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## **ETHNIC POLICIES IN CONTEMPORARY INDUSTRIAL, PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES**

Multicultural countries are exercising different ethnic and cultural policies, depending on their historical experiences and actual political, economic and other circumstances. External factors have less influence on these policies.<sup>1</sup> The policies are in many aspects the consequence of the vitality of the non-dominant ethnic groups. In cases where these groups developed the consciousness of their ethnic identity and have in this spirit elaborated diversified ethno-political programmes and effective ethnic movements as well, their claims have a greater chance to be taken into consideration. In fact in these conditions the dominant ethnic community would be much more inclined to make attempts to rescue the basic social relationships ensuring its domination by adopting compromising solutions on the terms of the non-dominant ethnic groups.

But the dominant ethnic group would very rarely accept structural social changes which would endanger its status of priority in cases where the changes were proposed by peaceful (i. e. parliamentary, democratic) methods. Unfortunately experience has shown that such changes were accepted many times because the dominant group was forced to do so, being unable to resist successfully the armed forces or political and social perturbances provoked by internal and very rarely by international circumstances.

It is very difficult to elaborate some kind of valuable typology of ethnic policies. In general it is possible to divide them between those whose principle feature is the repudiation of the existence of ethnic groups and of the pluralistic nature of a given society as such, and the other which have admitted this fact but have in practice developed various approaches to the management of interethnic and other types of relations in the ethnically pluralistic societies.

The latter policies could be further divided according to their political and ethnic goals, between those whose objectives are aimed at protecting the individual and the others which have, in addition, developed the protection of the ethnic community as a collective entity, as a rationale for their existence. This division usually corresponds to

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<sup>1</sup> One of the rare examples is the autonomy of thirteen provinces in the south of Philippines which was agreed upon on Dec. 23, 1976 in Tripoli.

the division between countries which are ensuring only the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination of the citizens and their equality before the law, and the others which besides this try by so-called reverse discrimination (e.g. special measures) to ensure also the maintenance and progress of ethnic groups which constitute their societies.

The ethnic policies could be classified also according to the division of those which provide only the constitutional and legislative provisions aimed at ensuring the equality of different ethnic factors of the given society, and the others which are trying to obtain these goals by endeavouring to create also other conditions for the unhampered ethnic and cultural life of the minority as, for instance, economic, environmental and similar conditions that characterise the contemporary industrial and pluralistic society. Differences between ethnic policies exist also in that they may confirm that the non-dominant ethnic groups are a constituent element of the given multicultural society or that they passively tolerate their cultural, political and similar claims.

Finally we could classify ethnic policies under two general headings: „negative“ and „selective“ policies. But immediately I must underline that it is very difficult to elaborate a precise typology of these policies if we look at them from this point of view.

The most distinctive are two negative policies: the policy of nonrecognition of ethnicity in any form and the policy of assimilation. The first policy is exercised in different forms. In most cases it is reflected in the non recognition of any rights or status of ethnic groups. All such societies have in common the assertion that they are ethnically homogenous and that they „consciously deny to ethnic groups any special collective rights or they even deny the very existence of these groups“<sup>2</sup>. These policies are in some cases the consequence of historical events<sup>3</sup> or of recent political decisions in particular countries which see in this the way for the creation of the overwhelming hegemony of the leading ethnic elite<sup>4</sup>. But many states which otherwise do not confirm the existence of ethnic groups living in them, implicitly recognise the existence of the ethnic factor by adopting legal provisions aimed at prohibiting discrimination against citizens or individuals on various ethnic or other grounds<sup>5</sup>. The principle of non-recognition of the ethnic diversity emanates from the notion of the sovereignty of people in the framework of the so called united national state (nation-state) which has been developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The realisation of this notion in the last century has provoked the assimilation of many cultures and the extermination of even more minority (or even majority) languages, for instance, in Europe<sup>6</sup>. This at first glance „liberal“ notion is in fact often a skilful coverup for the hegemonistic tendencies of the dominant group or, more precisely, its elite.

2 See: P. L. van der Berghe, Protection of ethnic minorities, A critical appraisal, in: Wirsing, Protection of Ethnic Minorities Comparative Perspectives Pergamon Press, New York 1981.

3 For instance, the non recognition of Kurds and Armenians in Turkey.

4 Typical example is Bulgaria who until the sixties recognises the existence of the Macedonia and until the eighties the existence of the Turkish minority in the country.

5 Such legislation was adopted practically by all the states who became members or acceded to the Pacts of human rights by 1966.

6 We have in mind the fate, for instance, of occitan, welsh, scot, catalan, britton or similar languages.

In countries which formally recognise different ethnic groups a variety of possible relations of their elites towards the minority groups exist. For the „negative“ policies we could propose this typology:

- (a) internal colonisation
- (b) assimilation
- (c) ethnocide
- (d) genocide

Each of these policies has a specific historical, economic, political, social and cultural characteristic. The common starting point of all of these policies is the official non-recognition or the repudiation of ethnic differences. All these notions are based on the cultural homogeneity of the national state in which citizens are directly incorporated as individuals. The differences between these policies are to be found in the extent to which particular states institutionalised the rights of minority groups besides the rights of the individuals belonging to them. The logic of the group rights and of their incorporation in the state is completely different from those which are based on the individual as the only subject of the state constituency<sup>7</sup>. It is important to bear in mind that in the countries where the dominant ethnic groups identifies itself with the state any ethnic policy always would be in the interest of this group in all states where the leading groups are substantially numerically stronger than other groups and this is a case more or less of all multicultural countries.

The multicultural countries that recognise the existence of ethnic differences usually have in their constitutions or legislation provisions for implementing the principle of international law of equality of citizens before the law and of the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of race, language and ethnic or national origin. In any case this relates, as we have already seen, to the citizens as individuals. But difficulties begin when it would be necessary to ensure by positive action the equality and non-discrimination of ethnic groups as collectivities and to give them a status of a constituent factor of the state.

In order to achieve this goal many western countries have developed the notion of the so-called affirmative action, according to which it would be necessary, by adopting special measures, to provide, not only formal but also factual equality. The affirmative action is a voluntary attempt to eliminate the categorical aspects of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, caste, or, in recent times, sex, age etc.<sup>8</sup>. Glaser and other theoreticians do not accept this notion, and are of the opinion that it represents a disguised, paternalistic approach towards the non-dominant ethnic groups and it creates an animosity between the majority and the minority. The latter is according to their opinion proved by the establishment of special bureaus, commissions, vice-presidential posts etc. for the minorities while the members of the majorities are directly incorporated in the state. „This animosity is a substantial characteristic of the colonialism – in this case the internal one“<sup>9</sup>.

The basic dilemma seems to be what is the function of the state. Of fundamental importance is if the state has an equal stand towards all its citizens without any

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7 See: P. L. van der Berghe, *supra* note 2, at 348.

8 *Ibidem*, pp. 351–352.

9 *Ibidem*, pp. 352–353.

distinction, for instance, as to race, colour, language, ethnic or national origin. But many times or even regularly this is not the case. The multicultural state is in the hands of the strongest i. e. the greatest nation and its ruling class. Consequently, this as a rule exercise control over all the principle attributes of the state such as administration, army, police, diplomatic corps etc. The protection of the minorities is therefore in many states only a smokescreen for disguising domination by the majority groups. Even if one accepts goodwill on the part of those in power the results of their activities are mostly negative for the minorities<sup>10</sup>.

Under the term consociation some theoreticians would like to define the ethnic policy which is exercised by some western constitutional democracies e.g. Belgium, Switzerland and Canada<sup>11</sup>. This concept relates to a system of governing that has institutionalised the proportional ethnic representation and the comprehensive negotiated system of compromises and equilibrium between ethnic groups which are supposed to be equal. Although the concept of „comuniti life“ is many times shown as stable democratic pluralism it is in fact sometimes a fragile and unstable system, working well only in particular circumstances which unfortunately very rarely obtain. This system in many situations reduces to the establishment of the conservative cartel of ethnic elites which participate in power and by giving in this way the priority to their class rather than to the ethnic interests<sup>12</sup>.

In those socialist countries where on the basis of the recognition of ethnic diversity claim to exercise the policy of guaranteeing equality to their different ethnic groups the regimes add to the mentioned elements of ethnic policy in the western countries some ideological ingredients but in substance they are facing similar problems to the capitalist countries. The recent events in USSR (Kazakhstan, Azarbeidjan, Armenia, Baltic Republics etc), Yugoslavia (Kosovo etc), Bulgaria (the repudiation of the Macedonian and Turkish minorities etc), China (the disturbances in Tibet), Ethiopia (the problem of Eriteria etc) show among other things how fragile these systems of interethnic relations are in the conditions of the contemporary multiethnic industrial societies.

In conclusion I would like to emphasise the importance also of scientific theoretical work for fulfilling the needs of finding out in the future adequate means of developing interethnic relations in multicultural societies of the contemporary world, in accordance with the phenomenon of the revival of ethnicity and in accordance with new economic, technological and other dimensions which constitute the substance of the industrial and post-industrial contemporary societies. New concepts in policymaking could be elaborated on the basis of the following elements:

- (a) the adequate policy should include all the elements of the identity of the contemporary ethnic group, from language and culture to economy and the protection of the environment.
- (b) the ethnic groups should have the opportunity to participate in decision making concerning the issues mentioned above.

10 Ibidem, pp. 353.

11 the corner stones of this theory were set up by LEHMBRUCH and LIJPHART. See: G. LEHMBRUCH, *Proporzdemokratie*, Monk, TÜBINGEN 1967; A. LIJPHART, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977.

12 P. L. van der Berghe, *supra* note 2, at 349.

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- (c) the relations between minorities and majorities must be based on equality and on genuine common interests without paternalism. mere humanism or ideological premises of the majorities' ruling elites.
  - (d) all these factual situations and intentions should be reflected in the constitutional, political and legal system of the multiethnic state and in its economic, cultural demographic and other policies as well.

But in any case the specific way of implementing these principles would rely on the specific historical, socio-economic and cultural circumstances in different regions of the world in particular states as well.