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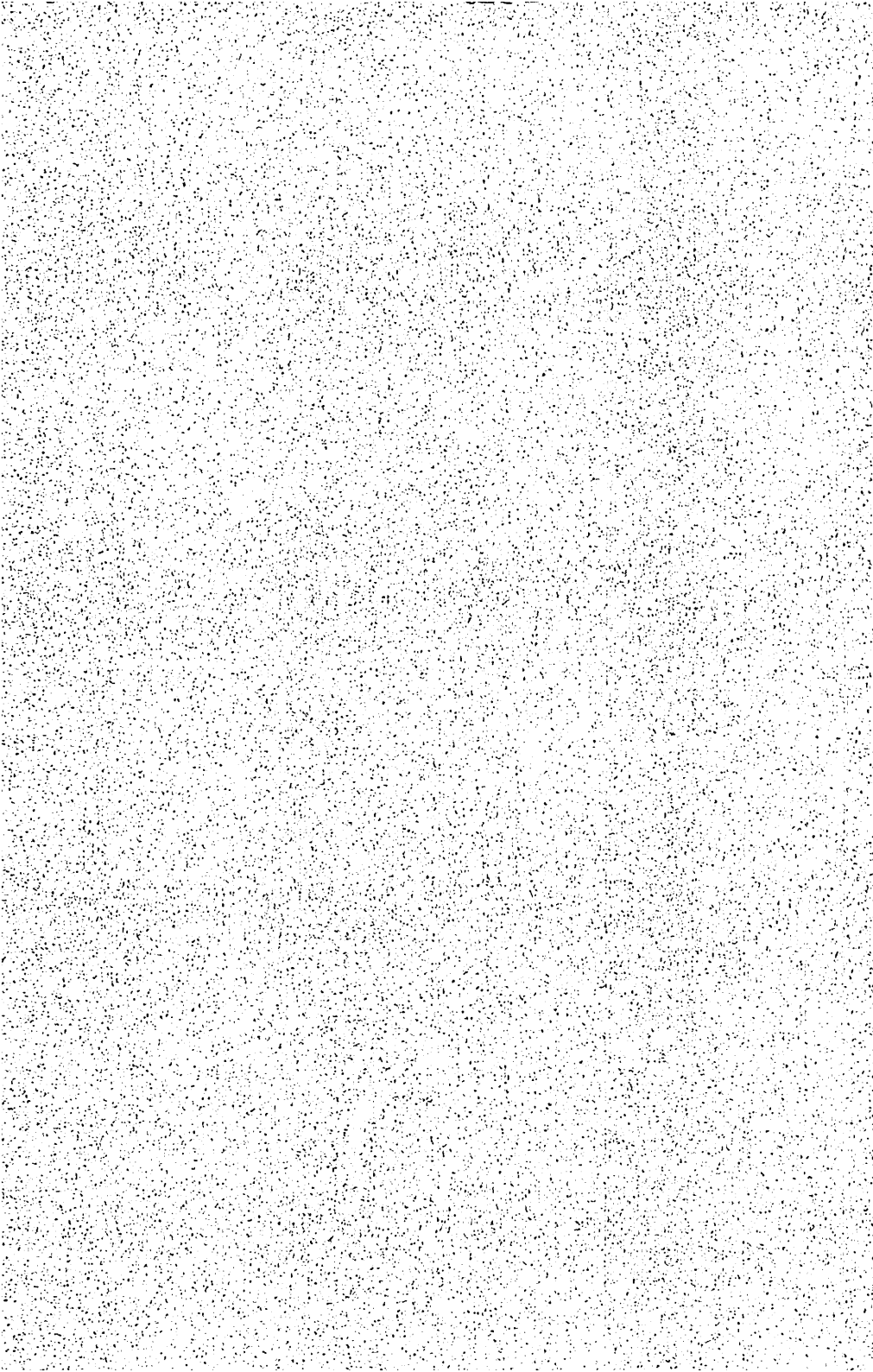
Nationalism, Populism, and Other Threats to Liberal Democracy in Post-Communist Europe

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The *Donald W. Treadgold Papers* publication series was created to honor a great teacher and great scholar. Donald W. Treadgold was professor of history and international studies at the University of Washington from 1949 to 1993. During that time, he wrote seven books, one of which — *Twentieth Century Russia* — went into eight editions. He was twice editor of *Slavic Review*, the organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, and received the AAASS Award for Distinguished Contributions to Slavic Studies, as well as the AAASS Award for Distinguished Service. Professor Treadgold molded several generations of Russian historians and contributed enormously to the field of Russian history. He was, in other ways as well, an inspiration to all who knew him.

The *Treadgold Papers* series was created in 1993 on the occasion of Professor Treadgold's retirement, on the initiative of Professor Daniel Waugh. Professor Treadgold passed away in December 1994. The series is dedicated to the memory of a great man, publishing papers in those areas which were close to his heart.

Sabrina P. Ramet
Editor

About the author of this issue

Vladimir Tismaneanu is a Professor in the Department of Government and Politics and the Director of the Center for the Study of Post-Communist Societies at the University of Maryland (College Park). He is also the editor of the journal *East European Politics and Societies* and serves on the editorial board of other publications including *Journal of Democracy*. Dr. Tismaneanu is the author of *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (Free Press, 1993) and, most recently, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton University Press, 1998). He is now finishing *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*. Dr. Tismaneanu is the editor of several volumes including *The Revolutions of 1989*, forthcoming from Routledge.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Sabrina Ramet and Daniel Chirot for helpful comments on the first version of this paper. My ideas on nationalism, liberalism, and populism in post-Cold War Europe developed in many conversations with friends and colleagues. Some share my moderately pessimistic view on the transitions from communism, others do not. What is important, however, is the common belief that we witnessed/experienced a historical watershed and that new concepts and ideas are needed to make sense of this dramatically novel situation. It is my hope that my Treadgold paper contributes to such a creative endeavor.

"Thinking of human emotional needs, we should also recognize the enormous pull of claims laid on the individual by the nation to which he or she belongs." - Czesław Miłosz

"It seems to me that those who, however perceptive in other respects, ignored the explosive power generated by the combination of unhealed mental wounds, however caused, with the image of the nation as a society of the living, the dead, and those yet unborn (sinister as this could prove to be when driven to a point of pathological exasperation) displayed an insufficient grasp of reality." - Sir Isaiah Berlin

No political dream has proved to be more resilient, protean and enduring in this century than nationalism. A comprehensive and potentially aggressive constellation of symbols, emotions, and ideas, nationalism can also offer the redemptive language of liberation for long-subjugated or humiliated groups. Conductor Leonard Bernstein used to say that whatever statement one makes about Gustav Mahler's music the opposite is equally true. This is the case with nationalism, as well. It is often described as archaic, anti-modern, traditionalist, in short reactionary. Other interpretations see it as a driving force of liberation, an ideology of collective emancipation, and a source of human pride. Whatever one thinks of nationalism, its ubiquitous presence at the end of this century is beyond any doubt. The problem, therefore, is to find ways for reconciling it with the democratic agenda. In other words: How can one tame that violent propensity which a Georgian philosopher aptly called "the illiberal flesh of ethnicity"?¹ Can national symbols and sentiments become part of the ethos of a civil society?

The roots of contemporary nationalism can be traced to the early days of the ideological age: the myth of the nation was created by historians, poets and philosophers in the era when nation/states appeared to be the political units par excellence. If we take for instance Polish nationalism of the 19th century, it certainly had these romantic, salvationist, and redemptive components: deprived of statehood, Poles cherished an idealized vision of national community unified by unique traditions of heroism, martyrdom, and sacrifice. During that romantic stage, being a Pole was first and foremost a state of mind, not a biological determination. Referring to this persistent, though not unique component of Polish nationalism, Andrzej Walicki wrote:

"The dominant form of the Polish national ideology became romantic nationalism, conceiving nations as moral entities and agents of universal progress: a nationalism passionately believing in the brotherhood of nations and in the ethicization of politics, whereby it was hoped to put an end to such political crimes as had culminated in the martyrdom of Poland. The most extreme and best articulated form of the romantic

nationalism was religiously inspired romantic messianism, which saw the Poles as the chosen nation, the spiritual leaders of mankind and the sacred instrument of universal salvation."²

Later, during the 20th century, this variety of romantic nationalism was increasingly challenged by a new concept of the nation rooted in common ancestry and ethnic bonds, primarily developed by Roman Dmowski, the founder of Polish modern, integral nationalism. But the myth of Poland's unique status within the international community and her predestined mission has continued to impregnate both political discourse and practice, from Piłsudski to Solidarity. Poles of course are not unique in celebrating this special link between their national destiny and the salvation of mankind. As formulated by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Russian nationalism had this strong Messianic dimension, linked to the belief that a nation has a predestined role in the relationship between God and humanity: "If a great people doesn't believe that the truth is only to be found in itself alone (in itself alone and in it exclusively);" Dostoevsky wrote in his novel *The Possessed*, "if it doesn't believe that it alone is fit and destined to raise up and save all the rest by its truth, it would at once sink into being ethnographical material and not a great people."³

The nationalist myth owes its galvanizing power to its unique blend of scientific and emotional claims. It pretends to speak in the name of the nation "as One," as an all-embracing totality, to offer compelling motivations for action, and no less impressive visions of the enemy. The problem is how does one define nationhood: liberals emphasize the civic bonds, whereas militant nationalists focus on ethnic purity based on common origins and presumed common destiny. The former favor dialogue, tolerance and inclusion, the latter champion forced assimilation, segregation or exclusion of those with different ancestries. The competition between these visions cuts across every single political community and symbolizes one of the most tenacious contradictions of modernity. Furthermore, neither camp is homogenous. In post-Leninist countries, one encounters among the illiberal nationalists former communists, socialists, neo-fascists, traditional conservatives and populists committed to the search for a "third way" between communism and capitalism. What do all these groups have in common? Most likely, their hostility to democratic, liberal, modern values, plus a common conviction that individuals should relinquish their rights in favor of collective aspira-

tions and interests. In the same vein, the liberal, or civic approach to nationalism is held by Christian Democrats (as in the case of Slovakia), liberal democrats, and even former communists converted to the values of an open society (as in the case of Hungary and Poland).

A point that needs to be emphasized is that these two paradigms are related to prevailing values, traditions, and the development of civic institutions and mentalities. This factor explains why liberal values seem to get the upper hand in Central Europe, whereas the Balkans have been prone to ethnic strife, populist collectivism and plebiscitary democracies. True, liberal and illiberal versions of nationalism exist in all these countries, but their impact is different in Romania and Serbia, compared to Slovenia and the Czech Republic.⁴ The problem is how do the political and cultural elites use the existing symbolic capital and how do ideologically distinct political formations co-opt the nationalist rhetoric to suit their tactical goals. The ultimate competition in the region is thus between those formations which share a civic-based conception of nationalism and those which adhere to confrontational, exclusionary ethnic nationalism. As tragically demonstrated in the former Yugoslavia, the revival of ethnonationalist politics has become a hindrance to civic-liberal development of the post-communist societies. In most of East and Central Europe ethnonationalism has warped, modified and fundamentally altered the left-right ideological spectrum. As Janusz Bugajski writes: "A nationalist-civic spectrum has intersected with the traditional left-right continuum, often making the ideological identity of specific parties confusing. Both the non-ethnic civic orientation and the collectivist ethnic-based option have been adopted by parties espousing either right-wing, centrist, or left-wing programs."⁵

Usually, it is intellectuals who manufacture discourses that justify nationalist identifications and projections; then, in turn, the mobilized masses give these discourses the validation of practical realities. While in the 1960s nationalism appeared at least in the West as an extinct myth, the end of communism and the new era of international ethnic conflict that followed the Cold War have made nationalism the main competitor to liberalism and civil society. Its main strength comes precisely from its ability to substitute for the loss of certainties and to offer immediate explanations for failure, confusion, and discomfiture. Nationalism caters to painful collective anxieties, alleviates angst and reduces the individual to one lowest common denominator: the simple fact of eth-

nic belonging. Romanian exiled writer Norman Manea, who survived the Holocaust as a teenager only to be later persecuted because of his Jewishness and non-conformist ideas under the Ceaușescu regime, gave a powerful description of this ethnocentric temptation as the main rival to the civic vision of the community associated with modernity and liberalism:

*"The increased nationalism all around the world, the dangerous conflicts among minorities in Eastern Europe, and the growing xenophobia in Western Europe emphasize again one of the main contradictions of our time, between centrifugal, cosmopolitan modernity and the centripetal need (or at least nostalgia) for belonging. ... The modern world faces its solitude and its responsibilities without the artifice of a protective dependency or a fictive utopian coherence. Fundamentalist and separatist movements of all kinds, the return of a tribal mentality in so many human communities, are expressions of the need to reestablish a well-ordered cohesion which would protect the enclave against the assault of the unknown, of diversity, heterogeneity, and alienation."*⁶

Ethnic nationalism appeals more often than not to primary instincts of unity and identification with one's own group: foreigners are often seen as vicious destabilizers, dishonest breakers of traditions, agents of dissolution. Nationalism, indeed, sanctifies tradition which was once described by Gilbert K. Chesterton as the "right to vote granted to the dead people." Especially in times of social frustration, foreigners tend to be demonized and scapegoated. A Ukrainian nationalist, for instance, would see Russians (and/or Jews) as forever conspiring against Ukraine's independence and prosperity. A Romanian one would regard members of the Hungarian minority as belonging to a unified body perpetually involved in subversive and irredentist activities. A Croatian militant nationalist would never trust Serbs, while Serbian ethnic fundamentalists would always invoke Croatia's alliance with Nazi Germany as an argument against trust and ethnic coexistence. Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian nationalisms are colored by the memory of the Soviet (and previously Russian) occupations of the Baltic states. National discourses serve not only to preserve the sense of ethnic identity, but also to continuously "reinvent the tradition," regenerate the historical mythology, infuse an infra-rational, transcendental content to the sense of national identity. In the words of a contemporary Lithuanian writer:

"As the nation enters history, the word of the poet must acquire the properties of a narrative discourse, must grow to become a myth that could in some ways function like those of epic Greek antiquity, when they gave the people a soul, an identity liberated by time.... The present situation of the Baltic states requires a new approach to the myth of nationhood, one that would cut through the bourgeois sentimentalism of a small country and the reveries of the romantic era to reach back to the roots which were there at the dawn of history and before."⁷

With its shattered identities and wavering loyalties, the post-communist world offers a fertile ground for delusional xenophobic fantasies to thrive and capture the imagination of millions of disaffected individuals. National homogenization becomes the battle cry of political elites for whom unity and cohesion are the ultimate values. The Leninist binary logic ("us" versus "them") has been replaced by the nationalist vision that sanctifies the ethnic in-group and demonizes the "aliens." Those who criticize this trend are immediately stigmatized as a "fifth column" made up of "inside enemies." For Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, for instance, it is only the intellectuals supportive of the "national spirit and self-determination" who deserve the name of intelligentsia. All others, he maintains, are just "Pharisees."⁸ This continuous invention of enemies and hatreds aggravates the climate of insecurity and makes many honest individuals despair about the future of their societies.

The fact that almost everybody in the post-communist world pays lips service to democracy does not mean that liberal values are prevailing. Liberalism in this context does not mean a suppression of ethnic differences and group identities, but an institutional and cultural effort to diminish and organize these distinctions "just enough to increase the chances for peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation."⁹ But radical nationalism opposes precisely these values of cooperation, tolerance and dialogue. In countries like Croatia, Romania, Serbia, or Slovakia, the mystique of the nation is used to justify the individuals' submission to an increasingly authoritarian state bureaucracy. This is a trend well depicted by Slavenka Drakulić, the Croatian journalist and novelist:

"In Croatia, nationalism that erases all differences and survives on the hatred of others is confused with patriotism, which is in fact the freedom to love your country in the best

way you as an individual can. This is the juncture at which, in the best manner of the old Bolsheviks, the production of enemies began. As if it is not enough to have outside enemies, such as the Serbs, the 'good' fundamentalist Croats began to search for, and in their feverish search to produce, 'inside enemies'."¹⁰

The new constitutions adopted in the post-communist states locate the source of state sovereignty in the majority ethnic nation, rather than in the individual citizen. They are ethnic-oriented and potentially discriminating against minorities. Because of these practices, for instance, more than one third of Estonia's population was barred from participating in the 1992 elections. Anthropologist Robert Hayden calls this variety of post-communist reification of the ethno-nationalist domination granted to the ethnic majority to the detriment of the minorities, constitutional nationalism.¹¹ Constitutions are used to enshrine the sovereignty and privileges of the dominant nation, whereas the minorities' complaints are treated as anti-national behavior. In Romania, for instance, an education law adopted in 1995 forces ethnic Hungarian school students not only take mandatory Romanian language and literature classes, but also to take Romanian history and geography lessons in Romanian. Political commentator Andrei Cornea describes this approach as "the mentality of the main resident" that invests Romanian language with a liturgical authority.¹²

This monograph examines the dynamics of post-communist nationalism, the tension between liberal and illiberal, collectivistic definitions of national community and the intellectual struggles over which type shall prevail in each country. Contemporary ethnic nationalism is seen less as a resurrection of the pre-communist politics of intolerance, and more as an avatar of the Leninist effort to construct the perfectly unified body politic. To be sure, the past is often used to justify the resentful fantasies of the nationalist demagogues. This "return of history" is, however, more of an ideological reconstruction meant to respond to present-day grievances than a primordial, inescapable destiny of these nations cursed to continuously fight with and fear each other.¹³ As these societies move away from the Leninist order, nationalism has emerged as the prevailing ideological myth. Whether this post-communist nationalism will become civic or will turn into vicious chauvinism, is too early to forecast.¹⁴

Communism and Nationalism

With its internationalist vision, Marxist Communism strove to overcome the limitations of national consciousness. "The proletarians have no homeland," the founding fathers of the doctrine proclaimed in the *Communist Manifesto*. They were wrong and internationalism turned out to be a utopian program.¹⁵ In reality, as the collapse of the German left has shown twice in this century (first in 1914, then after Hitler's takeover in 1933), proletarians do have a homeland and they are ready to die for it as arduously as the members of any other social group. In the name of the national interest large masses were mobilized into collective hysteria, suicidal uprisings and catastrophic wars. During World War I, the cult of *la patrie et les morts* (the fatherland and the dead ones) was more than a poetic metaphor: it provided millions of French people with the belief that fighting the Germans was a sacred cause. In the same vein, pan-German nationalism combined with pseudo-scientific racism (the doctrine of the *volkish* community) served as a main ingredient for Hitler's doctrine of imperialist expansion.

At the same time, Joseph Stalin's appeal to Russian nationalism and Hitler's scorn for the Slavic "inferior race" enhanced the enthusiasm of the Red Army and the Russian people in the anti-Fascist struggle (the "Great Patriotic War"). Stalin articulated war goals in terms of national survival, and even some of the most adamant anti-Bolsheviks closed ranks behind the "little father of the peoples" to defend the holy Russian soil. In 1948, it was nationalism which helped Josip Broz Tito build up the anti-Stalinist consensus in Yugoslavia and the ideology of "national communism." Democratic national ideals inspired Polish and Hungarian revolutionaries in their anti-Stalinist struggles in 1956. Nationalism has been the corrosive force which led to the break-up of the last colonial empire, the USSR.¹⁶ No less significant, it has been the legitimation for power-thirsty Third World self-appointed saviors to posture as "national redeemers."¹⁷ Some communist dictators understood that their stay in power would be guaranteed by resort to nationalist rhetoric. Romania's Nicolae Ceaușescu or Albania's Enver Hoxha knew how to present their autarchic regimes as reincarnations of millennia-old dreams of independence. The whole propaganda system under Ceaușescu was set in high gear to present him as the reincarnation of the Dacian and Thracian tribal chieftains who had resisted Roman invasions. In 1987, Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milošević used nationalist slo-

gans to build his power. As Tito's legacy disintegrated, Milošević turned into a hyper-nationalist demagogue, abandoned the Marxist tenets, and unleashed his struggle for the creation of Great Serbia. He postured as a resurrected Prince Lazar, the Serbian hero who had died in the Kosovo battle of 1389 opposing the Ottoman Empire's expansion. Similarly, Franjo Tudjman, a Croat communist general, broke with Titoism in the 1970s and espoused militant nationalist symbols, including some used by the Ustasha, pro-Nazi regime (whom he had fought against during World War II). This choice turned out to pay off. In 1995, Tudjman was the extremely popular president of an independent Croatia, successfully pursuing his strategy of building a nationally homogenous state by expelling Serbs from areas they had inhabited for centuries.¹⁸

Whether these leaders do indeed believe the nationalist myths with which they operate is less important: what is significant is that such discourses offer the individual the sentiments of pride, security, and unity so coveted for in times of traumatic dislocation. As British political philosopher John Dunn points out, nationalism is by definition an ambivalent project: "Nationalism is the starkest political shame of the twentieth century, the deepest, most intractable and yet most unanticipated blot on the political history of the world since the year 1900. But it is also the very tissue of modern political sentiment, the most widespread, the most unthinking and the most immediate political disposition of all at least among the literate populations of the world."¹⁹ Indeed, as the Marxist utopian creed faded away, nationalist discourses have (re)entered the scene, ready to fill in the apparent ideological void. Precisely because the social space appears ominously unpredictable, with weak civil societies and still inchoate political parties, individuals invest their aspirations for solidarity and belonging into the nation. The celebration of the community as the ultimate reservoir of human dignity and the downplaying of individual rights are usually associated with the exaltation of military virtues, the cult of the state, and the persecution of independent thinking. Mythologized history becomes the alibi for state-sponsored discriminations and violence. In the words of Daniel Chirot:

"If communities rather than individuals are recognized as the only legitimate basis for social organization, during moments of economic and political crisis people will evaluate their own life chances on the basis of their own communal

membership, and they will treat their competitors as other communal groups, rather than as individuals. When this is backed by historical mythologies that explain the past in terms of good and bad communities and demands for historical justice, civil war, or tyranny by one group or another, becomes just a matter of time."²⁰

Post-communist nationalism is intimately linked to the Leninist legacy. It is not simply a return to pre-communist traditions, but rather their development through the incorporation of such psycho-emotional elements as ideological zeal, egalitarian populism, and deep contempt for genuine cultural elites. Far from being a popular creed, Marxist internationalism was nothing but an empty slogan in most of Eastern Europe. How many of the Bulgarian, East German, Russian, or Romanian citizens nourished feelings of fraternal solidarity with the Angolan guerrillas, or the Chilean, Greek, Portuguese, or Spanish communists? How many believed in the myth of the Warsaw Pact as a community of equal brotherly states? It is now obvious that ideology and a number of political goals shared by the oligarchic elites in these countries were not sufficient to create an internationalist popular consciousness. Instead, under the veneer of the official slogans, nationalist passions continued to smolder and even irrigate the Leninist regimes. Thus, Zbigniew Brzezinski noticed this unification of Leninist style and nationalist themes in the communist experiments:

"... though it proclaimed itself to be a doctrine of internationalism, communism in fact intensified popular nationalist passions. It produced a political culture imbued with intolerance, self-righteousness, rejection of social compromise and a massive inclination toward self-glorifying oversimplification. On the level of belief, dogmatic communism thus fused with and even reinforced intolerant nationalism; on the level of practice, the destruction of such relatively internationalist classes as the aristocracy or the business elite further reinforced the populist inclination toward nationalistic chauvinism. Nationalism was therefore nurtured, rather than diluted, in the communist experience."²¹

This strange synthesis of unavowed national ambition with ideological monism explains the intensity of nationalist passions in the post-communist world: ethnic exclusiveness is a continuation of the Leninist reductionist hubris, of its adversity to anything smacking of difference, uniqueness, or alterity. Anti-liberalism, collectivism, and staunch anti-intellectualism blend together

in the new discourses of national self-aggrandizement. At the same time, the recollection of the times of oppression under the communist regimes is used to bolster a sense of uniqueness. Suffering is often exploited to justify a strange competition for the most victimized nation status. No less important, because communism was seen by many as an alien imposition, a dictatorship of "foreigners," contemporary radical nationalism is also intensely anti-communist. Ironically, the nationalist zealots are often former communists for whom the internationalist veneer of the old ideology had always been an embarrassing and shallow ritual.

What Is Nationalism?

The literature on nations and nationalism is dauntingly diverse. For some authors, nationalism is first and foremost an expression of insecurity, the exacerbated rationalization of unbearable inferiority complexes. They see nationalism as the most vibrant channel able to give vent to feelings of frustration, discontent, exclusion, and wrath, especially among communities which have long experienced historical humiliations. This often results in national martyrologies which fuse self-pity with self-idealization, and even in a "cult of failure." In the words of Polish writer Andrzej Bryk:

"Modern Polish history has been a story of nearly constant defeat and internal failure. A defeated people lives by myths, clings to myths. Apologetic and martyrological visions of national history only mirror an incurable romantic despair. Poles thus look at their history in terms of 'honor' versus 'shame' because categories of victory or national success are largely beyond the modern Polish consciousness and any of the institutions that shape it. Honor seems to Poles the only reliable justification of the national existence."²²

Other scholars insist that nationalism can play the role of a positive search for collective identities, especially among populations long deprived of independent forms of political organization. Nationalism is therefore not essentially hostile to civic and liberal values. Admitting that tensions cannot be always avoided between liberalism and nationalism, Yael Tamir proposes a normative concept of liberal nationalism:

"... the liberal tradition, with its respect for personal autonomy, reflection, and choice, and the national tradition, with its

emphasis on belonging, loyalty, and solidarity, although generally seen as mutually exclusive, can indeed accommodate each other. Liberals can acknowledge the importance of belonging, membership, and cultural affiliations, as well as the particular moral commitments that follow from them. Nationalists can appreciate the value of personal autonomy and individual rights and freedoms, and sustain a commitment for social justice both between and within nations."²³

Some writers argue that nationalism is the main underpinning of nations, that it precedes and allows for nation-formation, and that without nationalism, that is without the modern ideological legitimization of national ambitions and aspirations, nations did not exist. Ernest Gellner, for instance, insists that nationalism "invents nations where they do not exist."²⁴ Benedict Anderson defines the nation as an imagined community, but not in the sense that it is unreal or false: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their community. ... Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."²⁵ The key point is to understand that nations are not simply invented, but imagined on the base of shared perceptions, feelings, memories, and desires for sameness. Thus, the ideological myth called nationalism is not the creator of the nation: this would mean to endow it with a demiurgic power no ideology or myth can have. What this mythology of origins, foundation, belonging, and destiny does is create the sentiment of unity, homogeneity, and cohesion among otherwise disparate groups and individuals frequently (but not always) related by a shared territory, common ancestry, linguistic identity (or strong similarity), and cultural legacies (symbols, religion, folklore, mores).

Nationalism turns belonging to a nation into a status symbol: one becomes a participant, an actor as it were in the historical evolution of the community, an inheritor of all the past experiences and a producer of legacies for the next generations. Nationalism justifies identity, and reassures the individual that feelings of solitude, defeat, and alienation can be superseded through immersion in the larger community based on presumed sameness. The myth of the nation is a response to the need for sameness, for integration within a broader entity, and also to the yearning for human solidarity. Nationalism is thus a matter of belonging, fra-

ternity, and solidarity. It is also one of differentiation, alterity, and eventually exclusion. Yael Tamir captures this function of nationalism when she writes:

"Membership in a nation, unlike membership in a gender, class, or region, thus enables an individual to find a place not only in the world in which he or she lives, but also in an uninterrupted chain of being. Nationhood promotes fraternity both among fellow members and across generations. These features are desperately needed in an ever-changing, urban, technological age. In this sense ... nationalism is not the pathology of the modern age but an answer to its malaise - to the neurosis, alienation, and meaninglessness of modern times."²⁶

This approach is indeed indebted to the view held by Isaiah Berlin, one of the wisest students of the intellectual and moral dilemmas of this century. In his view, nationalism is more often than not, and especially in our age, a response to degradation and a search for dignity, a desperate attempt to right the wrongs of a cruel, unjust history and assert long-denied collective, i.e., national freedoms: "Nationalism is an inflamed condition of national consciousness which can be, and has on occasion been, tolerant and peaceful. It usually seems to be caused by wounds, some sort of collective humiliation."²⁷ In a similar vein, Liah Greenfeld, the author of a pathbreaking study on nationalism, sees it as a road to modernity: "National identity is, fundamentally, a matter of dignity. It gives people reasons to be proud."²⁸ At the same time, Greenfeld carefully introduces a crucial distinction between two versions of nationalism: one individualistic, liberal, and civic-democratic; the other aggressive, collectivistic and marked by social and ethnic *ressentiment*. The former characterizes societies where modernity amounted to the development of strong civil societies, guaranteed individual rights and freedoms, consitutionalism, competitive markets, and solid urban structures. The latter, it seems, tends to be prevailing in nations with a delayed and problematic modernization (Germany, Russia, most of East-Central Europe):

"The reification of the nation in the framework of collectivistic nationalism increases the susceptibility of a nation to *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* not only makes a nation more aggressive, but represent an unusually powerful stimulant of national sentiment and collective action, which makes it easier to mobilize collectivistic nations for aggressive war-

fare than to mobilize individualistic nations, in which national commitment is normally dependent on rational calculations."²⁹

Other authors are reluctant to recognize that nationalism contains any potentially positive, civic and democratic quality. They insist that nationalism is inherently primordialist, essentialist, and conducive to exclusion and persecution. One of them, British historian and political scientist Elie Kedourie, presciently wrote in 1992 (several months before his death): "The disintegration and failure of socialism in the Soviet empire and its satellites has not meant the disappearance of the ideological style of politics - far from it. As we can see it has produced, in a revulsion against socialist tyranny, a revival or recrudescence of nationalism - that other ideological obsession."³⁰ For Bogdan Denitch, an American democratic socialist theorist, nationalism defined as a form of exclusive communitarian politics, is responsible for the resurrection of Eastern Europe's political ghosts:

"Nationalism, whether old or new, provides a collective identity which is a powerful magnet when old universalisms are collapsing. Those politics are dangerous because, by definition, they exclude a number of subjects of the new nation states from full citizenship which is limited to the national community. ... As such it [nationalism] stands in fundamental opposition to liberal notions of individual as distinctive from collective rights; the community is posited as the relevant unit when it comes to rights, to grievances which need to be addressed, and to representation."³¹

In other words, nationalism as a celebration of the ethnic community, or the people, is the most powerful post-communist political myth.

Populism is a larger discourse that integrates nationalism in a structure of expectations and demands for protection from the drastic changes imposed by political and economic modernization. This "national-populism," argues French political scientist Michel Wieworka, is a response to deep-seated and excruciating fears of failure. It is not inherently anti-modern, but it expresses the yearning among many strata for not being ostracized, excluded or abandoned during the ongoing seismic transformation:

"Populism ensures the amalgamation of unsatisfied social demands with fears linked to the risk of exclusion and social

breakdown, and with references to identity that these demands have fostered, primarily through a xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and fundamentally differentialist nationalism. ... Populism therefore has a mythical structure that tends to reconcile a positive valuing of modernity and a rejection of what modernity implies in terms of destructuring."³²

Nationalist and populist expectations and actions are thus responses to fear, identity crisis, frustration, malaise and other forms of ill-adjustment to the dramatic changes and dislocations associated with both modernity and post-modernity. This is the approach used here. I share the misgivings about the destructive power of ethnocentric fantasies expressed by such different writers as Elie Kedourie, Adam Michnik, Eric Hobsbawm, or George Konrád.

The breakup of the monolithic ideology of state socialism created a new burden of reality and, as T. S. Eliot once wrote: "Human kind cannot bear very much reality" (*Murder in the Cathedral*). In the past, the individual could identify the "Party" with the source of all unpleasantness, hardships and harassments (or, vice versa, with all achievements and heroic exploits). This externalization of evil (or of good) was psychologically reassuring: it offered a clear-cut (even if misleading and schizophrenic) distinction between "Them" and "Us." A higher or lower degree of complicity was denied thanks to this fictitious split between the public and the private spheres.³³ In the post—communist world, the disappearance of the old "Other" created a need for the construction of a new one. As Katherine Verdery noticed:

"Senses of self had been built up and reproduced for decades knowing that the enemy was the Communists. Until new modes of self-constitution arise, we might expect a transformation of Communism's us-them into that other dichotomous social organization, ethnic distinction. Thus, persons self-constituted against a Communist Other now stand against an Other who is ethnic."³⁴

Minorities, especially ethnic ones, are thus the perfect candidate for the targeted figure of the enemy. Nations are presented almost universally as victims of foreigners, and the communist regimes are described as engineered by aliens to serve foreign interests. Russian nationalists, including some of the most gifted fiction writers belonging to the "Siberian School," have not tired

of blaming the Jews for the Bolshevik destruction of the traditional values and structures. Needless to add, some of the most frantic propagandists for such dark visions are former communists themselves, including a number of former communist intellectuals. Writing primarily about the tragic events in his native Yugoslavia, American poet Charles Simic strikes a depressing and unfortunately much too true note when he observes: "The terrifying thing about modern intellectuals everywhere is that they are always changing idols. At least religious fanatics stick mostly to what they believe in. All the rabid nationalists in Eastern Europe were Marxists yesterday and Stalinists last week."³⁵ There may be some exaggeration in this statement, but not too much if one thinks of the readiness of intellectuals like once critical Marxist philosopher Mihajlo Marković or novelist Dobrica Ćosić to endorse Milošević's nationalist rhetoric.

Several years before the end of communism in Europe, Joseph Rothschild argued that "ethnonationalism, or politicized ethnicity, remains the world's major ideological legitimator and delegitimator of states, regimes, and governments."³⁶ Since nationalism provides the most energizing of the identity myths of modernity, a more powerful and vivid one than either Marxist socialism, liberal universalism, or constitutional patriotism, one needs to see what its main forms are in the post-communist world. Is nationalism a fundamental threat to the emergence of politically tolerant structures? Is it, as Adam Michnik, G. M. Tamás, or Jan Urban, would argue, a poisonous form of chauvinism, a new totalitarian ideology, a destructive force intrinsically inimical to liberal values? Are these societies hostages to their past, doomed to eternally re-enact old animosities and conflicts? In reality, one needs to distinguish between varieties of nationalism: the inclusive versus the exclusive, the liberal versus the radical, or, as Yael Tamir proposes, the polycentric versus the ethnocentric.³⁷ Ethnocentrism is a form of nationalism which turns the real distinction between the in-group and the others into an insuperable attribute, a fact of destiny that places one's nation in a superior position to all the other ones. Under post-communist circumstances, this ethnocentric, rather than the liberal version of nationalism tends to get the upperhand. Distrustful of any rational analyses, it appeals to sentiment, affect, and emotion. Truth-content is practically irrelevant in such narratives bound to foster dignity and self-pride. We believe political myths because we want to believe them, not because they are true. A prophet is followed as much because he

persuades his adepts as because he says what they want to hear. We trust certain idealized interpretations of history because they give us pleasure, moments of satisfaction, and perceived magnitude.

Political myths are influential because they offer dramatic narratives with multiple, indeed inexhaustible symbolic meanings. Fusing the profane and the sacred, political myths are stories with prescriptive, paradigmatic value: the existence of a mythical precedent in terms of reference to the primordial origins of a community, the "ur-history," gives nationalism its seductive power. Such political myths make us feel pure, and good, and heroic. As Anthony Smith put it: "The truth-content of unearthed memories is less important culturally and politically than their abundance, variety of drama (their aesthetic qualities) or their example of loyalty, nobility and self-sacrifice (their moral qualities) that inspire emulation and bind the present generation to the 'glorious dead'."³⁸

In the economy of this monograph, I propose the following definition of radical (illiberal) nationalism: it represents an inflated, often self-serving and self-centered assessment of one's ethnic group's virtues, merits, misfortunes, and presumed historical mission and, by implication, a denial of other groups' similar rights, sufferings and aspirations. It is clear that I do not include benign or liberal versions of nationalism within the limits of this definition. It bears upon integral visions of the nation as the repository of communal virtues, a sacred entity that requires endless devotion and selfless sacrifices from its members. According to this vision, one is either born a Serb (or a Hungarian, or a Russian) or one is not. In other words, this view precludes the possibility of one becoming a member of the nation, no matter what the individual is ready to do in order to achieve this status: religious conversion, outstanding literary performance, readiness to enroll in the army and fight for the "Fatherland," etc. This is ultimately the xenophobic nationalism described by the respected Russian cultural historian Dmitrii Likhachev as spawned by malice and hatred for other nations (chauvinism) and for those people in one's nation who do not share nationalistic views.³⁹ It is a manifestation of a nation's weakness, of a reaction to threats to national traditions reminiscent of Isaiah Berlin's "bent twig, forced down so severely that, when released, it lashes back with fury."⁴⁰

However, in dealing with nationalism, i.e., the awareness and assertion of national belonging, we have to distinguish between moderate and radical (integral) versions of nationalism. Not

all forms of nationalism are exclusive, racist and murderous. Likhachev accurately contrasts patriotism with nationalism, characterizing the former as a conscious love for one's own nation and its national qualities and, by extension, acceptance of others since it is inseparable from an attitude of tolerance. The nationalism of the French Revolution or that of 1848 was romantic, generous, and in many senses universalistic. Just as one can distinguish between progressive and conservative nationalisms, there is a difference as well between the nationalism of the underdog and that of the imperial overlord. There is for instance the Great Serbian nationalism of Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić, and there is the nationalism of the Albanians in Kosovo who fight for their legitimate civic rights. But do Albanians fight for their ethnic rights, or for universal human rights? By simply opposing imperialism, nationalism does not turn into a democratic ideology. Anti-imperialist sentiment, justified as it is, is an umbrella-concept under which different visions of the political community compete with each other. One should be careful, therefore, in avoiding the idealization of the independence-oriented nationalist movements: many of them use nationalist values as a camouflage for the authoritarian, even dictatorial propensities of self-appointed national redeemers. A national liberation movement is not necessarily committed to pluralism and diversity, as the experience of so many countries in Africa and Asia has tragically demonstrated. After all, Fidel Castro fanned anti-North American grievances to mobilize mass support for an ideological tyranny based on his personal cult and the elimination of any political rivals. It is not true that Fidel moved from nationalism to totalitarianism, but rather that the despotic element was contained from the outset in his belief system; and Leninism served him better than any other ideology in establishing his monopoly on power. Whenever dealing with nationalist discourses, one should keep in mind the need to identify their political orientation, i.e., the underlying political vision which inspires its militants. The case of Georgian nationalist leader and former anti-Soviet dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia is significant in this respect. The son of one of Georgia's celebrated writers, he became his country's first elected president after independence in 1991 and was violently deposed a year later. His adamant fiend was former Georgian party boss and Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, whom Gamsakhurdia accused of being a Russian agent ready to endorse Moscow's domination of his country. Worshipped like a national apostle by his partisans,

Gamsakhurdia used power to smash any form of dissent, cracked down on opposition leaders and the press, accusing them of working for foreign interests. Eventually, after his overthrow, he fled to Southern Russia, and, after an aborted attempt to regain power, committed suicide.⁴¹

More than ever, in our times of nationalist furies and ethnic cleansings, when whole cities are bulldozed and hundreds of thousands are forcibly expelled from their homes and turned into superfluous populations of unwanted refugees, Ernest Renan's classic definition of the nation is worth being remembered for its intense, unabashed humanity:

"The existence of a nation is ... a daily plebiscite, just as that of the individual is a continual affirmation of life. ... A nation has no more right than a king to say to a province: 'You belong to me; so I will take you.' A province means to us its inhabitants; and if anyone has a right to be consulted in the matter, it is the inhabitant. It is never to the true interest of a nation to annex or keep a country against its will. The people's wish is after all the only justifiable criterion, to which we must always come back."⁴²

Below, I propose a minimal typology of nationalism in post-communist societies that does not squarely reject the trends toward national assertiveness as long as these do not involve exclusiveness and intolerance:

A. Civic nationalism recognizes individual rights as fundamental for the construction of a liberal order and locates the sovereignty of the people in the defense of individual rights for all members of the political community, regardless of ethnic origin and any other differences.⁴³ It highlights a post-traditional and post-conventional identity and the possibility of multiple identity referentials (not only ethnic, but also civic ones). It is a "soft" form of nationalism rooted in the democratic traditions, be they conservative, liberal, or social democratic. This vision allows for nationality to be acquired and rejects the "genetic" definition of ethnic belonging. It tends to be characteristic of a number of prominent political and cultural figures, including leaders of the Liberal Party and the National-Peasant Christian and Democratic Party in Romania, the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) and the core of the Magyar Democratic Forum in Hungary, Poland's Union of Freedom, Ján Čarnogurský's Christian Democratic Party in Slovakia,

important segments of the "Rukh" movement in Ukraine, etc. It is not xenophobic and stresses the need for inclusion and tolerance of minorities. Especially in countries with such a turbulent history, this trend should be seen as a constructive development, rather than as an alarming threat. It offers the individual a minimal sense of security (protection) and belonging to a community in times of dashed illusions and axiological tremors. It is close to the "new nationalism" described by Polish political philosopher Marcin Krol in that it is not an exaltation of "Blut und Boden" and need not have volkish, racist, tribalistic, and chauvinistic components.⁴⁴

A characteristic of this form of national affirmation is its primarily cultural-civic dimension and a refusal to accept the jargon of extreme nationalism. Anti-communism is often a major element of this direction, and since in Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia communism and chauvinism were intimately intertwined, this trend has shown an increased sensitivity to the plight of ethnic minorities (persecuted by xenophobic communists). Liberal nationalism recognizes the pre-eminence of the moral person, the elective dimension of personal identity, and refuses to see the individual as a prisoner of his or her communal belonging. In a certain sense, to the extent that it does not exalt the superiority of the national ideal over any other one, and it does not sacralize the nation as the ultimate and indisputable source of human identity, liberal nationalism can be seen as "post-nationalist." It values reflection over emotion, and it insists on the autonomy of human will and choice.

Liberal nationalism is not the self-absorbed cultural nationalism that historians have long associated with East European societies: autarchic, exclusive, parochial, and xenophobic. Hans Kohn gave the classic interpretation of this Eastern cultural nationalist tradition as opposed to the constructive, predominantly civic and political Western trend: "Nationalism in the West arose in an effort to build a nation in the political reality and struggle of the present without too much sentimental regard for the past; nationalists in Central and Eastern Europe created, often out of myths of the past and the dreams of the future, an ideal fatherland, closely linked to the past, devoid of any immediate connection with the present, and expected to become sometime a reality."⁴⁵ One should however correct this approach by recognizing that the sentimental treatment of the past is not a specific East European feature: think of the popular French recollections of the "Great War," or

the ritualization of the monarchic institution and its symbols in Britain. The point that needs to be made is that Western intellectuals have been more critical of their countries' traditions and have frequently exposed this sentimental false memories as self-serving mythologies, whereas their peers in the East have been among the most enthusiastic manufacturers of national legends of glory and victimization. To deny the status of Serbia as continuously martyred nation and to deconstruct the country's national mythology is tantamount to being a traitor. In the same vein, Croat or Romanian intellectuals risk being branded "parasites," "vermin" or "rootless cosmopolitans" when they dare expose the prevailing nationalist dogmas in their own countries. In the West, to be sure, this criminalization of myth-breaking endeavors is not the rule. This situation is linked to the existence of communities of reflexive discourse and the higher level of tolerance for unorthodox contributions in established liberal democracies. No less important is the fact that, historically, East and Central European romantic movements and intellectuals have promoted the vision of a pure, pristine original (primordial) ethnic community whose state of bliss was traumatically shattered or even destroyed by the advent of modernity (industrial and urban civilization). In this respect, they shared the anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois ethos of the German romantics, with their mystical exaltation of the lost values of Blut und Boden (blood and soil). The enduring power of this romantic tradition in East and Central Europe explains the intensity of the ongoing cultivation of historical fallacies meant to placate anxieties and reassure the frightened individual that he or she can recover the sense of lost unity in the overarching ethnic totality. This persistence of neo-romantic perception of the past, usually imbued with feelings of self-pity and self-idealization, makes the task of liberal nationalists all the more daunting.

In post-communist societies, precisely because of the experience of the homogenizing efforts of the Leninist party/state, liberal nationalists promote the rights of particularity and diversity. Unfortunately, this trend has been less effective and influential than other, less benign versions of nationalism. It is to be detected in different political formations, from left to right. One finds liberal nationalist views and activists as much among former communists as among the former dissidents.

B. *Ethnic, less liberal or illiberal nationalism* encompasses different trends whose common feature is the collectivist interpretation of

the nation, the exaltation of tradition and traditional institutions, the cultivation of heroic mythologies of the past, and a certain distrust of Western liberal values as "alien" to the local communal ethos. By postulating the common will of the "People" as the supreme national value, this version of nationalism paves the way for authoritarian experiments. It is always a minority which claims to be in the know, to have the right (or mission) to interpret this collective will, and to impose its vision on the less "enlightened" masses.

1. Conservative nationalism is often associated with Christian democracy and folk traditionalism. While its proponents formally recognize the importance of individual rights, they tend to exaggerate the role of the past, the influence of the Church, and the nefarious impact of Western mass culture and liberal institutions. In many cases, these groups and parties praise pre-modern values, especially the agrarian communal bonds, and lambaste the role of financial capital and industry in destroying the pure ethno-religious community. Whether they confess it or not, conservative nationalists have a serious grudge against liberalism, which they portray as soulless, atomistic, and mechanical. The sovereignty of the people as a whole prevails in this view over the rights of the individuals. An example of such conservative nationalist party is Croatia's Democratic Union. Initially a presidential party, dominated by Franjo Tudjman and his close associates, the Union split in 1994 between a moderate ("centrist") faction, advocating integration with Euro-Atlantic structures and closer cooperation with the West. The other major wing is made up of "isolationists," of "Croatia first-ists" whose concerns are to crystallize a uniquely distinct Croatian ethno-linguistic identity and contemplate ways of absorbing Bosnia and Hercegovina's Croatian majority areas into an expanded "Greater Croatia." Comparable cultural revivalist, neo-traditionalist, "third way"-oriented parties exist in Slovakia, Serbia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, and the Baltic states.

2. Ethnocentric populism has developed primarily in the Balkans, but is also notable in other post-communist countries (especially in Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine). Its background consists of the stressful coexistence of a beleaguered and still unarticulated civil society and a proto-pluralist institutional system, on the one hand, and the survival and even thriving of the former repressive insti-

tutions, including the secret police, on the other. One could speak of the "Belgrade syndrome" of populism in which expansionist-militaristic policies and demagogic nationalism were used to preserve the political hegemony of the ensconced communist elite around Slobodan Milošević. The former Serbian Communist Party changed its name to "Socialist," but the Leninist hypercentralism remained the basis of state authority. The ruling party, the secret police and the army represented the pillars on which Milošević could construct his personal nationalist authoritarian regime. His rhetoric offered simple formulas for those who resented the prospects for liberalization. First and foremost, Milošević cultivated the idea that military solutions would solve the country's problems. To the entranced nationalist rally at Kosovo Polje in April 1987, he solemnly pledged: "No one must ever dare to beat you again."⁴⁶ Xenophobia and national megalomania merged in Milošević's bellicose rhetoric: "...if we don't know how to work and produce, we Serbs will at least know how to fight."⁴⁷ Features of this syndrome developing in other post-communist societies can be found even in Russia, where strange alliances have emerged between national fundamentalists and nostalgics of the Stalinist days of "iron discipline" and imperial grandeur.⁴⁸ Initially, in 1990, the new "Russian party" (a motley coalition of groups united by authoritarian nostalgias and deep anti-Western and xenophobic feelings) even adopted the name of National Salvation Front (NSF) in order to emphasize its commitment to rescuing the beleaguered Russian national values.⁴⁹ In Romania, part of this syndrome of post-Communist politics, was the wedding in 1994-95 between the then presidential ruling party (the Party of Social Democracy) and the extreme nationalist and populist parties in the joint effort to promote the ideology of the radical, anti-Western and anti-democratic factions of the Securitate and party bureaucracy. This ideology does not claim any continuity with inter-war extreme right (but worships Nazi-ally, Marshal Antonescu). It claims to be leftist, but its political lexicon is jingoistic, rabidly anti-Semitic, and viscerally anti-Hungarian.

Populist ethnocentrism is neither left, nor right: it handles political slogans without any concern about their long-term impact, and switches policies in accordance with the immediate interests of the power elite. Serbian journalist and democratic activist Nebojša Popov calls this continuous change of political masks the "dramatization of power" and gives the following accurate analysis of the meaning of ethnocentric populism as used by

Milošević:

"Populism's aim and symbol are huge — fulfilling the destiny of the nation as a whole, as a collectivity. The concept of the individual is foreign to it. For populism, history is a totality, the future is a totality..... The leaders change hats and costumes. Now they are pro-war, now they are pro-peace, now they are pro-private property, now they are pro-state property, now they like the U.S., now they hate the U.S., now they like Europe, now they hate Europe."⁵⁰

The ethnocentric populist leader allies himself with the extremists, co-opts them into the ruling coalition, and then, when Western pressures intensify, he gets rid of the already useless former partners, posturing as a rational and reliable politician. Deep in his heart, however, he remains convinced that Western-style capitalism is neither possible nor desirable for his country.⁵¹

Ethnocentric populism is chauvinistic, conspiracy-obsessed, and includes a slightly disguised attempt to rehabilitate the communist regime. For Serbian academician Milorad Ekmečić, one of the country's most respected historians, the Vatican, and its weapon, Catholic nationalism are "the Serbs' worst enemy in history because behind it stands the Church and its monopoly on truth."⁵² In the same vein, Serbian Orthodox metropolitan Amfilohije Radović maintains that "the lightning and thunder of the Catholic and Protestant West and the Ismaelite Islamic Middle East clash over the Serbian people."⁵³

This form of extreme nationalism has a strong authoritarian element (it publicly advocates a military dictatorship to put an end to corruption and to the "democratic circus") and is therefore linked to circles in the army, and the regular and the secret police. Think of the Serbian nationalists' fascination with the Chetnik militarist traditions, the Croat rehabilitation of the Ustasha, and the Romanian National Unity Party's strenuous attempts to institutionalize Antonescu's cult. They look to the past for models to be opposed to democratic individualism. Democracy is condemned for being conducive to fragmentation and heterogeneity, for creating a state of anarchy which could lead to the disintegration of the unified ethnic body. Ethnocentric populist rhetoric exalts collective values, "homogeneity," "unity," and "absolute cohesion." Some ethnocentric populist formations like Greater Romania Party glorify the old regime, others, like Serbia's Radical Party under Vojislav Šešelj or the Croatian Party of Rights, claim to be viscer-

ally anti-communist. They combine in fact Leninist techniques of organization with Fascist practices of mass mobilization and manipulation. Sometimes, they establish their paramilitary units, as in the case of Serbia where political adventurers like Šešelj or Željko Raznatović (Arkan) were provided by the Milošević regime with resources to engage in mass murders during the offensives in Croatia and Bosnia. To the dismayed, confused citizens of their countries, these demagogues offered the vision of a threatened, perpetually victimized homeland. The resuscitation of the Chetnik tradition goes hand in hand with the rehabilitation of the pro-Nazi collaborators, while important figures of the Orthodox Church openly call for the establishment of a "theodemocracy." Slavophilism has resurfaced and slogans are circulated that call for the formation of a great Orthodox Empire stretching "from the Adriatic Sea to Japan." Information about war crimes committed by Serbian forces is dismissed as propaganda fomented by anti-Serbian circles (Catholic, German, Zionist). In addition to his title of president of the Serbian radical party, Šešelj proclaimed himself "Duke Chetnik." The Serbian national memory is purged of those elements that contradict this hyper-collectivistic, authoritarian vision. Important figures of the country's history who fought for democracy and human rights are decried as inimical to national survival. Speaking of human rights is considered a national betrayal. This is not to say that ethnocentric populism has fully triumphed in Serbia. During the December 1992 elections, one third of the electorate voted against Milošević and huge rallies took place in December 1996 to protest electoral frauds perpetrated by the ruling Socialist Party. But the civic-oriented, democratic individualist forces are still marginal and confused, whereas the nationalists enjoy almost total control over repressive institutions, ideology and media.⁵⁴

The case of Serbia, extreme as it is, is not totally exceptional. In Romania, the umbrella movement for former apparatchiks who lost their "chapel" is Vatra Românească (Romania Hearth), created in March 1990, a few days before the bloody ethnic clashes in Tirgu-Mureș. Later, Vatra created its own political party, the National Unity Party of the Romanians (PUNR), with a strong anti-Hungarian political platform. During the February 1992 elections, the PUNR-Vatra candidate Gheorghe Funar was elected mayor of Cluj where he initiated a systematic campaign against the democratic parties and primarily against the Democratic Convention (that for several years included the Hungarian Democratic Union

of Romania, a political alliance built along ethnic lines).⁵⁵ In many respects, Vatra appears as an anti-democratic and anti-monarchic movement (King Michael is described by Vatra propagandists as "non-Romanian").⁵⁶ Graphic artist Radu Ceotea was Vatra's first president. In a magazine interview, Ceotea gave a clear, albeit dire description of his Hungarophobic sentiments and fearful fantasies:

"I came from a pure Romanian village in the Mureş Valley. My village suffered in every possible way under the Hungarians. My father was the village butcher, and my mother had four years of schooling. The only book I knew before my school text books was the Bible. Even as a small child I was told by my father not to trust Hungarians. He told me that 'every single Hungarian carries a rope in his pocket.' The cord with which they would strangle Romanians. All my life I have never trusted Hungarians, but I have maintained correct relations with them. I even learned their language to a certain extent. It is a horribly complicated language. In 1968, following the invasion of Czechoslovakia, I was afraid that the Hungarians would occupy Transylvania, so I fled to the Regat (Old Kingdom). Having seen that nothing happened, I went back to my native county in 1977."⁵⁷

Again, similar stances could be heard from Serbian nationalists for whom ungrateful Croats, Muslim Bosnians and Albanians are all conspiring to destroy their country. Thus, novelist Dobrica Ćosić, one of the main architects of the Serbian nationalist crusade which culminated in Yugoslavia's destruction wrote regarding the alleged humiliation of his nation:

"Serbs were good and courageous soldiers in war, but they were bad and frightened citizens, weak builders of life. Thus, the majority nation in Yugoslavia fell to the level of an oppressed and imprisoned majority. We have invested everything we were and had in the Yugoslav idea and in a common country. In return, we were stripped of our rights, suffered under political and economic hegemony, met only indifference toward our torments and sufferings, and today we are subject to severe hatred because we no longer wish to be a lowly obeisant mass of people."⁵⁸

Note the repetition of the collective pronoun "we": the plight was collective, the redemption, the myth postulates, must be collective as well. In this strange alloy, the nomenklatura's salvationist rhetoric merges with the neo-Fascist discourses of hatred

to generate a *sui generis* authoritarian ideology of national collectivism. Add to this amalgam the idealization of rural values, adamantly opposed to the "decadent" urban civilization. It is hard not to agree with sociologist Zagorka Golubović who traced a correlation between rural origin, authoritarianism, and nationalism, and insisted that Leninist-style industrialization led to increased social tensions and a "ruralization of the towns."⁵⁹ The repudiation of democracy as inherently alien to the mystically defined national soul becomes an article of faith for the entranced ethnic fundamentalist. Thus, Dragoslav Bokan, an editor and film director, who led the White Eagles, one of the many private militias involved in combat, declared: "I told my fighters they were doing exactly the same as their ancestors did and their offspring will be doing. I don't believe in democracy because I don't believe any group at any time can change the course and goals of their ancestors by their own free will."⁶⁰

3. Nostalgic ethnocentrism and liturgical nationalism are characterized by the ideal of "national democracy," or ethnocracy, (as opposed to liberal democracy) and the attempt to rehabilitate the inter-war extreme right movements. The most visible example is the "Movement for Romania" under former student leader Marian Munteanu, one of the principal victims of the miners' violence in June 1990.⁶¹ The values favored by this group are primarily spiritual, and they seem linked to the ideology of conservative-populist thinkers like romantic 19th century poet Mihai Eminescu and inter-war philosopher Nae Ionescu. The latter claimed that only born-Orthodox individuals could claim to be truly Romanians, attacked the legacy of Enlightenment as "sentimental nonsense," and became the doctrinaire of a radical revolution against liberal modernity. This direction is programmatically vague regarding the form of government it advocates (republic, constitutional monarchy) and it has voiced consistent distrust of the existing political movements and parties (seen as opportunistic, corrupt, intellectual, non-Romanian in their lack of interest in the real problems of the Romanians). Sociologically, it appears as a generational movement of anguish and discontent, recruiting primarily among high-school and university students as well as recent graduates. For Munteanu and his movement Orthodoxy is the essence of Romanianess: his "Movement for Romania" is thus committed to introducing mandatory religious education in schools and combating the effects of "Western secular materialism."⁶² In the same

vein, one notices the attempts to define ethnic belonging in terms of religious affiliation and the growing interference of the Catholic Church in Poland's political debates.⁶³ To be sure, the rise of ethno-religious fundamentalism in Romania is closer in both program and significance to similar movements in Serbia (both countries are predominantly Orthodox) than to the clerical-authoritarian trends in Poland. What these religious nationalist trends share, however, is the common dislike of liberal values, individual rights, secular education, and market competition.

When Nationalism Meets Mythology: Guilt, Pity and Salvation

For many intellectuals in Eastern and Central Europe, the rise of nationalism in the aftermath of communism's collapse came as a surprise. After all, the "glorious revolutions" were, with exception of Romania, peaceful and gentle. Their dominant discourse was imbued with references to the universal rights of man and citizen. It was a rediscovery of the values of Enlightenment in a space once plagued by ethnic exclusiveness and authoritarian fundamentalisms. Then, as the euphoria of emancipation dissipated, individuals realized that they needed a source of self-confidence, an ideological substitute for the vanished certainties of the communist era. With the appeals of the discourse of civil society and human rights subsiding and the costs of transition affecting large social groups rising, these countries experienced a search for new ideas that would offer the intellectual and moral cement all societies need in order not to fall apart.

Actually, the appeals of the civil society paradigm, as championed and articulated within the dissident subcultures of the post-totalitarian order, were to a great extent idealized during the first post-revolutionary stage. The majority of the populations in East-Central Europe had not been involved in the anti-systemic activities and had not appropriated the values of moral resistance. The case of Solidarity was, of course, different, but even there the normative code of civic opposition failed to generate a positive concept of the "politics of truth." In reality, dissent, in most East-Central European societies, was a marginal and not necessarily popular experience. Those belonging to the "gray area" between government and opposition tended to regard dissidents as moral challengers, neurotic outsiders, Quixotic characters with little or no understanding of the "real game. As Hungarian philosopher and former dissident G. M. Tamás put it:

"The minority within the body politic which was aware of the 'dissident activities', as they were called, felt ambivalent about them. This was because the dissidents challenged the notion that political reform was the only way forward. With the emphasis on 'rights' and 'liberties', they also challenged the dominant political discourse of interest and naked power. . . . The essence of dissent was, or so intellectuals in 'reform dictatorships' believed, the Silent Reproach. According to them, dissidents were not so much telling the leaders of the regime to 'Go to hell!', as saying 'Shame on you!' to the majority of bystanders."⁶⁴

The appeals of the civil society vision, with its repudiation of hierarchical structures and skepticism of any institutional authority, showed their limits in the inchoate, morally fractured and ideologically fluid post-communist order.

As all conventional attachments and loyalties have lost their meaning and as uncertainty (e.g. about the future, about one's identity and belonging) spread, individuals looked for points of reference in which they could recognize themselves. This has been particularly true in those Balkan societies which never developed collective dissident efforts, had little tradition of liberalism and civil society, and whose predicament half a decade after 1989 further questions the wishful tenet that the breakdown of communism has been conducive to pluralism. Without exaggerating the role of civil society in Central Europe, one has to admit that it was much more developed than in South-Eastern Europe. No Charter 77, Network of Free Initiatives, or Solidarity ever came into being in Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria or Albania. Once the Leninist regimes collapsed, there was too little "usable past" for the democratic liberal forces to cling to. In the words of Slavenka Drakulić: "The myth of Europe, of our belonging to the European family and culture, even as poor relations, is gone. We have been left alone with our newly-won independence, new symbols, new autocratic leaders, but with no democracy at all."⁶⁵ The intensity of ethnocentric populism in South-Eastern Europe, especially compared to the Northern part of the post-communist map, is not simply the consequence of political manipulations exerted by skillful demagogues: to understand it one has to look into local traditions, the role of national religions (especially the Orthodox Church) and their attitude toward the state, the interpenetration between communism and Stalinism in the pre-1989 local political cultures, and, in the cases of Romania and Albania, the extreme isolation

from the outside world. Add to this the absence of thorough examinations of the pre-communist experiences, the mystification of the anti-Fascist resistance, and the communist distortions of ethnic relations. In this respect, the Balkans exacerbate the cultural dilemmas of post-communism. Precisely because of the weakness of civic traditions and of liberal memories, these societies are different from their Central European neighbors. True, dissidents were always a minority in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but they created a concept of freedom that was fundamental for the new, post-1989 polities. The fact that authoritarian leaders could come to power in Albania, Bulgaria, Serbia or Croatia, and that large majorities of the citizens voted for them in free elections, can be deplored, but should not be seen as just the result of cynical manipulations and perfidious diversions. For reasons whose examination would require a whole treatise, Balkan cultures have always had a problematic relationship with the concept of universal individual rights, tolerance of alterity, admission of ethnic diversity, and full equality under law. This is not to deny the existence of liberal and pluralist traditions, but simply to acknowledge their precariousness, lack of rootedness, and extreme vulnerability.

One of the key-elements in interpreting the rise of nationalism as a political myth in post-communist societies is the role of intellectuals and their relationship with the West. In Central Europe, there has always been a strong Westernizing wing among the national intelligentsias. The fact that, with few exceptions, the mainstream contemporary Hungarian intellectuals have not drifted toward the populist right is thus connected to their acceptance of the most important lesson of the twentieth century, namely that the main conflict has not been between communism and fascism, but rather between collectivistic regimes and ideologies (of rightist or leftist persuasion) and liberal individualism. The sad consequences of endorsing one or another ideocratic pathology has not passed unnoticed in Central Europe, whereas the same can hardly be said about the Balkans with their cyclical pageants of nationalist hysteria (Bulgaria being the exception). True, in each of these countries there are liberal and illiberal visions of the nation. But whereas in Poland, for instance, the de-mythologizing exploration of the past has been a major endeavor of the intellectuals, in the Balkans the trend has been to cover up the shameful pages of national history and to fabricate new messianic, self-indulging fantasies. Too few are the intellectuals in these countries who would echo Polish historian Jan-Józef Lipski's liberal definition of patriotism:

"Patriotism is not only respect and love for tradition; it is also relentless selection and discarding of elements of this tradition, and an obligation to this intellectual task. The burden of guilt for making fallacious judgments about the past, for perpetuating morally false national myths which serve national megalomania, for remaining blind to the blemishes in our history is, from the moral point of view, not as great a sin as committing evil against our fellowmen, but is the premise of evil and the path to future evil. Every time we romanticize our past and obscure the facts with omissions and half-truths, every time silence is kept and the atrocities our nation has perpetrated are glossed over, the fires of national megalomania are fueled. It is an illness. Every evasion of acknowledging one's own guilt is a defilement of the national ethos."

The word fantasy is used here to refer to an ensemble of collective visions and emotions bound to offer explanations for the main difficulties of the transition. In this respect, radical nationalism appears as a fantasy of escape, a political myth whose sociological and psychological underpinnings lie in widespread sentiments of insecurity, fear and helplessness. The truth of these fantasies is not the issue, because in the case of myths what matters is their credibility rather than their accuracy: "Myths are . . . believed to be true, not because historical evidence is compelling, but because they make sense of men's present experience."⁶⁶ And when this experience is perceived as painfully intolerable, when psychological disarray reaches a climax, the need for myth becomes irresistible. What the nationalist myth offers is consolation, the bliss of community, a simple way to overcome feelings of humiliation and inferiority, and a response to real or imaginary threats. Furthermore, the nationalist explosion can be seen as a "perverse effect" of the revolutionary changes unleashed by the revolutions of 1989-1991. This is not to say that the revolutions failed, or that they created situations worse than those supposed to have been overthrown. The "reactionary rhetoric" ignores that nationalism survived during the communist years in distorted and surreptitious ways; that it had permeated the official doctrines, and that the revolutions of 1989-1991 only created the framework for its full-fledged expression and possible transcendence.⁶⁷

Another element to be taken into account in our discussion of post-communist nationalism and the status of minorities is linked to the rise of the national-communist state during the terminal period of state socialism in East and Central Europe. In 1987,

Romanian dissident mathematician Mihai Botez proposed the "ethno-communist state" as a prognosis for the future of the states in the region. He insisted that in order to stay in power, the techno-bureaucratic elites would increasingly abandon the anachronistic paraphernalia of Marxism-Leninism and espouse the more appealing symbols of national interests.⁶⁸ To preserve their monopoly on power and deter independent groups and movements from challenging their authority, the established political class would thus resort to nationalist manipulation and mobilization: they would practice the demagogy of "the fatherland is in danger" and would indulge in any ideological travesty, including the adoption of long-denied religious and patriotic values. That this prediction did not come true immediately is not relevant here: the fact is that after the demise of the corrupt and incompetent Leninist bureaucracies, the new elites — often recruited from among the second echelons of the previous ones — did behave along the lines anticipated by Botez. Think of Ion Iliescu's or Boris Yeltsin's participation in Orthodox religious ceremonies, not to speak of Milošević's direct mobilization of the Serbian clergy to give religious benediction to the politics of ethnic cleansing. Another example is the transmogrification of Ukraine's former president Leonid Kravchuk from hard-line Leninist ideologue and sworn enemy of Ukrainian nationalism to born-again Ukrainian patriot.⁶⁹

The current nationalist revival is not simply a repetition of the interwar nationalist excesses, but rather a syncretic combination of historical allegories, escapist fantasies, vindictive motifs, all unified by a strong belief that the nation-state has the same predestined role that Bolshevism assigned to the proletarian vanguard party. Far from being a consistent vision, linked to one definite political program, nationalism is "peculiarly labile, attractive to varied social forces and so potentially of wildly different ideological coloring."⁷⁰

Post-communist ethnonationalism is a political and ideological phenomenon with a dual nature: as an expression of a historical cleavage, it rejects the spurious internationalism of the Communist propaganda and emphasizes the long repressed national values; on the other hand, it is a mental construct rooted in and marked by Leninist authoritarian mentalities and habits. Its targets are primarily groups and forces that champion pro-Western, pluralist orientations, and individuals and groups that are perceived as alien, different, potentially destructive of a presumably homogeneous and "healthy" ethnic body (immigrants, Gypsies,

gays). The radical nationalist discourse demonizes the West and insists on the need to reject any attempts to turn the post-communist nations into "the external proletarian armies of the capitalist metropolis."⁷¹ The first direction is related to the widespread, global tendency towards the rediscovery of ancestry, roots and autochthonous values - a tendency to be noticed in Western Europe, Asia or Latin America, as well. The second one perpetuates the collectivistic ethos of communism by denying the individual the right to dissent, sanctifying the national community and its allegedly providential leader (the "charismatic savior", the "father of the nation"), and scapegoating minorities for imaginary plots and betrayals.⁷²

In times of profound disarray, the nation appears as the symbol of one's security, the transindividual community which allows one to recognize both friend and foe and overcome (even if only in a mythological, vicarious way, i. e., through fantasy) otherwise excruciating dilemmas. In other words, we deal with a natural phenomenon, and not only with the artificial exploitation by the former elites of rampant phobias and fears. The radical nationalist discourse re-incorporates and re-functionalizes the populist, "communitarian," often xenophobic rhetoric of the inter-war integral nationalist movements.

The case of playwright István Csurka and his splinter group from the Magyar Democratic Forum — Hungary's ruling party between 1990 and 1994— is thus indicative of the illiberal trends associated with ethnocentric movements. According to these views, citizenship is ethnically defined, and therefore one cannot be simultaneously Hungarian and Jewish, or Hungarian and Slovak. Furthermore, this doctrine rehabilitates the Nazi myth about the invisible, but therefore more dangerous joint Jewish and Communist plot to enslave the Hungarian nation.⁷³ After his expulsion from the MDF in 1993, Csurka established his own political movement, significantly called the "Hungarian Road Circles" and, as a political arm, the "Hungarian Rights and Justice Party."⁷⁴ Using the rhetoric of justice, retribution and volkisch traditionalism, Csurka and his followers claim to fight for the preservation of the "Hungarian soul" against the soiling influence of Western symbols and values. That Csurka did not succeed to earn any significant electoral support in the 1994 elections was of course a promising signal.⁷⁵ At the same time, views close to his have surfaced among politicians of the more mainstream parties, especially the Smallholders's leader Jozsef Torgyan.⁷⁶ In Slovakia, former prime

minister and anti-communist dissident Ján Čarnogurský spelled out unambiguous anti-liberal and anti-Western views when he stated: "Liberalism threatens the necessary balance between different groups in society..., promotes a culture of artificial consumption..., promotes an environment which divorces the individual from values of morality and the articles of the true faith...[and] allows the individual to do everything, but forgets that the devil is present in human soul."⁷⁷

Post-communist nationalism appears thus as a heterogeneous successor ideology, competing with other intellectual and political trends (liberalism, socialism, Christian democracy). So far, ethnic rather than civic nationalism has been the prevailing trend in the region, and one can anticipate that this trend will continue. Looking into the role of collective symbols of national identity in the articulation of post-communist discourses it is hard not to agree with Adam Seligman's thesis that nationalist trends are a major obstacle in the construction of a genuine civil society: "There is not the apotheosis of the individual that vitiates the civil (and communal) pole of civil society but the continued existence of strong ethnic and group solidarities, which have continually thwarted the very emergence of those legal, economic, and moral individual identities upon which civil society is envisioned."⁷⁸

With its emphasis on collectivistic loyalties and group solidarity and the downplaying of the civic-individualistic motifs, ethnonationalism offers the illusion of clarity and coherence. It unifies the public discourse and provides the citizen with a palpable and easily imaginable source of identity as a part of a vaguely defined ethnic community.⁷⁹ Its main characteristic consists of the attempt to minimize the political differentiation during the transition period and emphasize, instead, the need to maintain an organic collective ethos. On the other hand, there are legitimate grievances spelled out in the discourse of post-communist nationalism: one of these is the right of these nations to have access to their own history, to reappropriate their long-insulted and distorted patriotic symbols.

Despite its often shrill tones, national revivalism cannot be dismissed simply as a diversion: its origins lay in the unresolved, and therefore explosive, psychological and historical problems of each nation. Demagogues do, of course, exploit these fears, frustrations, and phobias. Former Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar has not invented Slovak ethnocentrism; neither did Corneliu Vadim Tudor create Romanian chauvinism. Both, nevertheless, have

sought to restore emotional patterns that mobilized radical nationalist passions in the past.

Such problems tend to beset the transition in the whole region: all these societies are a battlefield between proponents of liberal values and those who advocate the supremacy of the homogeneous and self-enclosed Nation-State.⁸⁰ However, by simply decrying nationalist demagoguery we do not get the whole picture; the truth is that we deal now in both East and Central Europe and in the former Soviet Union with the triumph of political demagoguery. The former dissidents have been marginalized and their successors have tried to stir responsive chords among increasingly embittered and disenchanting populations. It is therefore important, as Steven Sestanovich insists, to distinguish between illiberal and liberal demagogues. Among the latter, one can identify the presence of nationalist demagogues whose ideology is strongly influenced by anti-communism. Taking the case of the Rukh movement in the Ukraine, Sestanovich concludes: ". . . anti-communism helps to build a national identity that is not simply ethnic. If the Ukraine evolves successfully toward democracy, liberal demagogues — liberal nationalist demagogues, at that — are likely to deserve much of the credit."⁸¹

The revolutions of 1989-91 were simultaneously revolutions of political and for most countries also national liberation. Hence, it is normal that the first stage was predominantly civic, whereas the second one tended to be more ethnically colored.⁸² The two stages cannot be completely separated, as civic and ethnic elements tend to overlap in both official discourses and private political statements. On the other hand, the presence of intermediary institutions and associations, usually described as civil society, is an element that can diminish the risk of exaggerated nationalist fever and the transformation of fundamentalist rhetoric into an ideology of pogroms. In the words of a leader of the Party of Democratic Birth (now part of an opposition coalition called New Ukraine):

"What is at issue is the difference between the emphasis on the individual and his rights on the one hand, and on the nation and national independence as the highest goal on the other. Independence itself is not an adequate goal for us. The national idea has to be transmuted into a democratic revolution."⁸³

In essence, these nationalist parties and movements have a

tendency to indulge in self-pity: we Poles (or Slovaks, or Ukrainians, or Serbs, or Croats) have been the ultimate victims. According to this self-serving philosophy, no other nation has ever suffered as much as the one of the speaker (or writer, or historian) who cannot simply understand why the outer world is so insensitive to his or her nation's unique plight. An ideological reference, a political-cultural myth perhaps is thus needed with which the afflicted society or groups that have been displaced or uprooted by the tempestuous social and political changes can identify themselves, around which they can gather and attempt to restore their collective life.⁸⁴ When all established certainties have been shattered, when no social status can be seen as a guarantee for stability and immunity, nationalism appears as the balm needed to soothe the wounds of the disaffected and disgruntled. In the whole region, a decade after the collapse of communism, there is a growing nostalgia for the pre-Communist national and cultural values and this explains the resurrection of the Messianic myth of the nation, the burning belief in its regenerative power as a spiritual remedy able to relieve the "pain of the wound to group consciousness" (Isaiah Berlin) left by the Communist experience. Polish historians, for instance, frequently describe their Poland as the "Christ of nations," always victimized, attacked and persecuted by its neighbors. Serbs and Romanians speak about their national destiny to rescue civilization from Ottoman invasions. According to these mythologies, suffering under communism bestowed on the speaker's (or writer's) nation a special universal destiny. Each ethnic group indulges in its own martyrology, frequently regarded as the most atrocious, and the most conducive to moral regeneration. Inebriated with self-serving delusions, the ethnocentric militant acts like a true believer, apriorically rejecting the relativity of all national myths. Discourses are created to legitimize the organic identification with the ethnic community. Thus, Arthur Koestler's bitter diagnosis sound eerily timely: "Wars are fought for words. They are man's most deadly weapon."⁸⁵

Demonizing the Foreigner

Extreme nationalism and xenophobia are synonymous. Their psychological underpinning is the belief that the whole world is conspiring to ruin one's own community. In the trenchant words of the late Yugoslav novelist Danilo Kiš:

"Nationalism is first and foremost paranoia, individual and

collective paranoia. As collective paranoia it is the product of envy and fear and primarily the result of a loss of individual consciousness; it is nothing but a set of individual paranoias raised to the degree of paroxysm.... The nationalist is a frustrated individualist, nationalism the frustrated (collective) expression of his individualism, at once an ideology and anti-ideology."⁸⁶

For the ethnocentric prophets in Romania or Russia, Serbia or Croatia, Slovakia or Poland, the foreigners (more often than not the Jews) were the ones who imported and imposed communism, institutionalized terror, and propagated the alien ideology of Marxism-Leninism. In this reductionist, Manichean scheme, communists were foreigners, the new leaders are foreigners, dissenters are foreigners, or whimps, or traitors paid by occult secret services.

Conspiracy theories abound, from Serbia to Poland and from Romania to Russia. Russian mathematician and former dissident Igor Shafarevich has written extensively about the plot of the "little nation" (meaning Jews, Masons, liberal intelligentsia), carrier of a "nihilistic ideology" which strives toward the "ultimate destruction of the religious and national foundations of life."⁸⁷ As nostalgia for communism has merged with the exaltation of militarist and Fascist symbols, the myth of the universal "Judeo-masonic" and "Wall Street" conspiracy has become the ingredient for strong anti-Western, anti-capitalist, anti-Semitic and anti-intellectual attitudes. Yuri Belov, a top ideologue of Gennady Zyuganov's neo-Bolshevik party, sees Russia as the victim of the CIA, of mistreatment by its neighbors, and of an unfortunate historical destiny:

"We are a special culture and a special civilization. You can't ignore these traditions...We were always in danger of occupation. Under the present regime we have occupation not from the outside but from the inside. The government is destroying and co-opting our national way of life....The state must be saved."⁸⁸

With few Jews in the region, anybody can be described as a Jew by the nationalist zealots: for instance, an eccentric Polish politician can claim that Pope John Paul II, Lech Wałęsa, the majority of the Catholic bishops, all the three of the Polish cardinals, and 30 percent of the Polish clergy are Jews.⁸⁹ Less eccentric and certainly more effective was the persistent innuendo during the Polish 1991 elections that Tadeusz Mazowiecki was a converted Jew

and that the whole intellectual elite of the anti-Communist underground was controlled by Jews. Being identified as "Jewish" has become the symbolic equivalent of being pro-Western, pluralist-oriented, opposed to nationalist pageants or simply decent. In the same vein, the anti-Semitic, or anti-Gypsy propaganda is an expression of anti-capitalist and anti-liberal sentiment.⁹⁰ The Roma (Gypsy) population has become the convenient target for outbursts of hatred: the largest and least protected minority in Europe, its members are frequently accused of fraudulent use of the market economy, cheating, robbing the national economy, and all the traditional sins traditionally assigned to the Jews. The protection of the Roma is indeed a major challenge for the emerging democracies, and the mounting wave of Gypsy activism, including the formation of their own national parties and movements, offer some hope that the politics of exclusion will not prevail.⁹¹

Conclusion: Tribalization or Cooperation?

To different degrees, all the countries in the post-communist world are confronted with a tension between the ethnocentric-authoritarian trends described above and the pluralist-liberal directions. Cities like Sarajevo, the cosmopolitan, multi-cultural capital of Bosnia, or Timișoara in the Western Romanian province of Banat, however, are examples that interethnic cooperation is indeed possible. An active civil society can hold in check nationalist passions and animosities, as long as the institutional framework is based on consensus and legitimacy. In post-communist societies, the objective of civic-oriented groups and parties is to create a sense of identification with the democratic process. The vision of citizenry as a cultural, rather than ethno-religious identity, still prevailing in Ukraine, is perhaps a beginning that could inspire other countries as well.

Radical nationalism operates with mythological constructs and brandishes the specter of the country's dismemberment (or of the persecution of national minorities abroad). The enemy is needed in order to create a false sentiment of solidarity — one based on fear and suspicion, rather than trust and consensus — and to avoid the transition to a true pluralism. *Cui prodest* is therefore a legitimate question when trying to discover the origins of ethnic tensions in post-Communist societies: in the case of Croatia or Serbia, it is obvious that the power elites have an interest in preserving a climate of fear, anguish, insecurity, and instability.

Critical intellectuals are described as "Trojan horses" and a universal conspiracy against "national interests" is concocted in order to keep the authoritarian (or semi-authoritarian) regime in power.

Post-Communist radical nationalism preserves authoritarian mentalities and behavioral patterns characteristic of Leninist monolithic regimes. At the same time, Marxist internationalist rhetoric, completely stripped of credibility, is replaced with the themes of the xenophobic extreme right of the interwar period. The enemy is constructed as a demonical figure (the "Eternal Jew", the "blood-thirsty Hungarian," the "cheating, promiscuous Gypsy") for practical-political purposes, because, as Eric Hobsbawm writes: ". . . there is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of restless people than to unite them against outsiders."⁹²

Nationalism will not vanish in the foreseeable future. National identities are part of modernity and they will continue to inspire strong emotions, attachments, and arduous commitments. These nationalisms, however, do not need to be mutually destructive. Minorities can be encouraged to be part of the construction of a tolerant and diversified civilization. As European unification proceeds and East and Central European nations come closer to supra-national institutions and structures, much of the traditional cult of sacred boundaries may turn out to be obsolete. New elites will emerge that would look into the past with a different eye: not so much to repeat it, but rather to learn its lessons. It may be hoped that as a result of these integrative trends many East and Central Europeans will remember their authoritarian and populist leaders the same way Spaniards remember Franco or Germans think of their country's historical catastrophes. For salvationism to function as a redemptive mythology, a mobilizing belief system, there should exist a widespread sense of danger. If economic transitions succeed, civil societies develop, and political life becomes consensual, such myths would lose their vindictive power. Hatred and envy will always be part of human existence, but their political impact is related to the ways human beings organize themselves and to their ability to transcend time-honored animosities and destructive follies.

Notes

¹ See Ghia Nodia, "Rethinking Nationalism and Democracy in the Light of the Post-Communist Experience," in N. V. Chavchavadze, Ghia Nodia, and Paul Peachey, *National Identity as an Issue of Knowledge and Morality: Georgian Philosophical Studies* (Washington, D. C.: Paideia Press and The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), p. 54.

² See Andrzej Walicki, "The Three Traditions in Polish Patriotism," in Stanisław Gomulka and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Polish Paradoxes* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 30-31.

³ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, quoted by Czesław Miłosz, in his illuminating essay "On Nationalism." See Czesław Miłosz, *Beginning with My Streets* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991), p. 85. Miłosz's essay is one of the most perceptive interpretations of the recrudescence of nationalism at the end of the 20th century.

⁴ For the role of illiberal nationalism in constructing a sense of national cohesion and mobilization against presumed enemies (internal and external), see Tom Gallagher, *Romania After Ceaușescu: The Politics of Intolerance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

⁵ See Janusz Bugajski, "The Many Faces of Nationalism," in *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol. 8, Nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1995-96), p. 9.

⁶ See Norman Manea's contribution in "Intellectuals and Social Change in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Partisan Review* (A Special Issue), No. 4 (Fall 1992), pp. 573-74.

⁷ Writer Judita Vaiciunaite, quoted in Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 121.

⁸ For the politics of intolerance in Tudjman's Croatia, see Goran Vezić, "A Croatian Reichstag Trial: The Case of Dalmatian Action," in *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Fall-Winter 1994), pp. 17-24.

⁹ See Stephen Holmes, "Liberalism for a World of Ethnic Passions and Decaying States," in *Social Research*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Fall 1994), p. 601.

¹⁰ See Slavenka Drakulić, "Letter from Croatia," in *Partisan Review*, No. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 382.

¹¹ See Robert M. Hayden, "Constitutional Nationalism in the Former Yugoslav Republics," in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Winter 1992), pp. 654-673.

¹² See Andrei Cornea, "Mentalitatea locatarului principal," 22 (Bucharest), 2-8 August 1995, p. 4.

¹³ See S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994); and Roman Szporluk, ed., *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).

¹⁴ For the essential distinction between the legitimate attachment to national cultural heritage and language and the desire to make one's nation more civilized, on the one hand, and the "rapacious and potentially totalitarian nationalism" which implies an "idolatrous belief in the absolute supremacy of national values when they clash with the rights of persons who make up this very nation," see Leszek Kołakowski, "Uncertainties of a Democratic Age," in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1990), p. 49.

¹⁵ Israeli political philosopher Shlomo Avineri correctly remarked that this cosmopolitan slogan did in fact reflect the real cognitive situation of a certain class of people: "not the proletarians, but the multitude of modern, educated deracinated Jewish intellectuals, without whom a revolutionary movement would have been unthinkable in Central and Eastern Europe." For these secularized Jews, Zionism and Bolshevism became the two magnets in their attempt to solve the same problem of identity and radical emancipation. See Shlomo Avineri, "Reflections on Eastern Europe," in *Partisan Review*, No. 3 (Summer 1991), p. 447.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Walter C. Clemens, *Baltic Independence and the Russian Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

¹⁷ For an illuminating analysis of "charismatic saviors," see Andre Reszler, *Mythes politiques modernes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981), pp. 188-205; and Gerard Chaliand, *Mythes révolutionnaires du tiers monde: Guerrillas et socialismes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979).

¹⁸ For Tudjman's background, see Raymond Bonner, "A Would-Be Tito Helps to Dismantle His Legacy," in *New York Times* (20 August 1995), p. A12. One should however emphasize that Croat state nationalism under Tudjman has not become a total exclusionary ideology similar to the ethnic cleansing advocated by partisans of Great Serbia. The purges of the Serbs from significant state and media positions in the first years of independent Croatia were related to their previous prominent status. Much of the Serbian wave of refugees in the summer of 1995 was the result of panic and mass anguish feverishly entertained by Serbian nationalist politicians and intellectuals. One should insist on these points especially in relationship to current attempts to present all participants in the Yugoslav conflict as equally guilty and equally vicious. See the interview with Mirko Grmek, "L'ex-Yougoslavie: la guerre comme maladie sociale," *Le messenger européen*, No. 9 (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), pp. 95-108.

¹⁹ See John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 57.

²⁰ See Daniel Chirot, "Modernism without Liberalism: The Ideological Roots of Modern Tyranny," in *Contentions*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Fall 1995), pp. 156-57.

²¹ See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Post-Communist Nationalism," in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 5 (Winter 1989-90), pp.1-2.

²² Quoted in Stanisław Gomułka and Antony Polonsky, "Introduction," to *Polish Paradoxes*, p. 7. Similar points could easily be made about the manufacturing of national mythologies in Serbia or Ukraine, Russia or Romania.

²³ See Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 6. This view presupposes the existence of a liberal tradition, as well as the functioning of liberal institutions that would be the necessary counterpart to the nationalist vision

and aspirations. The trouble is that in most of East and Central Europe, liberalism is still infant and under strong attack. Democratic individualism is widely regarded as a Western product, while the cult of ancestry and the focus on organic links appeal to intellectuals of different persuasions, from socialists to Christian Democrats. Furthermore, liberalism means protection from governmental intrusion, while these societies are still based on the widespread belief in the economic and social omnipotence of the state. For the difficulties of liberalism in post-communist East-central Europe, see George Schöpflin, "Obstacles to Liberalism in Post-Communist Politics," in *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter 1991), pp. 189-194.

²⁴ See Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971), p. 169.

²⁵ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 6-7.

²⁶ See Yael Tamir "The Enigma of Nationalism," in *World Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (April 1995), p. 432.

²⁷ See Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 245.

²⁸ See Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 487.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

³⁰ Elie Kedourie, "Introduction to the fourth edition," in his *Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), p. XVII.

³¹ See Bogdan Denitch, "Really Existing Nationalism," in *New Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 121.

³² See Michel Wieworka, *La démocratie à l'épreuve: Nationalisme, populisme, ethnicité* (Paris: La Découverte, 1993), pp. 92-93.

³³ This theme has been developed by Gail Kligman in *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

³⁴ See Katherine Verdery's rejoinder to E. J. Hobsbawm, "Ethnicity and nationalism in Europe today," in *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (February 1992), p. 10. For a sophisticated analysis of post-communist nationalism, see Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania," in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 179-203. Verdery's argument challenges the "ancient hatred" theory about the resurgence of nationalism after the demise of communism. In her view, state socialism never suppressed national consciousness, but rather enhanced it, and "the supposed exit to democratic politics and market economies aggravate it further" (p. 180).

³⁵ See Charles Simic, "The Spider's Web," in *The New Republic* (25 October 1993), p. 19.

³⁶ See Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 14.

³⁷ Tamir, "The Enigma of Nationalism," p. 430.

³⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1991), p. 164.

³⁹ See Dmitrii Likhachev, *Reflections on Russia*, trans. Christina Sever (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1991), p. 59.

⁴⁰ See "Two Concepts of Nationalism: An Interview with Isaiah Berlin," in *New York Review of Books* (21 November 1991).

⁴¹ See *Washington Post* (6 January 1994), p. A15.

⁴² See Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?," in Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay, eds., *The Nationalism Reader* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), p. 154.

⁴³ For the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism, see Leah Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ See the summary of Krol's presentation on "The New Polish Nationalism," in the newsletter published by the Woodrow Wilson Center, East European Studies (May-June 1992), pp. 4-5. Also personal interview with Krol, Warsaw, September 1993.

⁴⁵ See Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 330. For Eastern Europe's nationalist traditions, see Peter Sugar and Ivo John Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969).

⁴⁶ For a most informative analysis of the Yugoslav crisis and the role of political elites in flaring up ethnic conflict, see Laura Silber and Allen Little, *Yugoslavia: The Death of a Nation* (New York: TV Books/Penguin, 1996); for an outstanding scholarly exploration of the Yugoslav debacle, see Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institutions, 1995).

⁴⁷ Quoted by Nebojša Popov, "Serbian Populism and the Fall of Yugoslavia," in *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol. 8, Nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1995-96). Popov analysis of Serbian populism is among the most lucid autopsies of the Milošević authoritarian-socialist regime and its uses of revolutionary and chauvinistic rhetoric to forge a national, panic-ridden consensus.

⁴⁸ See *New York Times* (22 June 1993), p. A3.

⁴⁹ The "National Salvation Front" name was first used in Romania by the group that took over power in December 1989.

⁵⁰ See "Serbian Populism: Epilogue," An interview with Nebojša Popov, in *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol. 8, Nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1995-96), pp. 114 and 118.

⁵¹ On the history of the term "populism," as part of the Russian radical tradition, see Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," in his book *Russia Observed: Collected Essays on Russian and Soviet History* (Boulder: Westview, 1989), pp. 103-121.

⁵² Quoted in Nebojša Popov, "Serbian Populism and the Fall of Yugoslavia," in *Uncaptive Minds*, p. 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵⁴ See *New York Times* (12 December 1996), p. A39.

⁵⁵ Funar was re-elected in June 1996 on a platform imbued with anti-Hungarian, ultra-nationalist slogans. The most striking example of Funar's uses of xenophobic propaganda is his order to open archeological excavations in front of the statue of King Matyas (Matei) Corvin, in the very heart of Cluj. The ostensible argument for this urban devastation is the search for Roman relics. The direct continuity between the occupying Romans and the contemporary Romanians is a major point of the Romanian historiography. In 1996, Funar staunchly opposed the signing of friendship treaty between Romania and Hungary and called for the expulsion of ethnic Hungarians to "their country."

⁵⁶ For a thorough examination of the nationalist movements in post-communist societies, see Janusz Bugajski, *Nations in Turmoil: Conflict and Cooperation in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview, 1993). See also Bugajski's useful taxonomy of the post-communist nationalist trends in his article "The Many Faces of Nationalism," *Uncaptive Minds*, pp. 3-30.

⁵⁷ Furthermore, Ceontea described his perennial fears that Hungarians would want to rape and murder his wife and daughter. Ceontea's statement in *FBIS-EEU*, 5 February 1991, p. 42, as quoted by J. F. Brown, *Hopes and Shadows: Eastern Europe After Communism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 196.

⁵⁸ Ćosić quoted in Popov, "Serbian Populism," pp. 88-89. For the abysmal consequences of the mythological vision of history and the longing for ethnically pure community, see Chantal de Rudder, "Le rêve en ruines de la Grande Serbie," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 24-30 August 1995, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁹ See *New York Times* (10 April 1994), p. 41.

⁶⁰ It is symptomatic that Bokan's glossy magazine, titled "Our Ideas," carried articles on Mussolini, Ezra Pound, and the Romanian Iron Guard.

⁶¹ Marian Munteanu's espousal of Guardist anti-liberal views and the danger for the Romanian student movement to repeat the ill-fated rightist adventures of the inter-war period, were noted by István Deak in his article "Survivors," *The New York Review of Books* (5 March 1992), pp. 43-51.

⁶² See Michael Shafir, "The Movement for Romania: A Party of Radical Return'," *RFE/RL Research*, Vol. 1, No. 29 (17 July 1992).

⁶³ See Piotr Ogrodzinski and Henryk Szlajfer, "Is the Catholic Church a Threat to Democracy in Poland?," in *East European Reporter*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (May-June 1992), pp. 17-20.

⁶⁴ See G. M. Tamás, "The Legacy of Dissent: How Civil Society has Been Seduced By the Cult of Privacy," in *Times Literary Supplement* (14 May 1993), p. 14.

⁶⁵ See Slavenka Drakulić, *The Balkan Express: Fragments From the Other Side of War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), p. 3.

⁶⁶ See Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: PallMall, 1972), p. 124.

⁶⁷ For a refutation of the "reactionary" rejection of change, see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁶⁸ See Mihai Botez, "A View from Bucharest," in Vladimir Tismaneanu and Judith Shapiro, eds, *Debates on the Future of Communism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), pp. 170-181.

⁶⁹ This is not to say that Kravchuk adopted an exclusive version of nationalism. The point I want to make is the malleability of political beliefs in these transitional times. For a concise and informative examination of post-Soviet Ukraine, see Alexander Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence: Ukraine After Totalitarianism* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993).

⁷⁰ See John A. Hall, "Nations and States in Europe," paper presented at the conference "Europe: The One and the Many," University of Notre Dame, 20-22 April 1996.

⁷¹ See the editorial signed by sociologist Ilie Bădescu, the chairman of the Senate of "Movement for Romania" (a political movement with explicit Iron Guard nostalgias), in *Mișcarea*, No. 5 (1992), p. 1.

⁷² These issues are thoroughly discussed in Juliana Geran Pilon,

The Bloody Flag: Post-Communist Nationalism in Eastern Europe. Spotlight on Romania (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1992).

⁷³ For a penetrating interpretation of the Csurka phenomenon, see Zoltan Barany, "Mass-Elite Relations and the Resurgence of Nationalism in Eastern Europe," paper presented at the convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Phoenix, 19-22 October 1992.

⁷⁴ *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report*. No. 125 (5 July 1993).

⁷⁵ In the 1998 elections Csurka and his party managed to get into the Parliament.

⁷⁶ For the contemporary meaning of the traditional conflict between populists and Westernizers in Hungary, see Gabor Vermes, "Hungary's Unprecedented Opportunity: A Historical Interpretation," in *Comparative Social Research*, ed. Adam B. Seligman, Vol. 14, *The Transition from State Socialism in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary* (Greenwich, CN: JAI Press Inc., 1994), pp. 19-47. Hungarian economist János Matyás Kovacs proposed a sobering reassessment of the conventional ideological dichotomies in East-Central Europe in his paper "The Uncertain Ghosts: Populists and Westernizers in Post-Communist Eastern Europe," presented at the conference "Europe: The One and the Many," University of Notre Dame, 20-22 April 1996.

⁷⁷ Čarnogurský quoted in Arista Maria Cirtautas, "Nationalism in East European Latecomers to Democracy," in Stephen E. Hanson and Willfried Spohn (eds.), *Can Europe Work: Germany and the Reconstruction of Postcommunist Societies* (Seattle; University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 41-42.

⁷⁸ See Adam Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), p. 163. At the same time, although Seligman's statement that in East-Central Europe the very existence of the autonomous individual as a moral agent cannot be taken for granted is correct, one still wonders whether in other historical-political contexts this moral archetype is fully accomplished as a sociological reality. Then, there are significant cultural and historical distinctions that explain the different rhythms of civic reconstruction

in these countries.

⁷⁹ For nations as expressions of collective imagination, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

⁸⁰ See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York: Free Press, 1993), especially the afterword.

⁸¹ See Stephen Sestanovich, "The Hour of the Demagogue," *The National Interest* (Fall 1991), p. 15.

⁸² See Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp.306-331.

⁸³ Quoted by Abraham Brumberg, "Not So Free At Last," in *The New York Review of Books* (22 October 1992), p. 61.

⁸⁴ See Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980) p. 394.

⁸⁵ See Arthur Koestler, "The Urge to Self-Destruction," in *The Heel of Achilles: Essays 1968-1973* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 14.

⁸⁶ See "The Gingerbread Heart, or Nationalism," in Danilo Kiš, *Homo Poeticus: Essays and Interviews* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1995), pp. 15-34.

⁸⁷ For the intellectual foundations of extreme Russian nationalism, see the chapters on Igor Shafarevich and Lev Gumilev in Alexander Yanov, *Weimar Russia* (New York: Slovo/Word Publishing House, 1995), pp. 230-267.

⁸⁸ For Belov's and other similar anti-liberal views, see *Washington Post* (20 May 1996), p. A1.

⁸⁹ For the Polish extreme right and the views expressed by Boleslaw Tejkowski, the chairman of the Polish National Community-Polish National Party, see John Micgiel, "Poland: A Case-Study," *Political*

Science Quarterly, Vol. 108, No. 3 (Fall 1993), p. 7.

⁹⁰ For the threat of Fascism in post-communist societies, see Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (New York: Random House, 1990), p. 115.

⁹¹ See Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

⁹² See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 91.

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