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"How Many Pharmacists of Slovakian Origin Lived in Hungary in the Age of the Tartar Invasion?" Additions to István Bibó's Picture of Central Europe

The Hungarian thinker and politician István Bibó examined the history of Central Europe in several significant studies. He drew attention to the serious social and political problems of the area, including those pathological symptoms which, in his opinion, had led to both World Wars. The ethnic conflicts of the region had been escalating since the 18th century, turning into historical traumas and political hysteria in the 20th. Bibó considered the Trianon Peace Treaty such a trauma. Therefore, he rejected and raised his voice against the infringements committed by Czechoslovakians and Romanians against their Hungarian minorities. Bibó proposed the consistent application of the principle of self-governance and the introduction of political arbitration for the resolution of ethnic conflicts, but in the long term he believed in the reconciliation of these nationalities. In his view a historical shift of this kind could bring about a positive change for the Hungarian minorities of the formerly Hungarian territories.

Keywords: István Bibó, self-governance, ethnic conflicts, minority rights, political arbitration, international law

"Koliko lekarnarjev slovaškega porekla je živelo na Ogrskem v dobi tatarskih vpadov?" Prispevki k pogledu Istvána Biba na Srednjo Evropo

Madžarski mislec in politik István Bibó se je v številnih odmevnih študijah ukvarjal z zgodovino Srednje Evrope. V njih je opozarjal na resne družbene in politične probleme te regije, vključno z bolezenskimi simptomi, ki so po njegovem mnenju povzročili obe svetovni vojni. Etnični konflikti na tem območju so naraščali vse od 18. stoletja naprej in prerasli v zgodovinske travme ter politično histerijo 20. stoletja. Po Bibovem mnenju je bila taka travma Trianonska mirovna pogodba. Prav zato je povzdignil glas proti kršitvam nad madžarskimi manjšinami, ki so jih izvršili Čehoslovaki in Romuni. Predlagal je dosledno uporabo načela samouprave in uvedbo politične arbitraže za reševanje etničnih konfliktov, čeprav je na dolgi rok verjel v spravo omenjenih narodov. Po njegovem mnenju bi tak zgodovinski obrat lahko prinesel pozitivno spremembo za madžarske manjšine na nekdanjih območjih Ogrske.

Ključne besede: István Bibó, samouprava, etnični konflikti, manjšinske pravice, politična arbitraža, mednarodno pravo

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1. Introduction

The unusual title of this paper may be best explained by an anecdote stemming from István Bibó.¹ When the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior was headed by one of his friends, Ferenc Erdei, Bibó was working as the head of the legislation department at the ministry. Originally Erdei had been holding meetings with Soviet General Belyanov, who was responsible for internal affairs at the Allied Control Commission, but in August 1945 he gave this task to Bibó. Bibó recalled this meeting with General Belyanov by saying that “most of these meetings were about astoundingly insignificant things.” Once

I had to present Hungary’s population statistics broken down by historical date, nationality and profession back to as far as 1000. He gave me the categories and asked me the following question: how many pharmacists of Slovakian origin lived in Hungary² in 1242, during the period of the Tartar invasion? I already was wise enough to know that in a situation in which I was forced to respond, it was easier to answer a meaningless question with a straight face than to explore its nonsensical nature. So, a piece of paper as large as a screen had the piece of data showing that the number of such pharmacists was seven in the age of Béla IV. Belyanov looked at me, failing to perceive the humour in the answer, and immediately noticed a mistake among the more than two hundred items of data (Huszár 1989, 94–95).

This interview with Bibó is a sort of a *pars pro toto* example for the absurd situations that had occurred in this region during the 20th century in the area of ethnic issues.

Although his scholarly work was shaped by the ideas of several excellent internationally renowned scholars (e.g., H. Kelsen, G. Radbruch, P. Guggenheim, G. Ferrero, M. Bourquin), Bibó did not come under their influence to the extent that he would incorporate any elements of their scholarly views into his works.

István Bibó was one of the most significant Hungarian thinkers of the 20th century; his interests covered several disciplines, such as philosophy, law and political science, administration, politics, history and social psychology. The synthesis of this diverse range of themes alone may be seen as a significant scholarly achievement. One of the main features of his scholarly views was that he extended his research to a complex analysis of the interactions between social structure, social ideas and “mass sentiments”.

After the Second World War Bibó made efforts to contribute both to the development of a more peaceful atmosphere and to the reorganization of scholarly life. In this endeavour he analysed the causes that had led to the Holocaust and rejected any type of collective guilt. He did not agree, for example, with the stigmatisation of Hungarians as a “guilty nation”, nor with the deportation of the Germans in Hungary. He did not submit, either, to the Stalinist régime, which had come to power in the meantime, and his views and his courageous commitment

to them made him one of the most outstanding figures of Hungarian intellectuals of the time.

In the above context, Bibó's views were inspired by the 19th–20th century Hungarian intellectual trends which served the development of the institutions of social progress and freedom. At the same time, he was critical of the theories that had an impact on him, rejecting their excessive approaches and those views which were incompatible with his humanistic values (e.g., the views of any form of collective guilt). This intellectual and moral attitude further strengthened Bibó's sovereignty as a thinker and made it an example for others to follow, also.

Bibó's views became widely known only after his death in 1979; the (re) publication of his works began only around this time. However, at the end of the 1980s, on the eve of the introduction of a multiparty system in Hungary, there was hardly any party which did not put at least a few of his thoughts on their agenda. After the initial enthusiasm mentioned above, however, the reception of Bibó's oeuvre appeared to stop short during this period. One of the reasons for this, probably, was the fact that Bibó's views could not be classified with any single ideological trend, world view or orientation, such as liberalism, conservatism, or socialism. The reception of his ideas was however given fresh momentum in the 2000s, especially with the publication of several papers. The year of the centenary of Bibó's birth, 2011, saw the beginning of the publication of Bibó's collective works, offering new opportunities for their reception.

In this paper I will:

- discuss Bibó's concept of the similar and divergent features of social development in Western Europe and Central-Eastern Europe;
- analyse Bibó's interpretation of the difficulties that Central-Eastern European countries had to face in becoming a nation; and, finally;
- present Bibó's proposals and concepts for the resolution of the ethnic conflicts in the region.

2. Similar and Divergent Paths of Social Development in Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe

During his painfully short scholarly career Bibó did not write any monograph on Central Europe.³ At the same time, he was concerned with both the historical and the contemporary issues of the nations in the Central European region, especially those related to Hungary.⁴ In Bibó (1986a) he addressed several serious problems of the Central European region, those often characterised as belonging to social pathology, and which had contributed to two world wars. Such problems included, e.g., antidemocratic nationalism, political hysteria and "Hitlerism" itself.⁵ However, Bibó was not only concerned with the pathological problems of society. He also addressed several issues regarding the possible ways of resolving

various conflicts of ethnic origin and the opportunities for reconciliation among the nations living in this region.

66 If we want to describe Bibó's Central Europe from a regional point of view, we may establish that it did not cover the relevant region from either a geographical or a historical point of view. Bibó's Central Europe comprised two main "regional units": one of them was Germany, whose history, historical dead-end streets and shocks were examined in Bibó 1986a; the other was the region occupied by "Eastern European small states" like Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland with their "miserable history." We can see that there was "no room" on his map for Romania and Yugoslavia after the First World War, so he did not go deeply into the ethnic conditions of these two countries.⁶

Bibó examined the social development of Central and Eastern Europe in the context of "European social development". In Bibó (1986b) he refuted the statement that the nations and countries of this region are incapable of democratic development in the Western European way by virtue of "their very nature". However, even Bibó did not challenge the view that the countries of the region were very far away from the type of democracy that characterises Western Europe. "The institutions", Bibó writes, "which paved the way for democracy in Western Europe failed to transform the societies of Central and Eastern Europe" (Bibó 1986b, 213).

Bibó also took into account all the important institutions and characteristic features of social development with respect to which the development of Central and Eastern European nations diverged from that of Western Europe. They include the following:

- a feudal system based on contractual relations (as opposed to the "cold, uniformed serfdom" East of the River Elbe in Eastern Europe);
- "civil constitutional form and social methods and forms of communication tamed by Christianity and humanism" were present in Central and Eastern Europe to a "lesser degree" than in Western and Northern Europe;
- in later periods of social development both "the revolutionary working class of the new age" and the emerging class of industrial workers were much less significant in terms of their number and social importance than in Western and Northern Europe (Bibó 1986b).

In contrast to all this, Bibó believed that the humanist, civil and labour movement developments leading to modern social evolution had been established even in this region, although to a lesser extent. On the other hand, he emphasised that the processes of social development taking place in the Central and Eastern European region had their own special features (e.g., the free peasant's lifestyle and the historical antecedents of political freedom) which might equally well have given rise to an independent and heartening "trend of social development" (Bibó 1986b, 213–214).

The first, "tried and tested" way of "social development," the one seen in Western Europe – which, as seen above, was to some extent present in Central and Eastern Europe too – could be "fitted" into the grandiose "freedom programme" that had characterised the western (and northern) part of Europe from the Middle Ages⁷ and which was rooted in ancient Greek-Roman culture, as far as some institutions are concerned.⁸ In this respect, according to Bibó, the role of Christianity and the clergy in organising society and in "criticising power"⁹ was very important, and helped the barbaric principalities of Europe advance to the state of founding and organising state institutions. This transformation process resulted in a system of "freedoms", the "small circles of freedom"¹⁰ secured mostly by various privileges, which were characteristic of the Medieval period. Thus, Bibó's concept of freedom characterised a comprehensive social development that spanned several historical periods and was rooted in the Middle Ages, although he did not think that the emergence of the institutions of freedom in the modern age had no precursors, and he also stressed the differences between these two periods.

In Bibó (1986b) he proposed the same development when he presented the evolution of European nations as he dated the beginning of this process to the early Middle Ages (Bibó 1986b, 188), although he proposed that "modern nations" were established in the 18th century, more precisely at the time of the French Revolution, because he believed that was the time when this "huge force", national feeling as a democratic mass emotion began to emerge, which then 'triumphantly' took possession of the national framework (Bibó 1986b, 191).

3. Difficulties in Becoming a Nation in Central and Eastern European Countries

However, the history of the Central and Eastern European nations took a different course. Bibó called attention to two important factors that had a critical influence on the process of the countries in this region becoming a modern nation. One of them lies in the nature of their social development, which had been different from that of Western Europe, though Bibó thought these differences alone could not explain the difficulties in becoming a modern nation and the expansion of aggressive nationalism in the region. They were not able to provide an explanation, even though the large landowners and monopoly capitalists in the region and the "military cliques" operated a power mechanism which would never have been tolerated by "any other country with free thinking and healthy development". However, Bibó too rejected the view that aggressive nationalism had emerged in accordance with the interests of powerful forces because the peoples in these countries "were kept in slavish obedience" to divert attention from important social issues. "This is nonsense / ... /", Bibó wrote.

/If/ this factor were decisive, there would be simple servitude and brutal backwardness here rather than aggressive nationalism. The national feeling, even if it is restrictive and narrow-minded, is sister to a system of democracy, a serious mass emotion, yet people and groups of people firmly embedded in a system of interests can neither stimulate nor experience mass emotions /.../. Serious mass emotions can only be evoked by temperament, and temperament only by real experience (Bibó 1986b, 214–215).

What is then the other critical factor, in addition to the difficulties apparent in social development, which in Bibó's view can explain the history of the countries on their often bumpy road to becoming a nation, a road that was not free from conflicts or even historical cataclysms as well as the emergence and expansion of aggressive nationalism? "Every thread", Bibó argues,

points to some kind of political hysteria, and the first task towards giving an account of political hysteria of this kind is to uncover the historical shocks that upset the development and balance of these countries. These shocks stem from the painful and difficult nature of becoming a nation (Bibó 1986b, 215).

The road to this political hysteria in the region had several different stages. The starting point of this historical process in the case of three (Central and) Eastern European small nations was that each of them had lost their independence, though at a different time, and much of their territory had become part of the Habsburg Empire. The Habsburg Empire was a state "which once and for all upset the course of establishing a state and a nation in Central and Eastern Europe" (Bibó 1986b, 192).¹¹ On the one hand, there was indeed some sort of an "Austrian consciousness" that the Habsburgs intended to plant in this extremely heterogeneous state, but it was unable to take root since the Habsburg Empire "was not able to dissolve these national units, although it did manage to weaken the nations that made up the state" (Bibó 1986b 193–194).

For the peoples living in the territory of the Habsburg Empire the "national framework" did not coincide with the "political framework", so these emerging nations did not have their own state.¹² The lack of being an independent state meant two things for the three "small states": the ability to create an independent state as well as the opportunity to revive an independent state framework that had existed before. However, the revival of the previously existing independent state was only possible if the prevailing territorial borders were changed, and this in itself involved the danger of territorial disputes becoming aggravated. Bibó thought "/t/his is just the point where the democratic content of Central European nationalism begins to diminish" (Bibó 1986a, 389).

The different nature of linguistic and ethnic borders contributed to the evolution of "linguistic nationalism" to a great extent, which Bibó saw as a "special Central and Eastern European phenomenon". The mistaken idea "that a nation is created when people speaking the same language 'assemble' and found a state"

came from this region. This, however, had never happened in this world before" (Bibó 1986b, 195), for according to Bibó, nation is a "political" (rather than a "linguistic") notion. The nations living in this region

whose historic borders were surrounded by linguistically akin people, or which no longer had historic borders, envisaged the programme of uniting all their linguistic relatives, while those which had people speaking a different language on their historic territory were seeking to establish a single-language national state. Both ambitions involved the same basic objective: to support the instability of political existence using ethnic factors (Bibó 1986b, 196).

According to Bibó, the borders had become "fluid" under the effect of linguistic nationalism, soon resulting in a historical situation in which "all the nations that were reborn here got involved in a border dispute with most of their neighbours. The situation resulted in many wars and disasters and created even greater instability for national existence and territorial status." These were the "developments" that Bibó saw as the main sources of the political hysteria which emerged in the Central and Eastern European nations (Bibó 1986b, 197).

The processes mentioned before – as seen above – were not identical with political hysteria itself but were "merely" its sources. The next important stage on the road leading to political hysteria was the evolution of an "existential concern for the community". Due to "linguistic nationalism", the "fluidity of borders" and "fierce border disputes", the nations living in the region began to worry about "the death of their nation", "the destruction of their nation" because the possibility of "political destruction" seemed to be quite real.¹³ It did not mean "wiping out" or "deporting" a nation. The main source of the concern was that "it seemed to be possible to question" the existence of a nation "by means of brutal force and aggression" (Bibó 1986b, 217). National consciousness had to be awakened and kept continuously alive among the people living under these circumstances.

Bibó considered the mental state of "existential concern for the community" to be a critical factor, which made the possibility of democratic development in the countries of the region rather "unstable". Although he believed that "democratism" and "nationalism" had nearly the same roots as movements,

in Central and Eastern Europe the creation of a national community was not tied to the liberation of people; on the contrary, these nations had to experience historical moments which appeared to demonstrate that /.../ if democracy is taken to its final consequences, the national community is exposed to serious risks or even a catastrophe (Bibó 1986b, 219).

This is how "antidemocratic nationalism" was born, which Bibó called "a horrible iron ring made of wood." On the one hand, "the characteristic virtues of free man" do develop but this "spontaneous enthusiasm and conscious self-sacrifice" should

be undertaken for "a community that fails to ensure the basic conditions for the development of free man" (ibid.).

In Bibó's view, 'antidemocratic nationalism' led – among other things – to the emergence of phenomena in the region like the falsification of democracy (ibid.)¹⁴ and the distortion of political character.

The history of the nations in the region was undoubtedly saddled with these historical processes but it was really made "miserable" by the different kinds of political hysteria. According to Bibó, the starting point of political hysteria is "the shocking historical experience" of a community in connection with which the members of the community feel it goes far beyond what they can still tolerate. This historical shock results in "the paralysis of the community's political thinking," with collective thinking and activity "becoming morbidly tied to a particular interpretation of a single experience. In this deep-rooted, paralysed state, it becomes impossible to resolve timely issues if they are in any way related to the critical point" (Bibó 1986a, 376–377). Another prerequisite for the evolution of political hysteria is that in this case the given community begins to cherish "the illusion of a kind of fake solution," "tries to reconcile incompatible things," "gets into a distorted relationship with reality" and "as a result, slowly becomes incapable of figuring out the real cause of its troubles and failures in the normal chain of causes and effects / .../" (Bibó 1986a, 378). The hysterical world view so created is

closed and perfect: it explains and justifies everything / .../ Everything is right in it. There is only one problem with it. The reason why everything is right in it is not because it suits real values and corresponds to real facts but because it puts the consequences of a false situation into a system and says exactly what it wants to hear in the given situation (ibid.).

"The disposition to false self-assessment" gradually strengthens in these hysterical communities and "the well-known symptoms of a discrepancy between desires and reality begin to emerge / .../" (Bibó 1986a, 379).

Although Bibó first demonstrated the conceptual elements of political hysteria through the example of German history after the First World War,¹⁵ it was obviously present in the history of the "Central European small states" too. The peace system created in Versailles did not bring real peace either for Germany or for other countries in the region. Bibó's key claim was that the major principle of peace, the nations' right for self-determination, was not applied consistently (Bibó 1990a, 676). Bibó agreed with this basic principle but he also admitted that the peace system adopted in Versailles "compared to its own basic principles, was considerably more discordant than the old, monarchic and feudal system in its golden age" (Bibó 1990a, 331).

According to Bibó, the consistent application of the right for self-determination should have led to ethnic borders that were exclusively determined

on the basis of “national status”. Instead, however, they used criteria (economic, transport, strategic, making the shape of countries complete, etc.) “which are customarily used in the most irrational way.” They are “completely futile and their large-scale use is bound to become the source of the greatest troubles” (Bibó 1986b, 243). Accordingly, Bibó believed the only acceptable solution was the delimitation of nations, and he claimed that if a region was “not annexed here or there” immediately or within a given time, “it can only give rise to dispute” (Bibó 1986b, 244).

So, after Trianon, the “epidemic” of political hysteria had reached – not without precedent – Hungary too (Bibó 1986c, 597). The elimination of historic Hungary had some serious mental consequences too.¹⁶ Trianon had become the only point, the only experience, the shocking experience of seeing historical Hungary falling to pieces; Bibó mentioned this in connection with the characterisation of political hysteria. Although Bibó condemned the Horthy regime, it did not prevent him from rejecting the Treaty of Trianon also. His primary objection was that historical Hungary had been eliminated “in such a helter-skelter way that in addition to territories with people speaking another language, quite large parts of the country were also annexed where Hungarian-speaking people were living” (Bibó 1986b, 204). In addition to all that, the life of minorities living in the neighbouring countries between the two world wars was slowly becoming nearly impossible even at places where minority state had not been criminalised and ethnic conflicts had not degenerated into massacres (Bibó 1986b, 231).

The “phantom” of the Treaty of Trianon also appeared in Bibó’s works in connection with the peace treaty that concluded the Second World War. In this context, he noted again that “its unfair and bad nature / ... / is commonplace” (Bibó 1986d, 269). However, it did not change his view that Hungary “got what it had deserved for its role in the Second World War” and Hungary’s responsibility could not be overshadowed by any injuries the Hungarian had to suffer (Bibó 1986d, 286–287). On the other hand, he thought the same about the peace negotiations following the Second World War, saying that they were “exceptionally disappointing and appalling” and that they went far beyond the Treaty of Trianon in terms of “superficiality, formalism and capriciousness”. He believed that the peace treaty was at the mercy of a “serious crisis of confidence” that had developed between the “two rival power groups” recruited from the victors, which made it impossible to enforce any “fundamental principle” in the course of the negotiations (Bibó 1986d, 278–279).

4. The Resolution of Ethnic Conflicts

Bibó’s thoughts on Central Europe were not only aimed at the analysis of political hysteria. He also made a proposal regarding the resolution of conflicts that had developed in the region. Before quoting a few of his thoughts on this issue, it is

worth referring to the chain of arguments in which he consistently challenges the view that the use of force is the order of nature. According to Bibó, nature is not characterised by a life-and-death fight, by the struggle for life in a Darwinian sense. On the contrary: Bibó talks about “broad solidarity”, the interdependence of living beings, which does not make it necessary for them to conduct an unsparring struggle for life. Starting from this position, he concluded that “the struggle for life among people” was by no means a “law of nature” but “the result of a distorted process” (Bibó 1986d, 291). The anthropological genesis of this “distorted process” was the emergence of man’s existential concerns. On the basis of the above we can establish that Bibó did not at all agree with the necessity of the struggle for life among nations and nationalities.¹⁷

Bibó addressed in most detail the possible ways to resolve the conflicts among the nations/nationalities in the region in Bibó 1990a. In this large-scale work he addressed the issue of “higher integration”, the issue of federation as a solution for the ethnic conflicts; but he did not think it was a cure-all. Although he viewed federation as a “branch of the democratic ideal of freedom,” he did not agree with the ambition to propose federation as a solution “for groups of people separated by national conflicts” instead of straightening out unsettled issues between them (Bibó 1990a, 383–386).

The “other branch of the democratic ideal of freedom” can be seen in the principle of autonomy,¹⁸ which Bibó liked very much on account of his democratic values but – as we have seen before – he did not conceal his critical opinion on the practical application of this principle after the First World War. The main problem for him was that the principle of self-determination had not been applied consistently in Versailles.

He refuted the view, which is still present today, that self-determination could be opposed to the territorial integrity of states. Bibó considered this opposition unacceptable because it seems to hold, as a matter of fact, between an organising principle – self-determination – and an actually existing reality – territorial integrity. So, this contradiction is only apparent because the tension actually holds between a principle and its practical realisation, yet the institution cannot overrule the principle that it serves to implement (Bibó 1990a, 409–410). Furthermore, Bibó stressed that it is precisely self-determination that can lead to a greater degree of territorial integrity instead of endless tugs of war and conflicts (Bibó 1990a, 405–406). In order to be able to “take control” over the autonomy principle, peaceful institutionalised procedures should be created since the existing “international political procedures for conflict resolution” proved to be insufficient (Bibó 1990a, 417).

Bibó proposed an institution, “international arbitration.” which he thought was suitable for the resolution of disputes regarding the enforcement of the principle of self-determination. This institution did not exist in his time but he thought it could be established. This institution to be established is different from

regular international administration of justice, not only in that the former is of a political, whilst the latter is of a legal nature, but also in that the former consists of elected judges while the latter is made up of permanent judges, the former acts in accordance with international law, the latter proceeds under the principle of *equity*. However, according to Bibó, the most critical difference lies in their *function*: political arbitration can only be a special procedure, while the other one involves a regular procedure (Bibó 1990a, 499–517).¹⁹

5. Epilogue: Bibó's Expectations for the Future

Bibó did not see political arbitration as the only tool for the resolution of conflicts among nations in the region; he also hoped for a significant improvement in the situation of the Hungarian minorities living in the annexed territories, albeit only in "the long term."²⁰ In one of his letters he stressed that a country – here he refers to Czechoslovakia – "which takes democracy seriously should not seek to annex people that belong and are attracted to another nation" (Bibó 1990a, 422–423).²¹

Bibó's criticism²² affected Romania as well as Czechoslovakia; in it he pointed out:

what lies behind the current animosity is no longer the lively memories of the by now very old Hungarian suppression; it is the bad conscience of Romanians that they feel with respect to everything they had done to the Hungarians during the past 60 or the past 30 years (Bibó 1990b, 425–426).

Although the description of the pathological symptoms in the region takes a significantly much larger place in Bibó's oeuvre, including the examination of the conflicts among the nations living here, he was also concerned with the possibilities offered by patriotism and cooperation among the various ethnic groups.

Bibó made a clear difference between patriotism and nationalism. He saw some kind of an aggressive form of behaviour in the latter, behaviour which was missing in patriotism. Patriotism is "the devotion to one's country that comprises natural cohesive elements of national community consciousness", while nationalism also contains "aggressive and dominating elements" (Bibó 1990a, 363). Bibó did not see patriotism as an ideological trend, like, e.g., liberalism and socialism. The primary reason for this is that patriotism is related to a nation's sovereignty and the principles of self-determination, and the fact that nation states came into being following these basic principles does not require a separate ideology (*ibid.*).

Bibó concludes his exposition of patriotism with an extremely important conceptual distinction. He did not view it as a separate ideology, and as a result, not a form of nationalism, either; "if somebody identifies oneself with national

consciousness, national loyalty and national solidarity more zealously and in a more emotionally charged way than the average person, making each of the above their primary bond to the community" (Bibó 1990a, 364).

When a new state is created or undergoes territorial rearrangement, the "community taking the initiative" takes a stronger stand for national independence and national unity than e.g. "stable nations." At a time like this, the goal is to "implement a programme of patriotic sacrifice to foster national characteristics to a much greater extent and promote independence and union," which "by necessity does not involve aggressive, dominant tendencies" (ibid.). Thus, the ambitions and form of behaviour just mentioned cannot be put into the category of nationalism but, according to Bibó, they belong to the notion of patriotism.

Bibó's position regarding the "chances of cooperation among Central European small states" was influenced by László Németh's concept of Eastern Europe.²³ In a paper published in 1932, Németh envisaged a new intellectual and political agenda for Central European people which would make the hostile nations living here brothers and sisters (Bibó 1986f, 377). Although Bibó agreed with Németh's position, he also called attention to "the overheated nationalism" and the "Hungarophobia and national prejudice" of Czechoslovakia and Romania (Bibó 1990b, 425).

Apart from this quite late paper, Bibó formulated the position mentioned above as early as 1946, immediately after the Second World War but before the Paris Peace Treaty, in which he said the old-new national borders should be accepted – mainly for the sake of Hungarians living in the annexed territories – but if in the (possibly, distant) future there arises a "political constellation" which would enable Hungary to secure better borders, the opportunity should – with due responsibility – be taken (Bibó 1986d, 291–292).²⁴

Having come to the end of Bibó's paper on Central Europe we believe it is important to note that – despite all his criticism – he did not think that ethnic conflicts only occurred in this region and nowhere else in Western Europe. If he had, he would surely not have written his study on the Northern Irish issue.²⁵

However, all this does not exempt us from the obligation to offer therapy rather than just a diagnosis for the ethnic conflicts still existing in the region.

Notes

¹ István Bibó Junior (Budapest, 7 August 1911 – Budapest, 10 May 1979.) See Kupa 2009, 127.

² Lead by Batu Khan, the Tartars attacked Hungary in 1241 under the rule of King Béla IV (1235–1270). In 1242, upon hearing about the death of Ögedei Khan, they left the country. "When they left, smoking ruins and thousands of unburied bodies were left behind" (Engel 1990, 224).

³ It is worth mentioning several papers on Bibó's thoughts on Central and Eastern Europe which were first published only as a samizdat publication in a memorial book in honour of Bibó, especially the work of Jenő Szűcs written on three regions of Europe (Szűcs 1983, 5–8, 120–126). The same book contains a paper by Emil Niederhauser which focuses on Bibó's (1986f) book

(Niederhauser 1991, 116–129), and a paper by Csaba Kiss Gy, which examined the concepts of nation in Eastern Europe (Kiss Gy 1991, 11–16). Later publications on the same topic include a paper by Stefánia Bódi (Bódi 2005, 88–95).

- 4 One of his works in which he wrote about this problem is "Az európai egyensúlyról és békéről" [On European balance and peace] written at the end of the Second World War (Bibó 1986a). Several papers which are important for our topic were written after the Second World War, such as "A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága" (Bibó 1986b), and "Eltorzult magyar alkat, zsákutcás magyar történelem" (Bibó 1986c). In one of his late papers written in the 1970s, in "Nemzetközi államközösség bénultsága és annak orvosságai. Önrendelkezés, nagyhatalmi egyetértés, politikai döntőbíráskodás" (Bibó 1990a). He expounded several important ideas, e.g., in connection with the resolution of the ethnic conflicts in the region. In his comprehensive historical and political philosophical essay entitled "Az európai társadalomfejlődés értelme" (Bibó 1986e), he outlined a framework for historical development in which Central-Eastern European history can also be placed and interpreted.
- 5 In one version of 1986a Bibó warned that it would be a "fatal" error for the "Anglo-Saxon world" to look at the Central European region as if the problems of this region "/ ... / more precisely, the so-called intermediate zone lying between Germany and Russia were just one of many other complex issues / ... /" (Bibó 1986a, 605). Bibó justified his standpoint, among other things, by saying that "/ ... / within a short period of time a Second World War broke out due to the lack of consolidation in this region, and once a Third World War breaks out, it can hardly explode anywhere else but here" (Bibó 1986a, 606).
- 6 This is not exactly right, because in 1986a Bibó did provide a short overview of Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria. He gave the most attention to Yugoslavia, calling the situation of this country "the most unfortunate" regarding its historical development because the establishment of Yugoslavia did not bring about any reconciliation between "realities" and "wishful thinking" (Bibó 1986a, 515). According to Bibó, "the South Slav masses," which had not had any pronounced national consciousness in the 19th century, had developed a "firm national awareness" by 1941 (ibid). This did not mean that Yugoslavia did not have any "serious border problems" or that there was no aggressive nationalism emerging in the country (Bibó 1986a, 516).
According to Bibó, the situation of Romania was similar to Yugoslavia in that "the desires generated by modern nationalism became real and [Romania] managed to unite with the Romanians living in Transylvania and Bessarabia" (ibid). At the same time, "much stronger factors of the lack of political realism played a role in the development of the situation in Romania" than in Yugoslavia. "It is true that Romanians form an internally more united nation than the South Slav nation. On the other hand, the union of all the Romanians in 1918 was less engineered than that of Yugoslavia" (ibid).
- 7 Bibó also makes mention of modern freedom "being organically built upon" medieval institutions of freedom and sees this process as an organic development; but he detects this kind of continuity only in the history of England and the Netherlands (Bibó 1986e, 64).
- 8 Bibó addressed the issue of "existential fear" and connected the "escalation of aggression" that characterised the early period of human civilisation to this concept. In his view, only two cultural spheres were able to break out of this escalation process: Greek-Roman constitutionality and Chinese Confucian ethics. (Bibó 1986e, 11–14).
- 9 The "theoretical" bases of this latter role were created by Saint Augustine by saying that the states lacking the ideal of justice are nothing but "a gang of robbers" (Saint Augustine 2005, 265). Bibó even made a reference to this comment in Bibó 1986e, 22–24.
- 10 Bibó believed that "the entire hierarchy of freedoms in the Medieval Age was a homogeneous system / ... /" (Bibó 1986e, 98), and he supported his view, among other things, by an analysis of the Dutch national anthem (Bibó 1986e, 97–100). Accordingly, medieval Europe was characterised

by "an organisation of society with its gradually emerging institutions which embraced the entire society and provided it with plenty of freedom in addition to strong submission" (Bibó 1986e, 34).

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- ¹¹ According to Bibó, the Habsburg Empire was nothing else at the time of its creation but an "incidental, inter-national, dynastic structure of states, / ... / like that of Aragon-Sicily or England and the House of Hanover" (Bibó 1986b, 192).
- ¹² "/ ... / the nations living here were lacking what was so obvious, tangible and taken for granted for Western European nations: the reality of their own political framework, their public administration, a uniform political culture, a well-established economic organisation with players that know one another well, an élite in the capital city and an intellectual élite, etc." (Bibó 1986b, 216).
- ¹³ For all these nations "there were territories that they had every reason to jealously guard or rightfully make a claim for, and there was not a single nation among them which would not have been close to partial or total annihilation" (Bibó 1986b, 217).
- ¹⁴ The falsification of democracy can be traced back to the "persistent state of fear" that "the progress of democracy can jeopardise the cause of the nation and it becomes impossible to make use of the benefits of democracy" (Bibó 1986b, 220).
- ¹⁵ Just as in his statements regarding the history of the Eastern European "small states" laden with a democracy deficit, Bibó believed that the Treaty of Versailles was not the only factor that played a role in the development of German hysteria since "its historical antecedent goes back further than to Versailles" (Bibó 1986a, 370).
- ¹⁶ According to Bibó, Hungary was not the only country among the "Central European small states" whose state of mind made their people feel that "they could make claims against the world without any obligation or responsibility" (Bibó 1986b, 211).
- ¹⁷ For the above interpretation of Bibó's ideas see, e.g., Kupa 2012, 108–109.
- ¹⁸ The notion of autonomy in Bibó's sense was discussed by Gábor Kovács in connection with the categories of "nation" and "nationalism" (Kovács 2004, 53–54).
- ¹⁹ I have already analysed Bibó's views on international arbitration in *Treatises and Documents / Razprave in gradivo*. For this, see Kupa 2009, 135–136.
- ²⁰ For more details see Kupa 2011, 186–187.
- ²¹ For the analysis of Bibó's letter referred to here, see Kupa 2011, 187.
- ²² Bibó spoke highly of Yugoslavia's minority policy that affected the Hungarians (Bibó 1990b, 425).
- ²³ The author and journalist László Németh (1901–1975) was one of the leading figures of Hungarian intellectual life between the two world wars. For Németh's novel approach to the Trianon trauma and national policy, see Papp 2012, 132.
- ²⁴ For Bibó's proposal, see also Kupa 2011, 187.
- ²⁵ In this paper Bibó also called attention to the importance of a political culture that is ready for compromise, mentioning Great Britain as an example (Bibó 1990c, 689–690).

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