

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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It is with great pleasure that I greet the participants on today's panel at this conference.

Before getting down to work, and introducing to you this subject and to our speakers, I wish first to recall to mind the late **Toussaint Hočevar**, both for his own sake and because of his work. He was with us until very recently: he chaired a most interesting panel at last year's convention, even though already ill and in a deteriorating condition. It is very appropriate to consider him here because he was one of the real driving forces behind the Society for Slovene Studies, so that, if for no other reason, we may express our debt of thanks to him.

I now direct your attention to the subject of this panel today.

The first speaker, Andreas Moritsch from the University of Vienna, takes as the point of departure for his paper the consideration that nationalism was the force that brought to an end an excessively national structure such as was the Habsburg Empire in Central Europe. I agree with him to this extent: the former monarchies were based on the idea of social power handed down from God to the sovereign, by whom it was then distributed on earth to the feudal subjects by means of territorial grants. The stratum at the base, the peasants and other working people, had little influence on this process, except for delivering the necessary working power. One important consequence was that a structure of this kind did not necessarily rely on population or territorial cohesiveness. Empires and kingdoms were formed by inheritances, marriages, wars and the like, in a bizarre and non-homogeneous way, encompassing populations of different ethnic and geographic origins. In more modern times new ideas came to inform human culture—ideas such as humanism, the Renaissance, the Protestant Revolution—which shifted the center of social power to Man himself. This process had far-reaching consequences, including in the long run (in my view) the development of nationalism and national movements. How did the idea of the 'Nation' actually arise? If we move away from God as a source of social power, and place this in Man himself, if every common man stands (as the Protestants put it) equal before God, then after a while there arises the practical problem of having men gathered into groups by some common criteria, such as race, ethnicity, culture, language; all this, to create a homogeneous domain from which may be drawn the social power needed to build the juridical structure of the state. A well-known ideologist of this model, the Italian Mazzini, spoke of a triple unity that was a prerequisite of national states: territory, people, language. It is now considered natural that men with similar linguistic, racial and cultural characteristics, living in contiguous territories, should be unified in one state, so that they may express their will to govern themselves.

These new ideas came into particular conflict with the old in such places as the Habsburg domains, where ethnic non-homogeneity was the rule rather than the exception. The monarchy foundered precisely because it was unable to cope with this problem, giving way to several successor states. Subsequent history has showed that even these nation-states have not been able to cope with a series of problems that call for international, not national, solutions—problems that call for the centripetal view of unique ethnic groups to be overcome. Indeed, the national model in its purest form was universally difficult to apply; only in some isolated, fortunate exceptional instances did this occur—for example, France, Portugal, perhaps Italy and some others.

On the other hand, most of the nation-states formed in Europe after World War I were

rather small and ethnically not very homogeneous. Minority problems arose as a result of the ethnic disparities; and problems of international cooperation arose because of the small size of the nation-states. Between the World Wars, there was recourse to extreme forms of nationalism as a projected solution to these problems. After the Second World War, a solution was sought in the formation of international groupings such as ECM, EFTA, and CMEA. More recently, the idea of cooperation among non-independent, state-internal regions has been attempted; and this leads me to the topic of the Alpe-Adria initiative.

This idea is based on two considerations. The first is that there are certain problems of a regional nature that can only be solved on the basis of regional cooperation. These include problems regarding the nature of the environment, the use of free time, economics, social insurance, sanitation, health, sport, culture, energy, and the like. The second consideration involves the trend towards the extension of autonomy of regions within political states. There is also a seed of conflict in this idea: national states may become jealous of regional autonomy, if this is used for international purposes.

The Alpe-Adria Working Community, after nine years, comprehends extensive ethnic and administrative diversities, diversities which are an obstacle to unity. Yet, as today's speakers will make plain, the unity is very necessary.

I now give the speakers the floor.

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