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## **BETWEEN POLITICAL NATION AND ETHNIC-CULTURAL NATION: NATIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

### **ABSTRACT**

The article analyzes the nation-building process in Central Europe in the context of conditions and specific character of historical processes. It identifies the origin of the dilemma in Central Europe: political or ethnic-cultural nations. The study shows why ethnic-cultural communities developed in this region. It also describes the extent and the dynamics of disputes over the problem between the most important political trends arisen in Central Europe, and emphasizes the intensity of rivalry over this question in the interwar years, primarily in the Second Republic of Poland, the Kingdom of Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The paper also analyzes the style of thinking practiced by the adherents to the concept of Central European political nations: Józef Piłsudski, Tomáš G. Masaryk, and Miklós Horthy.

**Keywords:** Central Europe, nations, contemporary general history, nationality policy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Central Europe a clash at the intellectual and political levels between two ways of thinking about 'nation' is most clearly observable: the tradition initiated by Jean Jacques Rousseau and an alternative one begun by Johann Gottfried Herder. A dilemma arose in this region about how 'nation' was to be perceived: as a political community subjected to the same laws or as a historically formed cultural community. In the nineteenth century the problem came down to the justification of two movements: unificatory and irredentist. While the two movements had different vectors, their goal was identical: to build their own nation state. When this idea was introduced in politics by Pasquale Stanislao Mancini and following the success of Italian and Romanian unification processes as well as Greek and Serb independence movements, the term inevitably produced controversies because its interpretation depended on the initial definition of nation.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath of the First World War there was a collapse in Central Europe of four absolutist monarchies, not only imperial but multiethnic, which had sought to build political communities consisting of different ethnicities that would be united by such factors as 1) allegiance to the ruling dynasty: the House of Romanov, the House of Habsburg, the House of Hohenzollern, or the House of Ottoman; 2) subordination to state law typical of authoritarian states, and differentiated depending on the region and its inhabitants; 3) the consciousness of a historically formed community, integrated by symbols and myths, and appealing to collective emotions; 4) economic interrelationships between the territories making up the monarchies, strengthened as a result of protectionist policies pursued in capitalist economy; 5) consensus about the fundamental political distinction, i.e. the division into enemies and allies.

The independence revolutions, the so-called 1918 Autumn of Nations in Central Europe combined with the American ideas of self-determination of nations and the Bolshevik ideas of self-determination of the people's classes resulted in a fundamental decomposition of the political order in this part of the Continent. While military achievement during the war strengthened the Western European states composed both of European as well as overseas territories, in Central Europe there was a reverse process – there emerged a geopolitical and political space in which new national states were established. The political communities that had been built for centuries very soon broke up, thereby showing the illusory permanence of the foregoing five factors. Three mechanisms began to operate. First of all, the necessities of economic unity definitely lost to social (ethnic, financial) emotions and to the political will. Economic calculations became irrelevant during the 1918 Autumn of Nations. Second, the social elites representing ethnicities began to perceive the past in terms differentiating the inhabitants of multiethnic monarchies. History began to divide rather than unite. Third, irredentist movements, marginal before the First World War, which defined the international environment in terms of the dichotomy of between the enemy and the ally (friend or foe), imposed their way of perception of the world, which was different from

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<sup>1</sup> J. Szacki, *Historia myśli socjologicznej*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1983, p. 144.

that of the monarchs. This condition contrasted with the atmosphere of 1914, when the people in individual monarchies gave their support to the rulers.

Each of the new states faced the crucial problem: how to define its national character. Experiments in this area would take place under the conditions of building democratic states that almost generally replaced the former authoritarian monarchies. The democratization of states created definitely new conditions for political parties and movements, which now had to confront one another in the political arena canvassing for votes, including the support of voters from lower classes. A necessary condition for the democratization of the newly established states to succeed was to turn the people into a *demos*, i.e. to successfully carry out the process that had taken place in Western Europe in the nineteenth century.

At the threshold of democracy the role of popular classes in Central Europe definitely increased, at least for three reasons: firstly, it was them that were the social basis for the armed forces, which ultimately determined the outcome of the Great War and the establishment of a new political and territorial order; secondly, it was them that played the fundamental role in the 1918 Autumn of Nations deciding the victory of irredentist movements against loyalist parties that were dominant before the war; thirdly, it was them that were the points of reference for the emergent totalitarian movements, communist and fascist, which advocated fundamental changes in the social and axiological order.

Central Europe entered the twentieth century without having chosen between two models of nations: political/state-oriented and ethnic-cultural. In Western Europe the dilemma did not arise while it was a feature of the central part of the Continent. Before the First World War, two nation-building ideas competed with each other. On the one hand, the conservatives and socialists, starting from radically different premises (traditional historicism versus Marxist historicism) leaned towards the precedence of historically formed political ties, and on the other hand, the parties of national right and popular movements were decidedly in favor of the primacy of ethnic and cultural ties, pointing first of all to the religious and linguistic unity. Before 1914 this dispute could not be settled by means of elections because of the authoritarian character of Germany, Russia, Turkey and Austria–Hungary, and primarily because of the low degree of representation in the representative bodies, their limited competence, and independence of the executive from the legislative.

In Berlin, Petersburg, Istanbul, Vienna, and Budapest there was chaos with regard to nationality policies. Objective and subjective reasons clashed. What certainly favored nations as political communities was 1) pluralist small homelands and the multiethnic character of very many territories; 2) several centuries of statehood based on military power, myths and political culture. In contrast, the policy pursued throughout the decades of the nineteenth century, based on state nationalism, did not bring success, did not eliminate ethnic identities; on the contrary, national languages and folk cultures as well as historical writing developed. These three elements strongly jeopardized the ideal of state society and were definitely after something more than mere regional separatism, thus becoming a base for the potential successes of irredentist movements.

During the war, the two sides fighting in Central Europe (the Entente and the Central States) tried to capture the area for geostrategic and geopolitical reasons, giving up the policy of incorporating new ethnicities into national communities. This is how we should interpret the German *Mitteuropa* policy, the Russian Slavonic conceptions, or the program of broadening the Habsburg and Ottoman communities.

The Great War brought about revolutionary changes in the public sphere in Central Europe in the ontological sense. The changes were observable on two levels.

First, like in Western Europe, the emergence and existence of national states was legitimized by the national factor. It was the nation that was a social reference point for public debate, for conflicts, antagonisms and political rivalry and for social communication. The division into nations became a way of constituting a modern society, perceiving and describing the past and the future, as well as of defining the obligations facing the state. The state was expected to act for the nation, strengthening its identity and holdings. The line of reasoning in nationality terms also imposed on the international environment the division into allied and enemy nation-states.

The second level referred to politics in its three meanings: general, specific, and philosophical. The substance of politics in the general sense became the electoral struggle for power in the state and then the exercise of it in such a way as to preserve balance and national cohesion versus all particularistic and destructive tendencies, as well as to protect national existence against external and internal threats. Each specific policy would mean solving specific problems based on the criterion for increasing national wealth. In the philosophical sense, politics was evaluated using the national perspective. Political decisions were assessed in national categories: the protection of national existence against loss of national identity, assimilation or acculturation. The nation state was recognized as the main actor of history.

## 2. THE ALTERNATIVE: POLITICAL NATIONS OR ETHNIC-CULTURAL NATIONS

Because of the specific historical character of Central Europe, in the early twentieth century the inhabitants in this part of the Continent faced an alternative in thinking about national identity, whether either in political/state-oriented or ethnic-cultural terms. For the followers of the former approach, the sense of political community was stronger than the ethnic diversity based on cultural, linguistic and religious differences, observable in a historical approach and on a regional scale. They imagined that their own restored state in the social dimension would be built to resemble the former states lost in the past or the prewar local homelands. In local homelands, inhabitants from different ethnic groups lived side by side, forming one community: similarly, a nation would be one political community and political identity would be superior to ethnic identity. This type of thinking was strongly supported by republicanism, deeply rooted in Polish and Hungarian culture, which co-existed with monarchy. For centuries the guiding principle had been the one expressed by Rhigas Velestinlis in 1797, "[...] a sovereign nation are all

people in this state, regardless of religion and dialect". For the republicans the problem was to slowly and rationally include the lower classes into the nation, i.e. to transform the national community from an exclusive into an inclusive one.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, the supporters of thinking about 'nation' in ethnic-cultural terms came to the conclusion that diversity on this level was the most important sociopolitical division that determined the nation-building process. The projected state would be modernized in the social sense. Its national character should be decided by the dominant ethnic group rather than the republican ethos, which meant the beginning of the process of transformation of local homelands towards their ethnic uniformity consisting in support for individuals and families belonging to the state nation at the expense of national minorities.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century both ways of thinking about 'nation' were seen to penetrate into Central Europe. The first was dominant in the first stage of the nation-building process in this part of Europe, when, like in Western Europe, the Polish, Russian, Hungarian, Czech and Croatian social elites tried to build their own nations as inclusive political communities that incorporated both all ethnic groups living in the whole territory regarded as a state area and local communities without a developed ethnic identity (the locals). The inclusion criteria were political, historical and symbolic. However, the state of relationships in the former lands of the Commonwealth of Both Nations, the Kingdom of the Crown of Saint Wenceslas, and the Kingdom of the Crown of Saint Stephen between the Poles and Russians, Germans versus Czechs and Hungarians, and between Hungarians and Croats was that of an alternative choice. Mutually exclusive political communities could not be established in the same territory at the same time.

The Polish social elite perceived the lower classes living within the First Republic (Commonwealth of Both Nations) in terms of one political nation in accordance with the decisions of the Great (i.e. Four-Year) Sejm [Parliament]. During the national uprisings, all inhabitants of the pre-partition territories were expected to mobilize to fight for the restoration of the lost fatherland. In contrast, successive Russian czars – Catherine II, Alexander I, Nicholas I, and Alexander II – remained faithful to the idea of Russianness (*russkost*), which denoted a civilizational community formed around the Orthodox faith and culture, the power and history of Muscovy as the heir of Constantinople (the "third Rome") and around the model of power whose essence was autocracy, citizenship having been marginalized. In one Russian state there could be only one *rossijskij* (Russian) nation.<sup>3</sup> That is why, by using the state apparatus, school system

<sup>2</sup> A.D. Smith, *Kulturowe podstawy narodów. Hierarchia, przymierze i republika*, transl. by W. Usakiewicz, Kraków 2009, pp. 201-204.

<sup>3</sup> See D. Moskwa, "W poszukiwaniu tożsamości narodowej – «russkij» czy «rossijskij narod»?", *Найкові зануки*, Вип. 12, no. 2 (2013), p. 68; A. Wierzbicki, *Rosja: Etniczność i polityka*, Warszawa 2011, t. 5, passim; M. Waldenberg, *Narody zależne i mniejszości narodowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Dzieje konfliktów i idei*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 121-125; D. Fajnhauz, *1863: Litwa i Białoruś*, Warszawa 1999, p. 11; J. Hrycak, *Historia Ukrainy 1772–1999. Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu*, Lublin 2000, p. 50; T.A. Olszański, *Historia Ukrainy XX wieku*, Warszawa 1993, p. 17; A. de Lazari,

and armed forces the czars strove to establish and integrate a Russian political nation, uniform on the state scale, composed of different ethnic groups (Great Russian, Little Russian [Ukrainian], Belarusian, Polish, German, Jewish) with different religious (several rites of Christianity, Mosaism) or even civilizational affiliations (Eastern, Western). In this stratification the Russian ethnic community (*russkiy narod*/nation) was only part of the political community. All inhabitants were therefore expected to show state patriotism based on the Russian imperial tradition and loyalty to the House of Romanov. For that reason, many local autonomies were retained although gradually restricted (the Kingdom of Poland, the Taken Lands, the Grand Duchy of Finland, the Baltic provinces (*guberniyas*); so was the free access to the power elite, while Russian colonization of the Empire's western territories was abandoned. However, czarism as the protector of the Orthodox Church also carried an evangelizing mission in accordance with the Orthodox faith towards all peoples living in the Russian Empire. Both the Empire and the Orthodox faith were to be universal.<sup>4</sup>

An analogous situation obtained in Hungary, where two conceptions of political nation confronted each other. In the late eighteenth century, Emperor Joseph II began the process of forming the German political nation embracing all inhabitants of the Habsburg monarchy, or even in broader terms, the First German Reich (the Great German idea). In Central Europe, this policy encountered the rival idea of the Hungarian political nation. In 1791 the Hungarian parliament supported the idea Hungary's autonomy as a kingdom with its own state laws, state culture and tradition of freedom that developed during a historical process.<sup>5</sup> It is in this spirit that the Hungarian Parliaments expressed their opinion in 1825–1827 and 1848–1849. During the Spring of Nations an almost identical position was voiced in the Czech (Bohemian) lands when references in the legal and mental sense began to be made to the once lost historical state, to state law and the concept of the Kingdom of Bohemia (*Regnum Bohemiae*) and to the unity of Czech lands. With one change: the Old Czech elite was actually eradicated in the first half of the seventeenth century, and thus could not become the carrier of the myth of the Kingdom of Bohemia. Social continuity was broken. The carrier of the tradition was therefore the new social elite which emerged as a result of Bohemization. According to this elite, a social counterpart of the restored *Regnum Bohemiae* would be the Czech political community consisting of Hussite, Catholic and Mosaic believers, speaking German and Czech, and belonging to Czech, German, Jewish and Polish ethnic groups.

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"Jakby tu stworzyć naród «rossijskij»?", in W. Borodziej, S. Dębski (eds.), *Modernizacja – Centrum – Peryferie: Księga jubileuszowa z okazji 70. rocznicy urodzin Profesora Ryszarda Stemplowskiego*, Warszawa 2009, p. 315.

<sup>4</sup> M. Waldenberg, *Narody zależne i mniejszości narodowe...*, 121-125; M. Cimbajew, "Idee federalizmu w Rosji carskiej", in E. Wiśniewski (ed.), *Centrum i regiony narodowościowe w Europie od XVIII do XX wieku*, Łódź 1998, pp. 36-37; J. Hrycak, op. cit., p. 50; B. Cywiński, *Szkice z dziejów narodów Europy Wschodniej*, Warszawa 2013, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> M.-E. Ducreaux, "Czechy i Węgry w monarchii habsburskiej w XVIII–XIX wieku", in J. Kłoczowski (ed.), *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, t. 1, Lublin 2000, pp. 383-387.



A characteristic sociopolitical feature in Central Europe was rivalry between political nations: those ruling (Russians, Germans) and the dominant (Poles, Hungarians, Czechs), which was consistent with the break of continuity of the political and state order between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries following the collapse of the Kingdom of Hungary and Kingdom of Bohemia as well as the partitions of the Commonwealth of Both Nations. In the first decades of the nineteenth century it was these states that became the subject of reference for social elites, first of all for landowners, but also for the bourgeoisie. The states in question became mythologized as political, democratic, tolerant, and liberal entities contrasted with the authoritarian rule of the Habsburgs, the Romanovs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Ottomans. The regimes which, the Poles, Hungarians and Czechs thought, were a regression as compared with the past. Since the political reality could not be changed (failed national uprisings and the unsuccessful Spring of Nations), there followed an escape into the great past, i.e. the period between the fourteenth and sixteenth century. One of the components of this historicism was the idealization of one's own political community – equivalent to the myth of the lost state. The dispute between the dominant and ruling nations was most clearly noticeable in the rivalry for the national identification of the lower classes (the people, Jews). Two sides clashed: the processes of Polonization, Magyarization (Hungarization) and Bohemization versus those of Russification and Germanization; in the first half of the nineteenth century these concepts referred to the state rather than ethnicity. Activities of this type, undertaken at the same time both by the dominant nations and ruling nations, identically oriented towards creating political communities, gave rise to conflicts.

The nation-building processes in the second half of the nineteenth century entered the next stage in Central Europe, when the process began of abandoning thinking of nations in political-state terms in order to redefine them according to the ethnic-cultural concept. In the early twentieth century the changes must have already been noticeable because in 1907 Friedrich Meinecke said that ethnic-cultural rather than political nations had arisen in Central and Eastern Europe. It is in this fact that he saw the distinct character of this part of the Continent.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, it was becoming more and more evident that the policy of building Central European nations as political communities might not be feasible. This situation had three general causes. Firstly, Austria, Russia, and Prussia were unable to impose their own conceptions of political nation upon the privileged classes, who either cultivated Old Polish and Hungarian (Magyar) traditions or tried to revive Old Czech traditions. This was confirmed by underground initiatives, national uprisings, the Spring of Nations, and the attitude of the Polish and Hungarian émigré communities. After the Hungarian (1848–1849) and January (1863–1864) Uprisings, the Petersburg, Berlin, and Vienna circles began to view the Poles and Hungarians as perennial conspirators, eternal rebels, enemies of Russian and German culture. This assessment was motivated by a conviction that it was the Poles and Hungarians who were dealing

<sup>6</sup> See R. Radzik, "Formowanie się narodów w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej", *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, no. 4 (1993), pp. 20-22; M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Dzieje, idee*, Warszawa 1992, p. 13.

a blow to the universalism of the Habsburgs, Romanovs and Ottomans, thereby obstructing their mission of building empires over the largest areas possible. Additionally, while organizing their irredentist movements, the Poles and Hungarians referred not only to their own tradition, including parliamentarianism, but also drew upon liberalism and Bonapartism, the political trends regarded as revolutionary.

Secondly, in vast Central European areas the lower classes did not passively accept the “fruits” of Germanization or Russification, or Polonization, Magyarization or Bohemization. No such identification took place but a space arose for self-determination i.e. activation of processes of building new nations: for example Ukrainian, Belarusian, Slovak, or Baltic nations, and Romanian, Croatian, Serb, Jewish, and Bulgarian.

Finally, the first two causes resulted in a third: the ethnicization of nation-building processes with reference to the Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, Russians and Germans. This was a defense mechanism whereby a given group adhered to its own language, faith and culture, and in its radical version, biology (race). Reference to one’s own historical state was no longer sufficient. It gave way to two new phenomena: the ethnicization of religion and sacralization of ethnicity. In the sphere of religion, universalism was replaced by ethnic values. In the ethnic sphere, however, religious sense began to be attributed to ethnicity: there was a belief that it would exist eternally, which in fact meant metaphysical immortality and being chosen by God, who assigned a historic mission to a particular nation.<sup>7</sup>

A new level of rivalry began to develop increasingly clearly in public debate (overt and clandestine, domestic and émigré) and in Hungarian, Polish and Czech political arenas between the adherents of two different lines of thought about ‘nation’. Influential political currents began to abandon positive emphasis on the multiethnic and multireligious character of societies that once inhabited the Commonwealth of Both Nations, the Kingdom of Hungary and the Kingdom of Bohemia. This was regarded as a weakness that had to be rejected, and thereby Polonization, Magyarization and Bohemization no longer related to state patriotism but to ethnic issues.

The nineteenth-century historical-political rivalry now overlapped with ethnic-cultural reasons. Democratization of the political order was conducive to these changes, primarily the establishment of elected representative bodies, which meant the institutionalization of limited competition, and with the spread of suffrage the necessity arose to solicit the people for support, which could be gained by referring to ethnic and cultural arguments, according to the principle “we vote for one of us against the strangers.” This factor began to stimulate the development of nationalism as a protest against the existing political, or more broadly, political and even economic order. When new states emerged after the First World War, the ethnic majority decided to appropriate them and make them a tool for strengthening their position at the expense of national minorities.

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<sup>7</sup> R. Zenderowski, “Etnicyzacja religii i sakralizacja etnosu. Nacjonalizm w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej”, *Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne*, vol. 24 (2010), pp. 38-39.



### 3. EPIGONES OF POLITICAL NATIONS

The presented alternative: political or ethnic-cultural nations had to be decided in the interwar years because it was a dispute over the character of the most important political consolidation determining both the internal situation in individual states in the region and the international relations, and first of all the structure of the internal arena and the international environment in terms of enemies or allies. The victory of the advocates of ethnic-cultural nations almost made ethnic polarization – with a highly complex character of settlement in Central Europe from this angle – a determinant of political rivalry, driving classic political right-center-left disputes into the background. This solution also determined the national character of the new states, whether this adjective referred to political unity or to ethnic issues. The authorities of Central European states, chosen by election, had to face both the crisis of political communities, aggravated by war, and the nation-building process imbued with ethnic and cultural features.

An important role was played by some decisions made already before the Great War in Austria-Hungary, Turkey and in Russia, which emphasized the problem of national identification in the region. Through their policies Franz Joseph I, Alexander III, Nicholas II and Abdülhamid created favorable conditions for the emergence of ethnic-cultural nations. The political thought and activities of the Pan-German, Great Russian and Young Turkish movements were decidedly nationalist. Their points of reference were their own ethnic-cultural communities as opposed to other national minority groups living in the empires. Consequently, Russification, Germanization and Turkicization began to be treated in a different way, at the same time influencing the evolution of the processes like Polonization, Magyarization and Bohemization. The goal was no longer to develop state patriotism but to change the ethnic identity of individuals and societies.

In the Habsburg state, the Constitution of 1867 introduced a dual monarchy, while in fact it created the legal basis for the deconstruction of the Habsburg political community, ethnic polarization of Austria–Hungary, self-identification of Austrian Germans, and independent nationality policy of Hungary.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, in the Hungarian part of the state the physical, biological and spiritual uniqueness of the Hungarians began to be increasingly emphasized in public life, while on the other hand, Pan-German nationalism was emerging which advocated the idea of one national German state at the expense of elimination of the Habsburg community.<sup>9</sup>

The last two Russian czars, Alexander III and Nicholas II, facing liberalism and radicalism, directly referred to Great Russian nationalism by opposing the ethnic Russians to other nations living in the Russian empire. A theory was advanced about the existence of the triune ethnic-cultural Russian nation composed only of three regional groups: Great

<sup>8</sup> M. Waldenberg, *Narody zależne i mniejszości narodowe...*, pp. 52-53; idem, *Kwestie narodowe...*, pp. 30-36.

<sup>9</sup> P. Madajczyk, *Marzenie o narodzie doskonałym. Między biopolityką a etnopolityką*, Warszawa 2017, p. 64.

Russian, Little Russian, and Belarusian.<sup>10</sup> The Poles, Germans, Baltic peoples, Finns, Jews and Caucasian peoples were recognized as enemies of Russianness, who should be fought and weakened. Sergei Semionovich Uvarov's triad, "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality (national spirit)," became the basis of Russification in the ethnic-cultural sense in the last decades of the nineteenth-century. The Russification formula was therefore changed; state nationalism (*rossiyskiy narod*) was abandoned for ethnic nationalism (*russkiy narod*). In Russia, Great Russian attitudes, albeit weakly institutionalized, dominated in the dispute with liberal center parties (Union of Liberation, Constitutional-Democratic Party, Union of October 17), which expected that the liberalization of the political system would make it possible to generate political-state ties between all inhabitants of the Empire.<sup>11</sup>

Young-Turk nationalism was a response to the failure of the Young Ottoman movement, whose leaders believed that it was possible to build an Ottoman political community by introducing liberalism, democracy, and a constitution. Western European style reforms would block the process of break-up of state community for religious, linguistic and cultural reasons. The occidentalization of the sultanate, attempted twice by the followers of the *Tanzimat* in 1839–1876 and 1889–1918, failed.<sup>12</sup> That is why the Young Turk movement rejected not only Ottoman ideology but also Pan-Islamism, and focused its attention on building an ethnic Turkish community. This work was undertaken by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Some portion of the Polish, Hungarian, and Czech elites, and respective political actors, undertook the work of reviving their own political communities, by rejecting the ethnicization of nation-building processes. The political nations, Old Polish, Magyar, and Old Czech, would be transformed into modern political communities by extending former rights and liberties to the lower classes. That is why socio-economic reforms and educational measures were drafted which were oriented towards the interests of peasant, worker and Jewish population. These lower classes were expected to identify themselves with their own lost states and join the fight for their restoration. It was assumed that despite these transformations, the two communities would retain their multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious character.

<sup>10</sup> See A. Nowak, *Od imperium do imperium: Spojrzenia na historię Europy Wschodniej*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 34–35.

<sup>11</sup> P. Rojek, *Przekleństwo imperium. Źródła rosyjskiego zachowania*, Kraków 2014, p. 30; L. Bazyłow, *Historia Rosji*, Wrocław 1985, p. 288; M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe...*, pp. 101–108; E. Wiśniewski, "Liberałowie wobec dylematu: centrum i regiony w wielonarodowościowym Imperium Rosyjskim na początku XX wieku", in E. Wiśniewski (ed.), *Centrum i regiony narodowościowe w Europie od XVIII do XX wieku*, Łódź 1998, pp. 127–134; idem, "Europa Środkowowschodnia w koncepcjach liberałów rosyjskich przed I wojną światową", in W. Balcerak (ed.), *Państwa narodowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX wieku*, Łowicz–Warszawa 2000, pp. 65–68.

<sup>12</sup> Webpage "The Free Online Encyclopedia", <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com>, *Definition of Tanzimat*, accessed 20 September 2012; D. Kołodziejczyk, *Turcja*, Warszawa 2000, *passim*; T. Wituch, *Tureckie przemiany: dzieje Turcji 1878–1923*, Warszawa 1980, *passim*; S. Deren, "From Pan-Islamism to Turkish Nationalism. Modernisation and German Influence in the Late Ottoman Period", in M. Dogo, G. Frazinetti (eds.), *Disrupting and Reshaping: Early Stages of Nation-building in the Balkans*, Ravenna 2002, pp. 134–136.

1. Modernization views about Polishness were represented by the conservative and liberal circles, the Polish League, the social-democratic movement, and the independence camp. However, the all-Polish camp emerging in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century began to abandon the idea of perceiving Poles as a political community and, instead, emphasized the ethnic and cultural factors uniting its members. It was a new proposal in the area of political thought which meant redefining both the past and the future. The First Commonwealth (First Republic) was regarded as an ethnically Polish state while the idea of restoring the former political nation was treated at least as a manifestation of the archaic, of naivety and harmful activity. The future Poland would be guided by the interests of the Polish nation only, rather than of all its inhabitants. The dispute over the model of the Polish nation continued from the Partitions period into the Second Republic of Poland. The participants in it were two formations: the Piłsudski camp and the national-democratic movement.

According to Piłsudski's followers, during their rule between 1926 and 1935 the state was a value primary to the nation, an entity/actor able to integrate all its inhabitants around their common history and laws. Ethnic factors were attributed a secondary role and perceived in regional and local terms. To the Piłsudski camp, the Polish nation was a political "imagined community" with a historical origin, which needed modernization. What was important for its cohesion was Polish culture and state tradition as well as Polish language treated as a means of communication and application of the Republic's laws. Small differentiated homelands were not only idealized but also treated as a model for the state community because, since the majority of its territories were jointly inhabited by representatives of many ethnic groups, then they could only coexist on the scale of the whole state. For the Piłsudski camp, the enemy was (Polish and minority) nationalist parties and movements, which sought to break the unity of the political community by using the ethnic criterion.

For national democracy politicians and their leader, Roman Dmowski, it was the nation that was the actor in history, which used the state as a means of developing its resources in order to consolidate and strengthen its existence, and absorb social groups with uncrystallized national identity.<sup>13</sup> The nation appeared to them as a natural community, based on ethnicity, religion, ethics, morality, and culture. The national state would represent the nation perceived in this way.

2. In Hungary after 1867, Ferenc Déak, Gyula Andrássy, József Eötvös, István Tisza and Sándor Wekerle undertook the work of putting into effect the political slogans of 1791–1849. In 1868 the restoration of a multiethnic and multid denominational *Natio Hungarica* was proclaimed. The diverse communities would be united by the Hungarian state law, political culture, adherence to freedom and the principles of Hungarian constitutionalism embodied by the Crown of Saint Stephen. All these values could be enjoyed on condition that one spoke Hungarian. However, after an agreement with the House of Habsburg, the liberal and democratic program was abandoned to conserve

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<sup>13</sup> See E. Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy 1919–1928. Studium z dziejów myśli politycznej*, Lublin 2000, pp. 162–180.

the social structure, which would be reformed in connection with the progress of political Magyarization of public space, significant because it was fought against during the Habsburg rule in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

After the military defeat in 1918, fervent debate was initiated in Hungary about the way of guaranteeing the unity of the state and Hungarian community: it broke out between the conservatives (National Labor Party) and liberals and socialists (National Bourgeois Radical Party, Party of Independence and '48, Social Democratic Party). The failure of the liberal revolution, which produced space for a communist revolution, resulted in that the thinking of Hungarian nation as a political community could be expressed in the interwar years only in conservative solutions that Regent Miklós Horthy tried to implement.

What Piłsudski and Horthy had in common was the rejection of thinking of the state and society in terms of ethnicity, popular spirit and religion. The *raison d'état* was expected to be the most important to society while Polishness and Magyarness was to be defined in political and historical terms. Nationalism was perceived as a threat to the state for at least two reasons: the deepening of sociopolitical polarization and its spread onto local homelands.<sup>15</sup>

3. After 1848 the Czech national elite also put forward the idea of political nation. Unlike the Polish and the Hungarian projects, its advocate was the intelligentsia of lower class origin rather than the landowning gentry. Reference was made to the medieval Kingdom of Bohemia, and the following concepts were restored: the Crown of Saint Wenceslas in reference to Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia; Czech state law; the precedence of political identification over ethnic, linguistic and religious identity of inhabitants.<sup>16</sup> This program was called Old Czech (Bohemian) but at the end of the nineteenth- and beginning of the twentieth century it was rejected by the Young Bohemian (Czech) movement: for them the Czechs were an ethnic-cultural community, primarily different from the Germans. The distinctive features of this identity would be language, culture, and denomination (Hussite). The effects of political Bohemization or identification of Germans with the Czech lands in which they lived were rejected.

However, after the Great War the political community project took on another form: the conception of Czechoslovakism. Tomáš G. Masaryk proposed the implementation of the project of Czechoslovakia, the social equivalent of which would be a new nation with the same political identity, organized in a democratic and liberal state. The

<sup>14</sup> M. Waldenberg, *Narody zależne i mniejszości narodowe...*, pp. 90-92; Website History of Hungary – Sejm 1790-91 and its consequences, at <<http://www.budapest.infinity.waw.pl>>, 5 May 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Ł. Kaprańska, *Pluralizm kulturowy i etniczny a odrębność regionalna Kresów Południowo-Wschodnich w latach 1918–1939*, Kraków 2000, pp. 218-226; R. Wapiński, “Spuścizna lat Wielkiej Wojny”, in A. Czubiński, P. Okulewicz, T. Schramm (eds.), *Problemy narodowościowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX wieku. Księga pamiątkowa dla Profesora Przemysława Hausera*, Poznań 2002, pp. 235-242; W. Felczak, “Zerwanie unii realno-personalnej austriacko-węgierskiej”, in *Problemy historii Słowian i Europy Środkowej w XIX i XX wieku. Zbiór studiów*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1982, pp. 8-22; A. Friszke, “Piłsudski”, *Więź* nos. 4-6 (1985), p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> M. Waldenberg, *Narody zależne i mniejszości narodowe...*, pp. 56-65.

addressees of the project were the Czechs, Slovaks, Bohemian-Moravian Germans, Jews, Trans-Olzan Poles and Carpathian-Russians. The Constitution of the Republic of February 29, 1920 contained an entry about the existence of the Czechoslovak nation.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The decision in Central Europe concerning the alternative between political nations and ethnic-cultural nations had ontological consequences. This was because it related to the type of bond that provided the link between inhabitants in a given area, whether a political one oriented towards the state and liberties or an ethnic one oriented towards language, religion and culture. In the former case the symbols around which emotions were centered resulted either from the history of the state lost in the past or myths that developed in the decades of collective longing for the restoration of one's own sovereign state. It was planned to include the lower classes into the national community by extending the liberties and rights once vested only in the social elite (landowners, bourgeoisie). The means to that end was education in the state language, which had to be necessarily learned in order to consciously participate in creating one's own history, take part in politics, and learn the national law and liberties. One became a Czech, a Pole, a Hungarian, a German, or a Russian for political reasons: this was determined by identification with the state as a historical entity. The eulogists of czarism could not be regarded as Poles while those longing for the Commonwealth of Both Nations were automatically excluded from the Russian political community, thus becoming rebels. The assessment of the collapse of the Kingdom of Hungary in the sixteenth century or the Hungarian uprising of 1848–1849 became criteria for belonging to the *Natio Hungarica*. It was difficult to become a Bohemian without regarding the defeat in the Battle of White Mountain (Bila Hora) in 1620 as a national tragedy and the end of the Kingdom of the Crown of Saint Wenceslas.

In ethnic-cultural thinking the underlying basis of the nation-building process was ethnicity, whose base would be the people, while the duty of the social elite was to raise their awareness in terms of ethnic membership. It was a necessary condition for building rather than restoring one's own national statehood. Language and religion were regarded as the most important factors of ethnic identification. An interesting manipulation was also made in social awareness. The nations as social entities emerging in the nineteenth and twentieth century were also referred to the previous history, both medieval and modern (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries). The Central European states that existed at that time were assigned ethnic features, when the Poles, Hungarians and Czechs were spoken of in relation to the deep Middle Ages. This approach to 'nation' meant not only defining the "imagined community" in terms different from the West

<sup>17</sup> See idem, *Kwestie narodowe...*, pp. 284-289; E. Orlof-Piotrowska, "Unia słowacko-czeska w roku 1918", in *Problemy historii Słowian i Europy Środkowej...*, pp. 51-62; H. Batowski, "Przyczyny rozpadu byłej Czecho-Słowacji", *Prace Komisji Środkowoeuropejskiej* vol. 1 (1993), pp. 107-120.



European but created a space for the emergence of national minorities and provided strong impetus for the breakup of small local homelands in Central Europe, diversified in terms of language, culture, and religion. At the local level, an ethnically different individual became a stranger, and politically an enemy, whose position, including his holdings, should be limited.

In the second half of the 1930s in Poland, Czechoslovakia and in Hungary as well as in Yugoslavia, the supporters of thinking of political communities went on the defensive. It was a response to two phenomena.

Firstly, the development of fascism, principally its German brand, which invoked race and species in the process of political consolidation, forced the adaptation of political elites in the Central European states. Adolf Hitler raised to an unprecedented level the ethnic identification of Germans inhabiting Central Europe, who began to consciously exclude themselves from their mother political community and became patriots of the Third Reich. The Polish, Hungarian and Czech Germans increasingly made reference to their ethnic language while Nazism (Hitlerism) began to perform the role of a national religion. The ethnic Poles, Hungarians and Czechs had to react to this process by ethnicizing their own state and excluding minorities (Jews as well) from the national community. Fascination with ethnos also infected Joseph Stalin, who began to fill the communist thought with references to Russianness ("socialism in one country") when building the Soviet nation, which was actually another plan for a Pan-Russian community. Stalinism was a fundamental revision of Leninism on that issue.<sup>18</sup> Clearly observable redefinitions began to take place in the community of Central European Jews. The beliefs characteristic of the Haskalah movement that the modernization of Jews could be carried out towards including them in political nations, with their religious identity being retained, encountered an increasingly strong rival, i.e. Zionists, who recognized Jews as a nation worthy of having their own "national seat".<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, the strategic plans of Germany and the Soviet Union and the emergence of the bloc security system increasingly made the politicians in Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague consider a war scenario as the most certain possibility. In these conditions it was necessary to strengthen the citizens' political consolidation, without which it would be difficult to imagine successful participation in a war. The consolidation was based on ethnicity because chances of national minorities being loyal to the state were regarded as illusory. It was difficult to imagine Central European Germans taking part in a war against the Third Reich, or the Jewish minority in conflict with the Soviet Union. Generally, it was necessary to stir up emotions among ethnic Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs.

Under those circumstances, after J. Pilsudski's death, his camp increasingly began to absorb the ideas that had been characteristic of national-democratic thought in the

<sup>18</sup> A.J. Leinwand, "Bolszewicy wobec powstania państw narodowych w Europie Środkowowschodniej", in W. Balcerak (ed.), *Państwa narodowe...*, pp. 125-136; M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe...*, pp. 324-339; R. Wojna, "Bolszewicy a integracja Europy 1917-1922", *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Prace Historyczne*, no. 118 (1995), p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> P.S. Wandycz, "Odrodzenie narodowe i nacjonalizm (XIX-XX wiek)", in J. Kłoczowski (ed.), *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, t. 2, Lublin 2000, pp. 163-165.



past, including the definition of nation in ethnic-cultural terms, the reference to Catholicism, the ethnicization of ownership, and the acceptance of the Zionist attitude towards Jews as a nation rather than a religious community, whereas from 1932 Miklós Horthy began to replace conservative ministers with rightist radicals who brought in some fascist views to his formation. The aim was to stop the growing social support for the native fascists, who sought to take over power with the help of the Third Reich. The Czechoslovak experiment ended in disaster in 1938–1939, destroyed by the rebellion of Germans, Slovaks, and Russians (Ruthenians). The democratic Czechoslovak state was identified as Czech, serving the Czechs to impose their domination.

In all the three states and in the whole region, there was a fundamental change in political polarization resulting from ethnic rivalry. Poland began to show interest in the Poles in Cieszyn Silesia, and Hungary in the fates of the Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania. The wide spread of nationalist attitudes soon resulted in the transformation of positive coexistence of neighbors in small homelands into conflict-ridden living “side by side”. A spark (the outbreak of war) was enough to cause ethnic feuds and even result in acceptance or passivity towards the killing of the neighbors. After the Second World War this meant the collapse of multiethnic local communities, which was actually the consequence of the extermination of Jewish population who had lived in Central Europe “for ages” and of the ethnic relocations (of Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Ukrainians) to new, now homogenous homelands. The displaced persons took with them not so good memories of the past as the trauma of the recent war years.

After the First World War the formula of Central European political nations was becoming obsolete while ethnic-cultural nations based on the lower classes secured their position. The 1918 Autumn of Nations, which actually was a revolution, empowered the lower-class cultural-ethnic nations. Some of them, namely the Lithuanians and Croats, referred to and drew upon their own history, to a time when their states still existed. This was accompanied by the condemnation of the unions of these states with Poland and Hungary. Modern Lithuanian and Croatian patriotism was based on challenging the unions’ acts agreed on in the Middle Ages.

Like the Hungarians, the Croats tried to think about ‘nation’ in political terms. In 1830 Josip Kušević announced that the Triune Kingdom was a political actor with its laws and Constitution. Those who espoused this idea began to seek historical justifications for it. From the haze of old sources about statehood in the Balkans, Croatian historians began to construct narratives about the Croatian state. Between 1836 and 1868, Croatian politicians reconstituted such concepts as *Kraljevina Hrvatska, rex Chroatorum*, and Croatian historical laws. They wrote about the lost Crown of King Zvonimir, which was used at coronation ceremonies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Croatian state thereby moved from the mythical to historical sphere.

This line of thinking underlay two political projects. One, namely the Triune Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia, would be recognized as a separate political actor under the Habsburg rule, with its own political nation diversified in terms of language, religion, and blood ties. The main originator of the idea was Ante Starčević. The other project consisted in building their own state inhabited by all Balkan Slavs, which

meant the appropriation by the Croats of different local traditions, Illyrian, Slavonian, and Dalmatian, as well as of historical forms of statehood arisen in Illyria, Dubrovnik (Raguza), Dalmatia, Istria, and Slavonia.<sup>20</sup> However, during the Second World War, social legitimacy was definitively accorded to the organization of the German-dependent Croatian state inhabited by the Croatian nation understood as an ethnic-cultural community. The social elites of the other ethnic-cultural nations, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Latvians, Estonians, Slovaks, Romanians, Slovenians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Serbs and Jews, did not show any tendency towards considering the variant of building their own nation as a political community.

During the Second World War, social solidarity present in the Polish, Hungarian, and Czech territories at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, directed against monarchical absolutism, was replaced by agonistic ethnic-based relations. Rivalry was based on two pillars: 1) the ethnic interpretation of the ally-enemy dichotomy not only at the level of state but also on a local scale; 2) the use of force measures in politics, like resettlement, forcible alienation of property, and genocide. The positive results of multiethnicity were destroyed almost instantly; after the war the resistance movements did not demand the restoration of the multiethnic demos but only satisfaction for their own ethnic groups. This was accompanied by exclusion from the demos of individuals and communities that were regarded as ethnically dubious. Different identity was no longer an enriching factor; it began to be a burden. Pluralist local rural and urban homelands were entirely destroyed. The borderlands, marches and regions that made up the identity of Central Europe now symbolized historical tragedy, traumatic memories, the break of historical continuity, and collective injustice and harm.

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<sup>20</sup> W. Konarski, "Nacjonalizm i pojęcia powiązane: Interpretacje autorskie oraz wybrana egzemplifikacja", in W. Konarski, A. Koseski (eds.), *Balkany. Etnokulturowe podłoże konfliktów*, Pułtusk 2006, pp. 32-33; M. Jareb, "Old-Croatian Crown" or the Construction and Use of a National and Political Symbol from the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the World War II, at <<http://slavica-petropolitana.spbu.ru>>, pp. 16-33, 28 February 2015; J. Wilamowski, K. Szczepanik, "Ustasze i separatyzm chorwacki. Przyczynki do badań nad chorwackim ruchem nacjonalistycznym", *Przegląd Historyczny* 1983, no. 1, p. 79; P. Mada-jczyk, op. cit., p. 67; The web page of Croatia's Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, at <<http://www.mfa.hr>>, 21 August 2012; A. Jagiełło-Szostak, *Idea narodu politycznego kontra etnonacjonalizmy. Od jugosławizmu do jugonostalgii*, Wrocław 2013, pp. 55-78.

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