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DILEMMAS OF IDENTITY

Robert Parkin

Being a breakthrough by examining regional identities from an anthropological standpoint, the study pushes for the recognition of these regional identities in their own right, which may not involve ethnicity as such, regional identities actually being a matter of the majority identity within the nation state in many cases. Although there is sometimes a tendency to view European regionalisms almost automatically as basically ethnic, regional identities do not exist entirely within nation state borders, as europeanization is opening up a new path for alliances to be formed between regions across borders, providing thus an alternative to the nation state.

The lack of fit between ethnicity and some regionalisms is also shown by the fact that not all ethnic minorities compose a region, an entity which obviously requires geographical contiguity.

Regionalism is not only a popular movement — it can also be a bureaucratic instrument. National governments may regionalize administration, without implying anything about regional identities. Bureaucratically promoted identities are themselves culturally constructed and in principle no less suitable for anthropological analisys.

In the past, the EU's official delimitations of regions were clearly influenced by an exclusively economic perspective, often ignoring, and thus potentially conflicting with popular notions of regionalism. Today, it has been recognized that the cultivation of other, more identity-related aspects of regionalism may actually reinforce the implementation of policies. As a result, the idea of a Europe of regions has now entered the bureaucratic thinking of Brussels itself Although increased autonomy and responsiveness to local identities and demands are on the cards for sub-national units, there are no indications that the nation states in Europe, who are still first-line members of the EU, are ready to yield their sovereignty to them.

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Viktor Karády

Survivor's Dilemmas:
Jewish-Hungarian Identity after the Shoah (1945-1956)   23

The study contends that collective identity is a historical construction composed of various elements whose importance vary strongly in time. The process of modernization and the tragic and convoluted history of the 20th century brought about a gap between the internal and external definitions of Jewish identity in Hungary. They also account for the remarkable changeability of identity as an existential strategy, a changeability often leading to forms of reversibility for the same groups or individuals during their life cycle.

Paradoxically enough, although the post-Shoah circumstances had opened up a way toward upward mobility and modernity for Jewish-Hungarians, in the end they turned into another trap. Jews could not help being considered as the natural political supports of the new regime, duly certified antifascists as they were. Unprecedented new prospects for professional success in the state apparatus proved to be all the more tempting as other, more traditional roads to middle class careers were progressively closed down following the Communist take-over. Consequently, opposite identity choices could find equally satisfactory reasons of legitimacy. Reactions to the same collective trauma took three utterly different shapes, but all implying a break-away from the past: communism, Zionism and the remodelling of earlier assimilationist options. In the early years of the new regime, communism and zionism were functionally equivalent as they shared common traits: both options were new, they were conceived as social Utopias, they both resided upon universalistic principles. On the other hand, communism appeared from the outset to be incompatible with most of the cultural ingredients of Jewishness, such as religion above all, but also with many other traits of traditional mentality. Later, Zionist movements were suppressed and from 1949 onwards even well established Jewish cadres could not feel secure, they often being taken as targets of internal party purges as „ bourgeois elements". Having over invested their commitment to communism, Jewish cadres were among the first to turn against Stalinism and reinvest their hopes in „democratic socialism". Jewish-Hungarian identity choices were thus enriched with a new pattern, marked by a renewed nationalist engagement and – in the 1980s – by the liberation from the taboo of Judaism.

Florin Anghel

The Dual Identity of an Ethnic Community:
Poles and Slovakians in Bukovina, 1937-1944.
Ethnic Manipulation during International Political Crises   37

For a long time, the different identity of the Slav communities in Buko.'ina was given exclusively by their religion: Catholic or Orthodox, as they had already in-

fluenced each other prior to their settling here, there Polish and Slovakian roots being interwined. Their ethnic differentiation took place only under the pressure of the political competition between the respective nation states: Poland and Chekhoslovakia. The native academics as well as the press, biased by the general changing political circumstances and depending on their ethnic background, contended a Slovakisation of the Poles or a Polisation of the Slovakians by turns.

The third political actor involved in this struggle, Romania, proved no constancy, only pragmatism in its pursuit of its own interests. The Romanian state took sides according to the rise and fall of Poland and Chekhoslovakia on the international scene, with no regard to the rights or welfare of the minority communities involved. The end of the Second World War and the establishment of the communist regime put an end to this ethnical dispute by simply eliminating its object: Polish and Slovakian schools were done away with and most of the minority communities in the region were required to leave for their country of origin.

ANALYSES

Ilona Pálné Kovács

Every one of the Central-Eastern European countries in transition har had to face its territorial and administrative reform. Once the first steps were taken at the local arrangements level, it became clear that sustainable development policies could not be drawn up and implemented without there being a reformed intermediary tier. Consistent reforms to this end were hampered by the lack of political consensus, by the reluctance of the administrative centre to let a series of competencies to be taken over by a subnational level, but also by professional uncertainties. The counties, backed up by a millenium of history, have been a matter for contention in this controversial reform, at a certain point Hungary finding itself in the position of developing a regional policy without regions. Whether the envisaged regions will simply add one more level of government or they will wipe out of existence the present counties remains to be seen, but what is more important for a successful reform is the reinforcement of regional identities.

Ioan Codruţ Lucinescu

*The study is a historical survey of the federalist projects designed by Romanian thinkers
and politicians and of the federalist bodies Romania was part in. On the whole, federalism was conceived of only as a union of nations and not at all as domestic arrangements. In its 1923 Constitution,   Greater Romania was defined as a „unitary*

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national state" as it followed the French centralist model, the exact opposite of federalism. On the international scene, Romania, Chekhoslovakia and Yugoslavia formed the Little Entente in 1921. The Balkan Entente, an alliance formed in 1934 by Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece, and Turkey, reinforced the Treaty of Versailles.

In the postwar period, Romania remained a unitary national state, the Hungarian Autonomous Region being a shortlived exception.

The return to Europe is difficult as it presupposes genuine internal reforms, not only resounding international decisions. Nowdays federalism is seen by Romanians only as a prelude to state dissolution.

The European Union is still perceived exclusively as a union of nations, Romanian officials do not realize the importance of internal administrative reform and are blind to the Europe of regions. There have been established eight regions for development, but mainly under the pressure of Romania's accession to the EU and designed only to benefit from the european structural funds. This gap between political statements and political actions will most likely have a boomerang effect, missing the chance of reasserting Romania as valuable contributing member to the EU.

CASE STUDY

István Haller

Racial Discrimination in the Counties of Mureş and Satu Mare   85

The case study shows that, although at a first sight the present situation seems favourable to national minorities, racial discrimination pervades all the fields of social life.

There are special provisions in the education for Roma that are designed to support the emergence of a Roma elite by facilitating their graduation of higher forms of education, but Roma children cannot graduate elementary school. Theoretically, mother tongue education is provided for many national minorities, but practically it turns out that there are neither trained teachers nor handbooks for this field. Oh the other hand, the curricula and handbooks, instead of nurturing tolerance, only reinforce the extant negative stereotypes concerning minorities. The drawbacks in the educational system lead to the diminishing of job opportunities, the persons belonging to minority communities having a poorer education are bound to be employed in poorly paid positions if they are employed at all. There are also other deficiencies, inherited from the communist past, when persons belonging to minority communities were not allowed to hold key positions. Nowadays, even with a similar training, minority persons must get used to putting up with secondary positions. On the whole, a poor professional training results in social problems. It is especially Roma communities that live in precarious, conditions and the social assistance provided for by law is given only partially; this poverty, in its turn, leads to school abandonment.

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This vicious circle of discrimination and its consequnces is passed on by the negative stereotypes extant both in school and society on the whole, stereotypes manifested in limiting the access to public places and collective attribution of guilt grounded on ethnic belonging.

At the same time, negative stereotypes concerning minorities are coupled with positive stereotypes concerning majority. Consequently, the majority must display their prevalence also symbolically (the naming of streets and schools, for instance).

TRANSYLVANIAN CONVERGENCIES

The research deals with the question of the political integration of Romanian Transylvanian elites in Greater Romania after 1918. This proved to be a very difficult process because their aspiration for self-government – justified by the cultural specificities and separate history of the province – clashed with the centralist and unilateral policy of Bucharest. Comparing the two attempts at nation building before and after 1918, similarities are striking: national identifications were growing stronger while regionalism was diminishing. Within the dominant nation – Hungarian before 1918, then Romanian – the prospects offered and the constraints exerted by the ruling nation overcame or strongly diminished any divergent identity. In the 20th century, identities alternative to the majority one strived to come to life again in a new form, adjusted to modern life. Although they could have been a valid alternative to the national state, genuine pan-transylvanian and trans-ethnic alliances remained only unfulfilled projects for fear they should harm the interests of one's own „side".

Nevertheless, there are notable differences between the periods before and after the first World War as the Hungarian minority's elite held a different position and championed a different attitude within Greater Romania than the emergent elite of the Romanian nationality within the Monarchy.

The Vienna Diktat of the 30th of August 1940, dividing Transylvania into two parts and raising nationalisms to paroxism, put a concrete end to the idea of the primacy of the Transylvanian identity over national identities.

DEBATE

The Intercultural Centre of the PRO EUROPA League organised the third edition of the Transsylvania Summer University at Ilieni between the 22nd and the 25th of July 2004. Among the participants there were academics, politicians, political scientists

and representatives of the civil society. Considering the development of the European political scene, Romania will take part in the process of European integration no matter whether this country will have a genuine political commitment towards this end or not. Still, the genuineness of its commitment can make a real difference in smoothing Romania s accession to EU and, within this context, regionalisation and regionalism are significant coordinates. Then, what is a region? In a necessary revision of its definition, a region s territorial borders become less important, while the idea of regionalism, the existence of a region in the mentality of its inhabitants gains a first-rate position, as regionalisation does, too, namely the political will to establish a regional institutional framework. The eight regions for development were created by the Romanian decision makers under the pressure of EU policies and since, in the process, the various regionalisms extant in Romania were not taken into consideration, the country was deprived by an important instrument – the regional tier of government – on its way to accession. At present, regionalism should no longer belong to a bureaucratic sphere that distributes EU structural funds, but it should shift to reasserting large local communities.

The present administration is expensive, instead of being cheap; it lacks transparency, it controls society instead of being controlled by it. In order to change this state of affairs, a reform is necessary because the present structures were established during the communist regime and were meant to serve a centralist ideology and the communist elite.

At the request of the DAHR, a series of legal proposals (The Framework Bill on Regions, the Bill on Establishing the Special Legal Status Region, the Szeklar Land, the Autonomy Statute of the Szeklar Land as a Special Status Region) were drawn up by experts in order to initiate a debate on the issue, but they were rejected altogether, in present day Romania any regionalist discourse being perceived as a threat to the state. In spite of the mythologisation of history according to which Romania has always been a unitary national state, historical facts show the contrary.

Contrary to the widespread opinion that Romania is still a statist country, one can see that this country lacks a depoliticised, well-functioning state structure, the governing structure being a „partycracy". On the other hand, regionalism cannot find a political actor to champion it because the law on parties precludes the establishment of regional parties, thus making wider the gap existing now between parties and society.

By rejecting diversity and regionalism, the political elite is jeopardising Romania's accession to EU, the regionalist discourse of the political party now in power is used only abroad and boils down to a mere communication technique. As a conclusion, there are two possible solutions to Romania's current problems: a wide civical movement (but considering the inertia of the population, it is highly unlikely) or a"foreign rule", namely EU.

ECUMENICA

Vedran Horvat

The paper shows how turbulent social processes in postcommunistic transitional societies influence religion and how religion responds to these new challenges. The claims of the authors presented in this paper have shown that religion sometimes finds many obstacles on it's way to re-establish new relations with the state on one hand, and the newborn civil society, on the other hand, and, at the same time, to remain adherent to democratic principles, sometimes incoherent with its hierarchical and rigid structures. It has been shown that many years of suppression by communist regimes and liberation connected with strong ethnoreligious identifications did much damage to religious communities.

Today, one can see that they have few tasks to complete in order to nave a clear starting point and a foundation for dialogue with other social actors. Disentanglement of church from state and all sorts of political behavior; respect for religious human rights and participating in the building of civil society are the most important among them. Nevertheless, turbulent social circumstances that follow transition do not work on behalf of neutralizing the close links of religion to nationalism. And this is one of the possible directions in which religion might go, warn some of the authors. However, religion still can contribute to society, under the condition that it has dealt with satisfactorily with all the challenges of modernity. But, „tensions between tradition and memory on the one hand, and modernity on the other, are not sufficient to deny the continuing need for referring to tradition," which is, in the case of some transitional countries, still an everyday reality.

REVIEW

Ovidiu Pecican