Contents

The postponing of descentralisation, the overgrowth of central bureaucracy, the state intervention in economy and a certain reluctance towards participating in cross-border cooperation are all processes disclosing Romania's hesitation in planning and implementing regional development strategies. While up to the 1996 elections this tendency was accounted for by those days government's orientation, the acceding to power of the democratic forces after '96 would have been supposed to show more openness towards regionalisation processes.

Nevertheless, the political forces now in power seem to carry on the policies of former cabinets. Instead of making use of the possibilities regionalisation would open up for the country, they have until recently rejected the process tending to take it for the dissolution of the state and finally given into it only as a concession made to the project of joining EU. In doing so, they have shown they understand neither the core values of the European integration, nor the strivings of the Romanian regions themselves.

The study distinguishes three different levels of the regional question in Italy which should be approached: the regions as administrative entities, regional policy/development, and regionalism/federalism as a current of thought. Despite the pressure put on the Government by some advocates of a federal State, the question of whether to grant the regions autonomy rather than some measure of administrative devolution of power was never seriously considered since Unification. By contrast, the issue has now shifted and revolves around the alternatives of introducing a federal system of government or granting the regions considerable further administrative and fiscal powers.

In terms of regionalism/federalism as a current of opinion capable of influencing party politics, the issue at the time of the Risorgimento was how best to reconcile and integrate so many different peoples and cultures. Federalism has revived lately, thanks primarily to the rise and success of the Northern League party, and it has recently influenced all main political parties.

In terms of regional policy and regional development, the issue at the turn of the century was how to achieve a redistribution of resources in favour of the poorer and less developed regions of Italy, i.e. the South. Today it is the very idea of State-funded regional development which is in question.

The study sets as its aim to disenchant one of the strongest myth of the Banat region: that its high degree of tolerance — unparalelled by any other Romanian region — shown towards its own multiethnic and multicultural structure is not inherent, not an essential and ahistorical trait (both state institutions and the population held nationalistic views was, but one which has been reinforced during the communist regime as an act of resistance to the official policies of erasing any sort of differences and also as a means of communication with the outside (European) world; in the post-communist years the (self-)perception of the Banat region's tolerance has developed even more, up to turning into fact. Both cultural (its historical backround of convergence point of many nations and states) and economical factors (the region enjoys the highest welfare within Romania) have contributed to this.

The aim of the paper is to understand how the dynamics of regionalism, nationalism and the deepening processes of European integration influence each other. The study highlights both the problems of regional development within and outside the Union and also outlines a future-oriented vision of an enlarged Europe, able to accomodate the aspirations of regional, national and transnational political and social identities at the same time.

Through the analysis of the recent developments in Scotland as a 'stateless nation' of the European Union and in Romania as a country which wishes to join the Union as soon as possible and whose population includes substantional number of ethnic minorities, especially ethnic Hungarians, the paper outlines how the ideas of national sovereignty and of the decentralisation of state power are interpreted and sometimes misinterpreted by the various political actors in both Eastern and Western parts of Europe and how it will affect the long-term development of the Union.

DIALOGUE

Alice Brown and David McCrone

The debate sets Scotland's new parliament in its historical context, its establishment being accounted for by the end of convenience in the 'marriage of convenience' which the Union has been since 1707.

A lower level of government, closer to people, will enable Scotland to make a better use of its economic potential. On the other hand, the Scottish identity is gaining more and more weight. New opportunities are open within the European Union and Scotland can make herself better heard in Europe if she has a voice of her own. The success of the Scottish movement might also prove to be an incentive for other British regions to institutionalise their status. Whether the devolution process will stop once the Scottish Parliament will start working or the Scots' demands will further increase aiming at independence remains to be seen.

ANALYSIS

Will Kymlicka

While Western political theory and practice can provide the newly-democratizing states of Eastern and Central Europe a model regarding individual and civil political rights, they cannot do so regarding ethnic relations because the interest in this field is relatively recent even in the West and it has been raised only as a consequence of finally having been realised that differences implied by ethnicity will not go away, as the myth of ethnocultural neutrality of the modern state has assumed, but will have to be accommodated with.

A second reason for Eastern and Central European countries' impossibility to take on a Western model of managing ethnic relations is their completely different historical background (which has given birth to specific types of minorities and, consequently, minority issues which the West has never faced) as well as their present lower economic status.

Gabriel Andreescu

A response to Will Kymlicka's study, the paper contends that there is a universal core to ethic values underlying minority rights and that Western democratic countries lately have been approaching ethnic relations not by looking back to the past, but forward to the future; these two facts could and should constitute a model to be followed by Eastern and Central Europe. If they do not, as it is the case with Romania, it is rather because of the lack of political will and because of viewing minorities as scape goats for whatever failure in the transition to democracy. On the other hand, the granting of minority rights implies lower costs than denying them (the latter demanding a strengthening of repressive measures), so the economic argument cannot hold, either.

DOCUMENT

István Haller

Regional Self-Government in the view of the Council of Europe
and of the Romanian Legislation   188

The comparative commentary points out the lacks in the Romanian laws on regionalisation and self-government: the very notion of self-government is ignored, there is no guarantee of protection of regional self-government against central institution interference, in the setting up of a development region the population has no say (as they should according to European Charter).

TRANSYLVANIAN CONVERGENCIES

Gábor Flóra

The First Theoreticians of Transylvanism   195

The change in the political and territorial status of Transylvania at the beginning of the 20th century prompted the Hungarian ethnics, who had become a minority, to build up a new theoretical system in order both to clarify their identity and to properly claim their rights from the Romanian state of which they were now a part.

In the beginning, Transylvanism stressed the convergency elements of the history of the different ethnic groups — Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons, Jews — which, in the view of Transylvanism theoreticians, had lead to a distinct Transylvanian identity; but met with distrust by the Romanian state, Transylvanism ended up in scepticism and in a defensive position meant to safeguard the Hungarian minority's identity.

ECUMENICA

Nonka Bogomilova

The Ethnically Aggressive Instrumentalisation of Religion
in South-Eastern Europe   208

By the end of the past century it seemed that religion had exhausted its potential as justification and instrument for civilization clashes or imperial and cultural hegemony. But our century proved the unreliability of rational forecasts. Instead of being recoursed to as the universal bind of humankind, religions are seen in their differences from one another and as catalysts of conflicts. Paradoxically, clashes of civilizations are less based on the main historical religions than on communitiy differentiation within single civilization areas: conflicts between Catholics and Protestants (North Ireland), between Catholics and Orthodox believers (Croats and Serbs), among Orthodox believers themselves (Greece and Macedonia).

While Western prosperous countries seek hegemony through economic and military means, poorer countries resort to ideologies and instrumentalise religion in order to legitimate their distinct identities. This is why ethnic conflicts religiously legitimated have occured so frequently and have had such high intensity in South-Eastern Europe.

REVIEWS

Adrian Marino and the European Idea   218

The three books reviewed — Pentru Europa, Politică şi cultură, Revenirea în Europa *— highlight their author's genuine commitment to the European idea: he points out what we are (Europeans by culture, history, geography) and what we are not, or not yet (Europeans by civilization, politics and welfare).*

Europa   222

The on-line journal mirrors European diversity not only in its institutionalised forms (which are now a topic highly in fashion in academic circles), but also in its cultural dimension.