protest when those rights are infringed. According to Brubaker what happens in the relations between these actors is a confrontation between their nationalisms, creating a breeding-ground for a conflict situation. The minority finds itself between two rival parties: nationalising states and external homelands. This type of relationship can be found in many places in Central and Eastern Europe: for example, Poland-Germany, where Germany is the external homeland and Poland the nationalising state; or Poland-Lithuania, where Poland in turn finds itself in the role of external homeland. However, the best example of an external homeland is Hungary which espouses the cause of the Hungarian minorities in all neighbouring states.

There is a complex interplay between the parties in these "triangel dramas", in which the actions of the one directly influence the others, and relations between them are re-shaped. All international actors supporting the rights of the minorities in Eastern and Central Europe ought to be aware of this. If not, there is a risk that EU institutions or charities, though acting in good will to aid an exposed minority, only increase the potential for conflicts instead of staving them off.

EU politicians should be made aware of the nature of the nationalisms of Eastern Europe, and that they will find themselves dealing with nations weighed down with a difficult past, nations which have been ill-treated by history and which are very sensitive about identities and status. The majority populations in the East European countries tend to regard the states they live in as exclusively "their own". This exclusive concept of the state, and sensitivity and insecurity about the strength of their own national identities, leads the majority to accept only with reluctance the existence of the minorities. The presence of the minorities often constitutes a painful reminder of past oppression and threats and of the uncertain future. That is

why demands for certain minority rights can be fairly uncontroversial in a Western European country and highly sensitive in Eastern Europe. In Great Britain, for example, why can the Welsh language be made an official language in Wales alongside English, while the Poles will not grant German a similar status in Silesia? To understand this it must be borne in mind that the Welsh have no external homeland which has questioned whether Wales should belong to Great Britain, and that they have never wanted to join any other state. The minorities' cultural rights are intimately connected with the question of security. That is also clear in Estonia and Latvia's attitude to the minorities' possible right to dual citizenship. This right can be discussed with little emotion throughout much of Europe, but in the Baltic context it excites greatly disturbed feelings. The Russian minorities' demand for the right to dual citizenship, supported by Russia (which in this case is the external homeland), is wholly unacceptable in the eyes of the Balts. It is seen as a direct and serious threat to the independence of the Baltic States, in view of the considerable size of the Russian minorities, fresh memories of the Russian occupation, and Russia's nonchalant attitude to Baltic sovereignty (the Baltic is regarded by the Russians as part of what they call "the near abroad").

It is important for institutions and organisations in the EU to try to understand the Central and Eastern European states on their own terms. That means listening to, and hearing, all sides involved in any conflict and taking decisions on solutions together, instead of forcing on them our own solutions supposedly based on "superior standards of civilisation". International actors active on behalf of the rights of minorities must not allow themselves to be lulled into a belief that the conflicts will be solved if the states involved submit to pressure and adapt their legislation to the international standards that apply to national minority rights. Governments can subscribe to numerous treaties on the protection of minority rights and adopt constitutions which grant minorities their rights, and yet conduct a "nationalising policy" in practice. Confrontations between the majority and minorities can occur on different planes, at the formal or informal level, e.g. in regard to specific laws (such as about language or education) and their application. The struggle for power and resources in these countries is tightly bound up with the struggle to be able to form, confirm and strengthen the national/ethnic identity of the minority groups. As has been indicated there is a long tradition of defining social and economic demands

in ethnic terms. Conflicts can flare up. The fear of them among EU Member States should not, however, stand in the way of enlargement. Instead it can be asserted that conflicts can probably be solved more quickly and effectively if the parties involved are members of the EU and can therefore more readily be subjected to pressures from it. That presupposes, however, that the future enlarged EU is equipped to manage that kind of conflict. It is already time to start putting the necessary measures in place.

4 How will EU enlargement affect national minority questions?

The engagement of the Council of Europe, OSCE and the EU in the situation of the minorities in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990's has already had a significant effect. The minorities are no longer in a marginalised position and attention has been drawn to their often problematic relations with the majority population. Today the minority organisations know that in their struggle for both cultural and political rights they can count on support not merely from the external homeland (always a sensitive question) but also from these highly prestigious international actors. Since accession to the EU enjoys a high priority among the political élites in the Central and Eastern European states they have been prepared, at least in the matter of their legislation, to adapt themselves to the Council of Europe norms for minority rights and the protection of minorities. That is a step in a positive direction, even if the minorities are not satisfied, since in a number of Eastern European states these norms lack broad support in the community. In many cases the minorities are not content with the basic rights but want compensation for the years of oppression, for example through "positive discrimination" or territorial autonomy, i.e. collective rights. The minorities draw strength from the minority-friendly, and even minority-promoting, discourse pursued by the Western European political élite over the past ten years. "Multi-culturalism" has become almost a prestige concept among these élites, as has been confirmed by the EU's proud watchword "unity in diversity". The EU's policy is to promote trans-bor-

der cooperation and to pin faith on the construction of regional identities as a counter-weight to the ethnic and national identities. By creating “Euro-regions” it is hoped to bring about cooperation between neighbouring states in which minorities on both sides of the frontier are given an important role as cultural intermediaries, entrepreneurs, and so on, which is valued by both sides. With Roger Brubaker’s model described above as the point of departure, it could be said that the aim is to de-dramatise the relations between nationalising states, external homelands and minorities, and to create a situation in which the minorities can be perceived as an asset rather than an encumbrance in relations between neighbouring states. Up till now, the idea of “Euro-regions” has been implemented only on a very minor scale in Central and Eastern Europe. The Polish–German attempt to build up a Euro-region on Poland’s western borders has not yet proved much of a success, even if it is perhaps too early for a final judgement.²⁵ The other hoped-for Euro-regions (for example in the Carpathians, between Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary) have not come about. One of the reasons is the neighbours’ suspicious attitudes to one another. It is, however, to be expected that the idea of Euro-regions will acquire new life when the East European states join the EU. As new members of the EU they will become more attractive cooperation partners for their neighbours both to the east and to the west. Euro-regions can moreover play an important part in blurring the frontiers between the EU and the rest of Europe.

Mobility across frontiers within the EU itself will also have major consequences for minority questions. It is probable that members of minorities will be more inclined to seek work and to move, temporarily or permanently, to their external homelands. That will bring to the fore the question of dual citizenship which in turn is linked with a number of rights (such as the right to vote in parliamentary elections). It will also give rise to a discussion about who is to be regarded as a member of a minority. There is in fact no generally accepted definition of “minority”.²⁶ A common practice is, however, for the minority in a given state to be regarded as consisting of *citizens* of that state. Non-citizens living in the state are foreigners and do not count as a minority in it. How will that definition be altered when “EU citizenship” is introduced? Who will then be considered a minority?

The existence of minority questions is in general a consequence of thinking in terms of “nation-states”. What happens if nation-states lose their

importance, as is affirmed by supporters of political federation in the EU? Will minority questions lose their relevance? Will the EU become a “Europe of the peoples” or a “Europe of nations and minorities”? These questions must be put even if they cannot be answered today and probably belong to a rather distant future.

What is on the other hand quite certain even today is that the future EU enlargement will change the power relations both between EU countries and within those countries. It is clear that EU membership results in a transfer of some degree of political power from the respective member states. As the authority of the state is weakened, the power relations between the majority and the minorities within the respective states will change. One can only speculate about the consequences of these changes. It is possible that this development will improve the national minorities’ negotiating position vis-à-vis the Government and the majority population. Together with increased mobility across borders within the EU, that may lead to a gradual reduction in the political importance of minority questions. Some visionaries, moreover, maintain that ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences may become less significant in a future globalised world. We have yet to see much of the latter development. On the contrary, there are a number of signs (in the form of new ethnic movements) pointing in the opposite direction. Objective differences between groups (i.e. external characteristics, in the form of language, race, customs, etc) may diminish or disappear, but the groups may yet preserve and even strengthen their collective separate identities. That is because the collective identity does not rest on any specific combination of external characteristics, but rather on a continuing dichotomisation between “we” and “the others”.²⁷ This dichotomization can rest on highly subjective grounds (e.g. conceptions of common values or myths). A group which has preserved such an “internal boundary” can maintain the feeling of separate identity even if it has lost the external delimiting markers. A number of experts maintain that the processes of globalisation, the pressures for integration in Europe and the élite’s striving to dismantle nationalism and the nation-state might provoke a counter-action. Particularly those levels of society that perceive themselves to be victims of this development may regard the weakening in the position of the nation-states and governments as a threat. This may find expression in a resurgence of nationalism and political mobilisation around the defence of ethnic identities and so on. Such tendencies are to be found

both among majority populations (who may feel that their dominant position is threatened) and among the minorities. That could entail increased tensions in relations between ethnic groups and nations in the whole of Europe. It cannot of course be foreseen which, if any, of these future scenarios will come about. The EU will acquire a certain preparedness to cope with the future by attempting, through the Council of Europe, to unite the EU's current and possible future members around certain basic norms and principles in respect of minority rights. That is the objective of the various conventions, treaties and laws mentioned at the beginning of this article. The problem with them is, however, that to be legitimate and to be respected they must apply to all states, both West European and East European, whereas the Council of Europe has long had a tendency to focus on the minority situation in the East and to ignore minority problems in the West. It cannot be maintained that there are no minorities in the West who feel themselves ill-treated. The readiness of the Basques or the people of Northern Ireland to resort to force, the loud protests of the Corsicans and the endless quarrels between the Flemish and the Walloons tell a contrary story. These and many other minorities in the West can today base their demands on the principles and decisions of the Council of Europe and the EU. The attention which international organisations have accorded to minority rights during the last decade was prompted by the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, but it has already assisted many silent minorities in the West to discover the value of ethnicity in politics and to come out of the shadows.²⁸ It is no longer possible to maintain the picture of nation-states in the West where ethnic problems do not exist, and ethno-nations in the East which must be guided towards "civilised standards".²⁹ The new situation is difficult for the Council of Europe and the EU to handle. How, for example, can one combine criticism of Romania, because it will not give the minorities increased cultural rights, with the fact that Romania's constitution is based on the French constitution which leaves absolutely no room for the existence of minorities? The French constitution provides that the French nation is a unity consisting of individuals equal before the law, and it excludes all divisions according to ethnic or linguistic criteria. France thereby refuses to recognise the Corsican people as a minority.

Another example of the need for a revised attitude to minority questions in the West, prompted by the problems in the East, is the debates

about relations between minority status and citizenship. The question was posed in extreme form when Russia protested about Estonia and Latvia's membership of the Council of Europe, on the grounds that the large Russian minorities in these countries could not enjoy minority rights since they did not meet the requirements for citizenship laid down by law, and in general were classified not as minorities but as stateless foreigners. The Council of Europe criticised Estonia and Latvia's restrictive citizenship laws (with their strict conditions for naturalisation) and at the same time questioned the right of individual countries to determine for themselves what groups should be considered as national minorities within them. It is nonetheless a fact that in 1995, when Germany signed the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, it reserved the right to define a national minority. It was emphasised in this connection that only individuals with German citizenship can be included in national minorities in Germany.

In the judgement of many, the German laws on naturalisation are more strict than, for example, the Estonian (8 years residence required, as opposed to only 5 in Estonia).³⁰ Moreover, Germany recognises dual citizenship only in special cases.

A result of the restrictive citizenship laws in a number of EU countries is that 5% of the inhabitants of the EU are immigrants who do not enjoy minority rights, on the grounds that they are not citizens of the respective EU countries. These circumstances have been the object of criticism and discussion between West European and East European states. One country that appears to have taken the criticism to heart is Germany which in January 2000 implemented a number of changes in its citizenship laws. Major groups of immigrants, and even their children and grandchildren, previously had difficulty in becoming German citizens. Now, children born in Germany of immigrant parents automatically acquire German citizenship if their parents have been resident in Germany for 8 years and have had residence permits for at least 3 years. They must, however, renounce their other citizenship (if they have one) at the latest by the age of 23, otherwise they forfeit their German citizenship. These changes in the German citizenship laws occurred shortly after Latvia, in response to considerable pressure from the West, relaxed the laws governing citizenship for children born in Latvia to foreign (usually Russian) families. That may be interpreted as an indication that the EU countries have become aware of the

importance of avoiding double standards. It should be added that nowadays there is a greater tendency in the EU to accept dual citizenship, while the limitation of minority status solely to citizens of the state concerned is beginning to be questioned.

5 National identities in Central and Eastern Europe and views about European integration

Questions concerning the influence of national identities on the foreign policies that nations conduct have in recent years been the object of attention from political science experts. Among those setting the tone in this field have been the Copenhagen school, led by Ole Wæver, who *inter alia* maintain that there is a reciprocal influence at work between a nation's identity and its foreign policy. According to Wæver, the internal discourse about "state" and "nation" in given European countries is related to the internal discourse on Europe, which in turn influences the formation of European policy in these states.³¹ In a single article it is impossible to make an analysis of the discourses on Europe that are being conducted in various Central and Eastern European states, with a view to drawing conclusions about their future European policy. What can, however, be done is to attempt to reconstruct certain features of their view of European integration, on the basis, first, of what we know about their historical evolution and, secondly, of the analysis made above of the nature of nationalism in the region. It is important to reflect on the future EU members' view, given that it can influence the way in which the EU evolves.

5.1 "l'Europe des Patries"

The historical experiences and the nation-building processes which the Central and Eastern European countries have undergone make it rather unlikely that they would support the transformation of the EU into a political federation. In recent decades federal ideas have suffered a serious

setback in states in this region. Federations such as Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have ended in disintegration, in the two latter cases in blood-baths. The reluctance to form federal ties, and to yield a major part of their power, is founded on the view of “nation” and “state” held in these countries. The “nation” is regarded as an absolute value while the “state” is held to serve the nation. This thought is expressed in the constitution of several applicant countries. For several decades the people in this region fought for the sovereignty of their countries, and it can readily be understood that they are not really prepared to see limitations put on it and even less to give it up. There is a gap between the East European states’ wish to assert their sovereignty and their wish to become integrated in the EU. To bridge this gap the Central and East European states line up behind a vision of the EU as a “Europe des Patries”. In their view the nation-states of Europe must be preserved as basic units in the union which for the rest must build on common, supra-national, legislation applicable in all members. According to this view, the culture of each nation has special values to bring with it into the union. Europe will become strong and rich thanks precisely to this variation (“unity in variety”). In Eastern and Central European debates about accession to the EU it comes out clearly that for the applicant countries the chief objective of integration is to achieve both internal (economic policy) stability and external (security policy) stability, and to hasten the modernisation of their economies.³² It is thus a matter of improving the security and living standards of the respective *states* and *nations*. The question which presents itself in this connection is what happens if the hopes attaching to EU membership are unfulfilled? How would that affect their attitude to the EU and how will the interests of individual states be balanced against those of the EU as a whole? Stability and continuity in the integration process largely depend on whether the countries affected succeed in reconciling their concepts of “state” and “nation” with “the European project”. It is a challenge for Central and Eastern Europe, but one that can be met successfully despite the difficult starting-point. Identities are not given, once and for all, but are constantly in a state of change. In the view of the Copenhagen school national identities constitute foreign policy, and *vice versa*. That means that the identities of the East European nations can influence the way in which they act in the EU, but their participation in the EU integration project will also influence their identities.

5.2 “The open Europe”

The dominant view among the applicant countries is that the future enlarged EU must not take shape as a kind of “beleaguered fortress”, keeping nations and peoples outside the boundaries of the union at a distance. The Schengen Agreement and the EU’s request to the applicant countries to “seal” their frontiers prior to EU accession has caused them concern and misgivings. Cross-border trade and contacts between inhabitants of the applicant countries and their neighbours to the east have significantly diminished, which has led to protests on both sides of the borders. Moreover this policy is directly contrary to the manner in which a number of Central and Eastern European nations define their identity. In the Polish national discourse Poland has for centuries been ascribed the function of a bridge between East and West.³³ Poland is ready to conduct an active policy in the East and in particular to work for a closer connection with Western Europe for both Ukraine and Belarus. There are moreover Polish minorities in both Ukraine and Belarus whose contacts with the home country are made more difficult by the visa requirement imposed in accordance with the Schengen Agreement. The minority aspect is, however, particularly important for Hungary, the Government of which explicitly declares itself to be the representative of *the whole* Hungarian nation, i.e. including Hungarians beyond the borders of the country. In 1999, at the second Permanent Hungarian Conference (an assembly of representatives of Hungarian parties in Hungary and the neighbouring states) it was decided to work for the right of all ethnic Hungarians to visa-free entry into Hungary, work-permits, customs concessions, and so on.³⁴ That is a signal that Hungary will also work for the inclusion in the European integration process of Europe’s neighbours to the South and East. There is no advantage to the Eastern European applicant countries in functioning as the outpost of the EU. If the economic and social differences between the countries on the two sides of the borders of the EU were to become too profound, it would complicate regional cooperation and the development of stability in the region.

5.3 “A Europe of equals”

Contrary to what the name “Central and Eastern Europe” implies, this region’s position in Europe has never been “central”. The region has rather been condemned, through the centuries, to constitute a periphery. In mediaeval Europe the region was the Western Christian world’s periphery which had to face the onslaught from the Muslim world. In the 17th century it came to occupy a peripheral position in the economic context too,³⁵ from which it has never recovered. In the 18th century Europe of the Enlightenment, and later, Central and Eastern Europe was regarded as the periphery of European civilisation, taking its impulses from the West.³⁶ The Eastern Europeans received confirmation of their peripheral position, and hence marginal importance, at the end of WWII when at the Yalta Conference in 1945 the Western Powers gave their tacit agreement that the region should fall into the Soviet Union’s sphere of power. The élites in the region are fully aware of the area’s peripheral situation and bitter about the fact that for centuries it has been treated as “the suburb of Europe”. In the discourse on Europe in these countries one can trace an inferiority complex, coupled with a need for self-assertion and, on the one hand an idealisation of Europe and, on the other, bitter criticism of it. The promise of EU enlargement which was held out during the 1990’s gave the Central and Eastern Europeans hope of at last leaving their peripheral situation and becoming fully valid and respected members of Europe. Membership of the EU is seen in terms of a “return to Europe”, a Europe understood as a community of values and hence as a “Europe of equals”. This rhetoric expresses an important emotional driving force behind the striving of the Central and Eastern Europeans towards integration – the will to confirm and strengthen their identity (as Europeans) and to increase their self-respect. How realistic are these expectations? For the Central and East Europeans there is probably no escape from a peripheral situation, even if they were to become full members of the EU. The élite have already understood this, even if they will not always admit it, especially not to their own fellow-countrymen. Within a “Europe of equals” there is nonetheless a chance that the weaker, peripheral countries will be able to cooperate and thus to balance their interests against those of the larger countries. For the Central and Eastern Europeans cooperation with Fin-

land, Sweden and Denmark is especially important, not least because their presence in a regional cooperation prevents the old conflicts among the East Europeans from flaring up again.³⁷ However that may be, to reconcile oneself with fears of a peripheral status in Europe is at any rate better than being reduced to the explicit acceptance of such a status through being offered no more than “partial membership” of the EU.

To be able to accept the applicants as full members the EU must be institutionally reformed and its economic policy (in particular the CAP) must undergo major changes. So far, virtually none of this has been accomplished. Within the EU discussions continue about what should be given priority - enlargement to the East or deepening the economic and political cooperation within the present union. Today the indications are mostly either that enlargement will be postponed or that it will take place in stages. The latter implies “integration at different speeds”, i.e. “partial membership”, a disguised strategy to create a kind of second-class EU membership. Irrespective of which of the two above-mentioned solutions the EU chooses, it will engender great bitterness and disappointment in the applicant countries. The latent inferiority complex will manifest itself and again fuel the nationalism which often functions as a compensating force in frustrated societies. It is probable that in such a situation the East European peoples will call in question the value of EU accession, and opinion against the EU might greatly harden.³⁸ That could put the entire European integration project at risk.

Is the EU to miss the historic opportunity of at last creating a stable pan-European social order? In that case it would mean that EU decision-makers have now forgotten the original *goal* when the Coal and Steel Community was established. The union’s founding fathers saw economic integration as a *means* of creating peace and security in Europe. Has the original goal today disappeared from view, and has the means become an end in itself? If so, there is cause for anxiety about Europe’s future, and to ask, paraphrasing Timothy Garton Ash’s words in a speech in Prague in 1999: “How much longer must Europe pay in blood for its own false priorities and short-sightedness?”

Endnotes

- ¹ This difference is not without political significance because it implies that the Albanians do not comprise 90% of the population of Kosovo, which is what they claim in the negotiations on Kosovo's future.
- ² Liebich, A. (1999a).
- ³ For further information on national minorities in Poland see e.g. Golczewski, F. (1994) or Gwiazda, A. (1995).
- ⁴ For a more detailed analysis see Cordell, K. (1996).
- ⁵ For an analysis of the differences in law between "individual" and "collective" rights see Jones, P. (1999). If an individual may invoke the right, it is according to Jones an individual right. Collective or group rights are exercised by the individual in common with others. International law is cautious in regard to national minorities and group rights.
- ⁶ The figures given here and in the whole of section 1 are quoted from Liebich, A. (1998), see the Appendices II to his article from 1998.
- ⁷ See Obrman, J. (1994).
- ⁸ Kalvoda, J. (1991).
- ⁹ For a more detailed description see Folkeryd, F. and Svanberg, I. (1995).
- ¹⁰ Liebich, A. (1996), p. 86.
- ¹¹ For more about Transylvania see Nouzille, J. (1997).
- ¹² For more about this see Galati-Fischer, S. (1994), Nelson, N.D. (1998).
- ¹³ Liebich, A. (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 86.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid* p. 88.
- ¹⁵ For an analysis of this conflict see Holm-Hansen, J. (1992).
- ¹⁶ For an analysis see Smith, G. (1996).
- ¹⁷ For an analysis of the situation see Kolstø, P. (1999).
- ¹⁸ A hundred years ago half the population of Central and Eastern Europe could identify themselves with an ethnic minority, and sixty years ago about 25%. However the situation changed radically after the Second World War, a fact which most Western Europeans have yet to perceive. cf. Liebich, A. (1998), p.1.
- ¹⁹ Schöpflin, G. (1995).
- ²⁰ The significance of these socio-psychological factors in the emergence of nationalism has attracted attention in recent years from a number of those researching into nationalism

(Shibutani-Kwan, Scheff and others) who are interested in the “sociology of emotions”. Scheff, for example, has elaborated what he calls a “pride/shame hypothesis”. He writes that “the motor of ethnic identification can be summarized as: *individuals and groups seek to increase their pride/shame balance, their moment-by-moment social status*”. See Scheff, T. (1994), p.286.

²¹ See Jonsson, A. (1999).

²² Johansson, R. (1993).

²³ This model of development was described in detail by Miroslav Hroch. See Hroch, M. (1985).

²⁴ For a presentation of this model see Brubaker, R. (1995).

²⁵ See Persson H-Å. (1999).

²⁶ For a discussion of this see Packer, J. (1993).

²⁷ This is pointed out by the social anthropologist F. Barth who asserts that ethnic identity is constituted by “the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders”, see Barth, F. (1969), p.14.

²⁸ A number of minorities in Western Europe (e.g. the Basques, the Corsicans, the Bretons, and others) began to make themselves heard as early as the 1970’s, but in the new situation in the 1990’s they had much better opportunities to win a hearing and understanding for their demands.

²⁹ Liebich, A.(1999b).

³⁰ For a comparison between German and other West European citizenship laws on one hand, and those of the Baltic States on the other, see Chinn, J. & Truex, A.L.(1996).

³¹ See Wæver, O. (1998).

³² For debates in e.g. Poland see Bobinska-Kolarska, L. ed (1999),.

³³ See Törnquist-Plewa, B. (in printing).

³⁴ Kiss, J.L. (2000), p.1-26.

³⁵ The causes of this are discussed in Chirot, D. ed., (1989).

³⁶ For a description of it see for example Wolff, L. (1994).

³⁷ A good example of this is the cooperation in the Baltic Council, where the old “arch enemies” (Poland and Lithuania, Russia and the Baltic States) are capable of working together. For an analysis of the work of the Baltic Council see e.g. Nowak, W. (2000), p.95-112.

³⁸ That is the conclusion drawn by among others Badersten, on the basis of his analysis of opinion in Eastern Europe about the EU. See Badersten, B. (1999).

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