

FERENC GLATZ

Trianon – Past and Present

The area of ethnic settlement and the territory of the state as an administrative unit have never coincided in the East-Central European region. This discrepancy between the borders of states and ethnic settlement is one of the major causes of conflicts in this region, leading to wars and to spiteful attitudes towards the neighbouring countries in all spheres. I have repeated this statement over and over again in various studies and papers in the past decade. It has also been established more than once that the political elites and the middle classes of these nations have been unable to find a proper arrangement to resolve this contradiction over the past hundred and fifty years.

Similarly, the diagnosis of this Central European disease has been repeatedly presented in the hope that the conclusions drawn from it will rivet the attention of politicians who shape our present and future framework of territorial administration at the regional level. It is also hoped that these fact will be taken into notice by the hardworking public servants, intellectuals, craftsmen and peasants who all are to “arrange” the everyday life of people. From all this, it is expected that these people will to give up their national ill-feelings towards the neighbouring nations or towards the ethnic groups who live in the same state, and with whom they must work together to reproduce the material and intellectual goods of the given society. It is also hoped that they will accept the conclusions which can be drawn from all this for the future: *if the hostilities and conflicts among the small nations of the region will not be brought to an end, each nation of the region will inevitably lag behind in the global competition at the turn of the millennium.* (Slovaks, Hungarians, Romanians, Croats, Serbs, Bosnians and so forth. Capital will not flow to the theatre of wars and social conflicts, moreover armed and social conflicts break the creative force, both material and intellectual, of the local societies. As a result, they all will lag behind in the mentioned global competition. We all: Central Europeans.) *Our main goal is to evade this lag.*

We resort to history in order to disclose the causes of the contemporary conflicts, and to find feasible alternatives for the future. This statement is also meant to give food for thinking.

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BORDER OF STATES AND ETHNIC SETTLEMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE AROUND 1500



Great Powers – Small Nations

Historically, the middle classes of the region – we maintain – failed to find a sound solution to terminate the national-ethnic conflicts mainly because their way of thinking was influenced by the notion of the national state (also referred to as “nation-state”) and the related principles. *They failed to recognize that it was impossible in this region to base a unit of territorial administration, i. e. a state, on the supremacy of the majority nation.* Therefore and thereafter – and this was another erroneous conclusion of the middle classes – *they tended to resort to the West-European Great Powers rather than to try to come to an agreement with each other.* They competed with each other for the favour of the Great Powers. Consequently, the interests of the Great Powers have always played a decisive role in the region’s history ever since 1848. It was this game of the Great Powers that led to the creation of the region’s first bourgeois state formation, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867). The resultant of the particular viewpoints of the Great Powers, which led to the major transformation of the Habsburg Monarchy (1867), is also seen more clearly today. It was the same political game that helped the Hungarians restore the territorial integrity of the historical Hungarian state after three centuries of disintegration. The general public, however, is not inclined to recognize this decisive role of the Great Powers. The general public – either Hungarian or non-Hungarian – prefers to believe in a kind of “historical” or “divine” justice, or in the will of fate. It clamours for justice when the prospects are good, and speaks of ill-fate when losing is in sight. This has ever been so since 1867 up to now.

Before Trianon (1867–1918)

It was not a sort of predestined justice which prevailed when, in 1867, the Hungarians recovered the whole territory of the historical Hungarian state which had been disintegrated soon after the Battle of Mohács lost to the Turks (1526). (This is not accepted by a good part of the Hungarian intellectuals, instead they insist on the principle that the justice of the “historical right” must prevail.)

The fact is that the Catholic Habsburgs, who in 1866 had been finally defeated in their struggle for unifying the German-speaking lands by the Protestant Prussia, had no choice but to make a compromise between their hereditary provinces and the Hungarian Kingdom, within this, between the leading Austrian and Hungarian political elites.

The Compromise of 1867 was based on mutual concessions by the political elite of the Hungarian Kingdom and the Habsburg ruler. As is widely known, the historical Hungarian state disintegrated into three parts after 1541. The first, the central part of the country, included territories occupied and then ruled



by the Turks for a long time; the second was Transylvania, the formally independent eastern part, while the rest (the northern and western territories) formed the Hungarian Kingdom. After the expulsion of the Turks (1718) the Hungarian Estates urged their ruler – the Habsburgs were on the Hungarian throne at that time – on the re-unification of the lands belonging to St. Stephen’s

Crown. However, the Habsburgs as Hungarian kings retained the special status of Transylvania even after 1718, governing it quite separately in the same way as they governed the former southern provinces which they treated as a buffer zone against the Turkish Empire still present in the South-East. This traditional southern military border zone was withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Diet and also from that of the Hungarian landowners. It was on those vast territories that the Serbs (and partly the Romanians) developed their particular territorial autonomy which ensured them a relative independence in their local administration and in practising and maintaining their ethnic and religious customs. They were granted collective rights in exchange for their collective military service.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Habsburg kings were forced to ask the Hungarian Estates for help in defending the dynasty in wars first on Prussia (1740, 1756–63), then against Napoleon (1805–15), in exchange for their military services, they immediately demanded the “territorial re-unification” and later, in the 1800s, made claim to the right to use the mother tongue. The King only gradually relegated again the administration of the southern provinces to the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Diet during the 18th century. As is also known, the re-unification process was concluded by the Acts of April 1848, and Transylvania was simultaneously re-united with Hungary. The armed conflict of 1848–49 between the “only partly Hungarian King” and the nation ended in the failure of the Hungarian War of Independence. Under the circumstances, the actual re-unification took place only as late as 1867. At a time when – as has been seen – the common Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Dynasty lost its campaign for a Central European German hegemony to Prussia.

At the same time, the Compromise of 1867 and the restoration of the integrity of the historical Hungarian state ensured a Hungarian supremacy within the state. However, the non-Hungarian peoples of the country opposed both the territorial centralization and the country’s transformation into a Hungarian national state.

The proportion of the non-Hungarian peoples on the territory of Hungary kept increasing in the periods following 1541. The Turkish devastation stroke mainly the central part of the country where the majority of the Hungarian ethnics were living. Thus between 1541 and 1718 there was a marked decrease in the number of Hungarians. At the same time, Serb inhabitants in large masses moved from the Turks-occupied territories of the Balkans to the Hungarian Kingdom. Then, following the expulsion of the Turks, popular masses came to settle in the deserted areas from the German Empire, also Romanian and Slovak settlers came from the country’s eastern and northern ends, respectively. *The number of non-Hungarian peoples increased within the one-time Hungarian state, while the Hungarian ethnics were reduced to a state of minority.* Increasing the weight of non-Hungarians was that in the period of the East-European expansion of the

industrial revolution (after the period 1840–1867) a considerable number of Czech-, Moravian- and German-born officials, intellectuals and engineers came to Hungary from the German Empire and mainly from the hereditary provinces of the Habsburg Dynasty.

When the struggle for power between the Hungarians and the Dynasty broke out in 1848, the non-Hungarian peoples took sides with the ruler. They refused to accept that after 300 years, the state would be subjected again to a Hungarian control, based on the principle of “might goes before right” and by virtue of the historical right, especially if this control would be exercised on a national basis taken in the modern sense. The Vienna Court readily used these Serb, Croatian, Romanian and Slovak endeavours to attain their national self-organization in its efforts to suppress the Hungarian War of Independence, but when it came that Vienna was forced in 1867 to share its power with the strongest nation, it was just as ready to ignore these minor nations. *However, the conflict between the Hungarians and non-Hungarians persisted within the new state, the Hungarian Kingdom.* The national wars of 1848–49 furnished an emotional basis for mutual conflicts which have made their effects felt on the thinking of the region’s nationalities up to now. And these emotional conflicts have been fostered “carefully” and even instigated by the national middle-classes up to today.

The Omnipotence of the State

In the nineteenth century, when the modern states of Europe were formed, the *leading political elite of Europe lived under the spell of the state.* Understandably enough, since it was the organization of the state which provided the institutional and administrative framework of the emerging Industrial Revolution, ensured legal and public security, and supplied public services necessary to creating normal living conditions for citizens (elementary schooling, basic health care, and the protection of the arable land, and so forth). It is, then, also understandable that *in respect of the relationship between the individual and the community,* loyalty to the state was considered as a decisive factor in the political thinking of the age. Other spheres like ideological, religious, social affiliations or ties to the community were all deemed personal affairs. National affiliation was also considered as an individual, personal affair: at the individual level, all citizens should be free and *should in no way be subjected to any collective discrimination* on account of their ethnic origin or social status. The consequent deliberation and observation of these noble liberal principles *led the Hungarian political leaders to treat all kinds of “collective rights”, including the national collective rights, as privileges.* In other words: they dismissed these rights. On the same grounds, they did not deem the *various ethnic-territorial autonomies* formed within the Hungarian State *acceptable either.*

Starting from the same “fundamental principle” they had demanded the elimination of the south-eastern military border zone which was actually carried through after 1867. Other ethnic-territorial autonomies as the autonomy of the Transylvanian Saxons of six-century standing and that of the Jazygian-Cumanian [Jászokun] ethnics of three-century standing were also eliminated.) *The state-centred liberalism of the Hungarian political elite was combined with the principle of national supremacy.* To be sure, they were by no means led by anti-Slav, anti-Romanian or anti-German sentiments when they put an end to the centuries-old autonomies in Hungary; they only followed the European norms of that age. They tried to lessen the difference between the official state borders and the borders of the respective national dwellings by guaranteeing the “minority rights” of non-Hungarians living on the territory of Hungary under a special Act.

Act on the Nationalities (1868–1918)

It may well be stated that the Hungarian liberal political elite performed a work which was up-to-date and unique even by European standards, by creating an Act on the Nationalities in 1868 (enacted as Act 44 of 1868). This Act provided nationality rights on the level of the individual extending them, however, to cultural organization as well. Only the hereditary provinces of Austria had a constitution of similar nature. (This “meritorious deed” of the Hungarian political elite has never been appreciated by the intellectual strata of our neighbouring countries, what they welcome is nothing but our own criticism of the “historical right” and of the Hungarian political elite.)

The turn of the century gave rise to new tensions. At that time, the non-Hungarian peoples of Hungary as collectives made claim to special rights. Encountering these claims, the practice of liberal legislation already proved obsolete.

What explains these new collective national claims? What new economic and cultural phenomena called forth these movements? (Formally, these appeared as demands on recovering the ancient rights, i.e. in a historicizing fashion. In reality, however, all this was more than that.)

The modern, bourgeois-type patterns of industrial production, administration, commerce, transport, and communication enrich the daily communication among the individuals. The ever enlarging body of managerial and professional knowledge requires a better linguistic and conceptual proficiency. Only such people can acquire an up-to-date professional or managerial knowledge (physicians, lawyers, engineers) that are highly educated in their respective mother tongue. In the early years of this century, the young non-Hungarian and non-German intellectuals of the Monarchy clearly saw that the basic conditions of the revival of their respective nation include instruction in the vernacular and

the extension of their national institutions. They wanted to be recognized as national collectives. It was these everyday driving forces of history which broke up the Hungarian state's policy towards nationalities. (It is quite another question: why could the denationalization of the national minorities be carried through in Western Europe, and why could the nationalities survive in Hungary? Hungary is the country of minorities.)

Peace Settlement and Cold War

The contradiction between the national dwellings and the official territorial-administrative units (the state) could not be solved by the politicians of the early twentieth century. This was one of the main reasons for the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1918–1919).

Nor was it solved by the peace treaties of 1919–20. Trianon saw the dissection of the territory of the historical Hungarian state. Transylvania was given to Romania, North-Hungary was detached to form part of the new Czechoslovakian State, and South-Hungary was annexed to the new Yugoslavia. (Here we remind again of a negligence of the former Hungarian historiography which tended to interpret the Monarchy's disintegration as if the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920 had made only a decision on matters concerning the conflicts between Hungarians and non-Hungarian. Or as though it had been simply a decision on the winners and losers of World War I. In our opinion it was more than that: it concerned *the adoption of the fundamental principles of a continental peace settlement.*)

In 1919–1920, the two empires occupying the zone from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, i.e., the Habsburg and the Turkish Empires, were divided on the basis of the same fundamental principles. The victorious Great Powers created "nation-states" on the *territory of the two multinational empires* which they considered as "outdated" ones. Even those ethnic groups and tribes were annexed to a so-called "national state" territory in the semi-desert region stretching down to Palestine, of which more than one had never heard of "national state border" or of the institutional and legal system of a state. It was this fundamental principle that came into prominence in decision-making on the dissection of the historical Hungarian state. The new European state system, in this case too, formed part of a global plan of the Great Powers.

Taking a glance at the map, it is easy to perceive that all the major European conflicts in the second half of the 20th century arose in this region. Included in these conflicts are World War II (1939–1945), then the South-Slav War (from 1992 up to now), let alone the Hungarian-Slovak and the Hungarian-Romanian conflicts, though the latter have not escalated into civil wars. This raises the question of whether the series of the near-eastern armed conflicts (from 1956 to our days) are not rooted in the fundamental principles of the 1920 peace treaties.

BORDER OF STATES AND ETHNIC SETTLEMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE BETWEEN 1920–1938



In our present opinion: it was again the Great Powers that had made *a series of erroneous decisions in 1920 which had a far-reaching effect not only on East-Central Europe but also on world history for the rest of the twentieth century.*

Not only the recent destructive conflicts between these “nation-states” in this region, but also the wars in the Near East, seem to go back to the erroneous principles of the peace-makers. Indeed, the problem is rooted in the fact that Western European principles of the national state were imposed upon societies organized along quite different lines both from ethnic and from social aspects. The same happened to the peoples of the former Habsburg Monarchy. The newly created national states were nothing but newer multinational states with the only difference that the natives of former “leading nations”, Austria and Hungary as war losers, turned into national minorities.

The Trianon Peace Treaty – as is widely known – formed part of this peace settlement. It forced 3.2 million ethnic Hungarians to live as a minority nation in the neighbouring countries. (The intellectuals of those countries that benefited from the peace treaties of 1919–20, of course, do not welcome criticism concerning not only some details, but also the principles underlying the peace treaties. The Czech, the Slovak, the Romanian, the Croatian, the Serb, and the Polish historians consider the peace treaties closing World War I as untouchable ones. The Poles have nothing to say of the fact that 30 per cent of their country’s population, people who had not been Poles in 1920, were assimilated and virtually lost their original national character in a few decades between 1920 and 1968.)

So these peace treaties gave rise to tensions between Hungary and Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, just as well as between the renewed Poland and its neighbours (Germany and Russia), Czechoslovakia and its neighbours (Hungary, Austria, Germany, and Romania), Yugoslavia and its neighbours (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Italy), and Romania and its neighbours (Russia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia). (Let us not deal with the series of conflicts in the Near East and Asia Minor this time.) Instead of peace these peace treaties created an incessant cold war on the territories of the former Habsburg and Ottoman Turkish Empires.

This is how the Central European peace treaties, including the Trianon Peace treaty, are fitting into the general trends in international politics.

The “Triumph of the Ethnic Principle” (1938–41)

Attempts the Hungarian made at the revision of the peace treaties are well known both to the Hungarian historiography and to the historically interested public. These resulted in some corrections of the country borders between 1938 and 1941, but these, again, followed from changes in the international political

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power relations. (The Hungarian public is not too impressed by this fact. Namely, speaking of 1920, the intellectuals of the neighbouring countries try to explain their public that 1920 was but the fulfilment of a long-expected “national justice”, while the Hungarians tend to blame the great powers for their short-sightedness in this respect. As regards the judgement of events in 1938-41, it is the other way round: Hungary’s neighbours blamed “fascist Germany” for the Hungarian territorial revision, while the Hungarian public would interpret it as a partial victory of justice. Only partial, since Hungary “got back” only part of the territory it had lost in 1918–20.)

The Hungarian territorial revisions in 1938–41 really fitted well into the series of territorial revisions devised by the Soviets and the Germans. In the mentioned period, not only did the Germans annex Austria and the Sudeten, but they also recovered their former and some additional territories in Poland they had lost in 1919 (totalling several millions of ethnic German inhabitants). These readjustments of the country borders follow the ethnic principle in its German version, in contrast with the (French-contrived) principle of the national states having been followed in 1919–20. Exercising pressure from the east, the Soviet Union recovered Bessarabia from Romania. It also agreed with Germany on occupying the Baltic, along with the eastern territories of Poland.

The redrawing of country borders in the Carpathian Basin in 1938–41 were the most effective steps towards making the ethnic borders more consistent with the political ones until then. (This statement is, of course, unwelcome in the neighbouring countries.) However, to the present generation of historians fell the uncongenial task to warn both the politicians and the public that the revision of country borders is not a sound solution. The revisions of 1938–41 made Hungary a multinational state again. The contemporary historiography and politics could do nothing but promise a tolerant policy towards the nationalities in the spirit of King St. Stephen, the founder of the Hungarian state. However, the middle classes just as well as the workers’ parties at that time were unable to go beyond the principles of the national state. It was only the radical right wing that spoke of the possibility of creating autonomies. (This idea was still less accepted, in fact, rejected in Hungary. But all this is not meant simply to criticize our old middle class or those of our neighbours.)

What we mean is to call the attention to the fact that no settlement could have been achieved on the basis of principles followed either in 1919–20 or in 1938. Neither of them could have resulted in a really sound solution. The societies of the region were so much mixed ethnically that the repeated redrawing of country borders could in no way relieve the deep-seated tensions. In fact, it created new tensions even in those countries that had profited by the changes. In other words: the years 1920 and 1938–41 made it clear that *it was impossible to draw “ethnic borders” between these ethnically mixed societies.*

BORDER OF STATES AND ETHNIC SETTLEMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE BETWEEN 1945–1990



“Nation-states” and the Soviet Regime (1945–89)

World War II had, from the outset, prevented Hungary and its neighbours from realizing all this. There were only few who came to realize the possibility of confederations. Thus the peace treaties closing the war returned to the principles adopted in 1919–20. If only because those nations which had come badly out of the border revisions after 1938, were now among the victorious nations (Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, South-Slavs, and also Romania which had changed sides just in time). Once more, it was the sheer interests of the Great Powers which really counted. Interests in their own power, security, strategy, and economy.

Thus the old contradiction between the national dwellings and the official political state borders persisted. However, a new “recipe” for settling the problems proposed, namely the resettlement of national minorities. Once the states of the region are ethnically so much mixed, and the redrawing of country borders is of no help – so the peace-makers philosophized – attempts have to be made to create “homogeneous nation-states” by some other means. With this, the resettlement of national minorities to their respective countries, where they represented the majority, began. These people were given a few hours to pack up a few things they were allowed to take along. Hungarians were removed from Slovakia and Yugoslavia, and Germans from Hungary and Bohemia. They were forcibly conveyed to the other side of the respective country border, thus expelling them from their centuries-old communities. (The fate of the ousted Hungarians fell in line with that of other ethnic groups which were cruelly resettled or forced to migrate elsewhere in Europe. More Turks were removed from Bulgaria than Hungarians and Slovaks from Slovakia and Hungary, respectively, in an “official” form [157,000 altogether]. To say nothing of ten million Germans who were expelled from various countries. This was then followed by the “voluntary” escapes from the native land: Germans, Hungarians, Poles [2 million], Russians, Ukrainians, and many Jews who survived the Holocaust [450,000].)

The Soviet regime came next: this political system was introduced in the zone occupied by the Soviet Union during World War II. It was a specific Soviet interpretation of the internationalism of the proletariat. It was unable to tolerate either the national or ethnic considerations or any kind of autonomy including the local autonomies of minor communities. There were endless ideological debates on the role of “class and nation” in history, but the real sources of conflict, the annoying fact of the depressing Soviet presence, or problems as assimilation (the lack of the citizen’s freedom to choose his/her identity), and the Trianon and Paris peace treaties (1920, 1946) were all carefully concealed. Political statements were made concerning common socialist interests of the region’s peoples, while the perennial conflicts were ignored. But tensions cannot be relieved by insincerity. This explains that each shake of the Soviet political sys-

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tem (1956, 1868, 1980), then the collapse of system in 1989-92 brought the national tensions to the surface.

These all lay even more heavily on the whole Soviet system. The unsolved state of national conflicts was one major factor leading to the collapse of that system.

In the Emerging New Democracies (after 1989)

It is well known to the presently active generations how these tensions came abruptly to the surface immediately after the institutional framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat has irreversibly collapsed, censorship and restrictions of travelling abroad have been abolished, and the multi-party system has been instituted. The demonstration by candlelight in 1988 in support of Hungarians in Transylvania revealed how strongly the Hungarian society would still react on the trauma caused by Trianon. The anti-Hungarian atrocities at Marosvásárhely [Tirgu Mures] and Pozsony [Bratislava] showed that similar feelings were harboured by the majority societies of the neighbouring countries. (Of course, in the latter case against the Hungarians.)

Then came a partial revision of the 1919–20 peace treaties along ethnic lines. (Many people thought that the spirit of 1938 was to return. And some went so far as to speak of a new “German threat”.) Yugoslavia disintegrated, Croatia and Slovenia became independent once again, and a bitter struggle began for the territory of Bosnia with its mixed population. Another invention of the peace settlement of 191920, Czechoslovakia, also disintegrated. In the meantime the Soviet Union that had expanded after World War II also fell apart. No one should, therefore, search for any “reactionary” conviction or approach – in social terms – behind the deliberation of citizens who demand that the situation of the largest minority of the region, the three million Hungarians, should be improved.

The present responsibility of both historians and politicians is to stop sticking ideological labels like “nationalist” or “cosmopolitan”. Instead, they should draw the lessons from the grievances on all sides and patiently seek after solutions together with Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, South-Slavs, Germans, as well as with the Gipsies and Jews (who do not identify themselves as a nationality). One has to understand that *the nationality question is more than the problem of Hungarians living beyond the borders of Hungary*. It is the general problem of our region. It is a domestic policy issue in Hungary, but it also has marked foreign policy relevance as to the Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries.

One thing is certain: the intellectuals of the region and the political elites are facing the most difficult task they have had in the past century and a half. This is the first time that they can decide on the forms of coexistence, including the local

systems of administration without external pressure from any Great Power. It is now, if ever, that these political elites have the chance to surmount their selfish interests. They should not exploit the national grievances for gaining votes at the elections, for attaining high publicity through the mass media or for being celebrated at political meetings. Instead, the elite are supposed to think about the future. To think about the future also means that one understands the arguments and grievances of others. It is no use pursuing the favour of the Great Powers and seeking support in New York, London, Paris, Bonn, or even in Moscow. It would be much wiser to travel to Bratislava, Bucharest, Zagreb, and Belgrade.

It is to be established once more: *all methods which have so far been tried to relieve the contradiction between national dwellings and the administrative state borders have to be discarded.* Forced assimilation, the principle of the national state, the revising of country borders, and the resettlement of ethnic groups proved equally useless. What remains is nothing but democracy: *to grant various rights, both individual and collective, to the national minorities, including political, cultural, or even territorial autonomy.*

Though the contradictions of the ethnic and the administrative-political state borders could not be resolved over six generations, we have to make further efforts to resolve it on a brand-new foundation. This is the lesson the Hungarians and their neighbours have to draw from Trianon.

Historians are not supposed to make out prescriptions for how this or that should be done. However, they have all qualifications to warn the nations and the political elites not to choose ways and means which have proved to be failures in the past; they are also expected to recommend more feasible approaches both to the politicians and the public that consists of tax-payers who sustain them.

Federation of Nations

All majority nations have to understand that they cannot consider the state as their "private property". *The state does not cover the majority nation only, but it extends to all citizens who keep the institutions going, produce and manufacture goods, and pay taxes.* (This applies to every state, be it Hungarian, Serb, Slovak, Romanian or Croatian.) Ethnic majorities and minorities are all state-creating peoples. Hungarian historians should also think the consequences of this principle over, especially now on the seventy-fifth anniversary of Trianon. What the Hungarians lost under that treaty was not the "state of their own", but 3.2 millions of their fellow-countrymen. These 3.2 million people need our help today to be able to maintain their Hungarian identity and culture...

The Hungarian elite of the historical Hungary failed to understand this principle, so the territorial and administrative unit they had created inevitably

declined and disintegrated. The majority nation has to ensure the minorities the conditions they need for their self-fulfilment and development not as a gift but as a civil right. *The minority right consists in the right to have equal chances with the majority nation.* Just as the Romanian, Slovak, and Serb intellectuals rightfully demanded equal rights for education and culture for the children of these minorities at the turn of this century, the Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries also rightfully demand the same rights and chances for themselves nowadays.

A historian should not make out recipes; he should refrain from doing so even in his hours of solitude. He must, however, make the public acquainted with the history of the world and with the development of regions which are in a way similar to ours, but are ahead of us in the relieving of similar tensions. The historian views the efforts of countries to the east of Hungary to recreate their state and administration with respect, just as the Western European and overseas countries that have reached a high level of economic and military development and created high living standards for their citizens. However, to gain experiences and to draw the relevant lessons, the historian had better refer his disciples to those countries which have already solved their similar conflicts. He should advise them to study, for example, the history of the minor nations in North-West Europe, the Benelux states, and the Scandinavian peoples where the various nations have found their proper place within the states and the citizens are free to choose their identity. They are free to exercise their religion, to give expression to their nationality, and organize their religious, social, national and other communities and autonomies.

The Central European peoples should give up repeating *their hysterical demand for a "national compensation.* These peoples – Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks and Serbs alike – should not consider themselves as victims with reference to the "evils" of history. A new "victimology" has recently developed in the Central European region. Peoples in the region try to support their arguments with historical, statistical, and cartographic data and prove the grievances they had to suffer from the others. And they all expect "compensation" from one or another neighbour.

The general public, either Hungarian or non-Hungarian, is reluctant to take into notice the data series presented by the historians, according to which *the peace treaties of 1919–20 were equally detrimental to Hungary and to its neighbours.* Though, these treaties were partly advantageous to the Slovaks, the Romanians and the Serbs as they were given every opportunity to develop their culture and education in their mother tongue and to rise from all respects. But by creating several minor national states in the region, these treaties brought equally low living standards for all these nations. The new system (from 1920 on) divided the former economic and productive unity of the region, which had enjoyed all

advantages of an economic “large area”, into seven customs districts and several separate monetary and economic units. *Consequently*, Central Europe became a *region which the really substantial western investors will surely avert*. Direct foreign investments decreased not only after 1920, but in the aggregate, they have not shown a dramatically growing tendency after 1990, either. In 1910 the living standards of handicraftsmen, peasants, and civil servants were more comparable to those of their counterparts living in the more developed societies at that time than are today, in 1995 – in the period of the questionable triumph of the idea of the national state – around the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Trianon Peace Treaty.