

István Bibó on the Democratic European Idea and the Corresponding State Organizational Principles

István Bibó (1911-1979)¹ was an outstanding Hungarian political theorist and politician. He was an advocate of the implementation of human rights in social organisation all over the world. His ideal was the »elimination of one man's fear from another by humanization, rationalization and moralization of social processes and practices«,² a free world without religious and social prejudices. He condemned all kind of exploitation. Throughout his whole life Bibó thought and wrote following the ideas of Western democracies. He was an independent socialist, and profoundly Christian. His ideas became highly influential during the resurgence of the Hungarian democratic movements towards the end of his life, and his influence has continued to be important until today. This essay attempts to do a presentation of his ideas on the European democratic social organization, on the problems of the Hungarian state organisation and on a democratic European federation.

The democratic European idea in Bibó's interpretation

István Bibó³ was one of the best-known representatives of the democratic European idea in Central Europe. He consistently fought for reforms aim-

¹ *Bibó emlékkönyv*. Hg. Századvég – Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem. Budapest 1991; István Bibó: Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination. Selected writings. Ed. Károly Nagy. New York 1991; *Bibó István életművének aktualitása*. Konferencia a Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung támogatásával. Szeged, 1992. november 5-7. Ed. Iván Zoltán Dénes. Budapest 1993; István Bibó: Életút dokumentumokban. Eds. György Litván, Katalin S. Varga. Budapest 1995.

² *Reflections on the Social Development of Europe [1971/1972]*. In: *Bibó: Democracy*, 421-523, here 518.

³ Bibó was born in 1911. He was a member of the generation, who, in their childhood, experienced the First World War, the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, and the revolution and counter-revolution in Hungary. He studied politics and law in Hungary. He received his PhD in political science in 1933 at Szeged University in Hungary. He also studied in Vienna, Geneva, The Hague, and travelled to Paris. After his studies he worked at various Budapest court offices, and later in the Ministry of Justice. He published a series of essays and reviews in the field of jurisprudence.

During the second half of the 1930's Bibó participated in the activities of the March Front and the populist movement of Hungary's left-leaning progressive writers and intellectuals whose program included the democratisation of the country, the whole elimination of the feudalism and of the latifundia, the introduction of a peasant cooperative movement, and an alliance between the peoples of the Danube Valley to oppose both pan-German and pan-Slavic expansionism, calling for the democratic transformation of the region. Bibó held numerous

ing at the implementation of the Western democratic principles of constitutional state organization in Central Europe. In his essay entitled „Reflections on the Social Development of Europe”⁴ he tried to explain the reasons that led to the centralised nationalistic and communistic state organisational tragedy of this area. He also developed ideas for improvement.

Bibó identified himself with the democratic European idea and the idea of human rights. He regarded them as the result of the ancient fight for freedom of thought and for the implementation of common democratic legal and moral principles in state organization. He identified himself with this historical process, which was so successful in changing the feudal society and which could develop the ideas and practices of democratic state organisation. He believed in the common principles of democracy and of human rights. He was also a follower of the democratic European movement, which was to create the democratic community of the European

lectures in support of these aims and contributed to draft the programme of the March Front. In the early 1940's he taught at the Universities of Szeged and Cluj (*Kolozsvár, Klausenburg*).

During World War II Bibó worked as secretary in the Ministry of Justice where he provided expert opinion on issues of urban renewal and administration. He was a leading member of several scientific societies and he edited the Hungarian Review of Jurisprudence until the German invasion in 1944. In 1945 Bibó participated in the work of the provisional government. He was hoping for realization of the March Front's programme, for the reconstruction of the country after the war, for the elimination of the survivals of the Horthy era, and for the birth of democracy in Hungary. At that time he worked in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, supervising the democratic organisation of the administrative and legal life in Hungary. He began to develop plans for an administrative system based on local self-government balancing the overwhelming power of state and county administration.

In 1946 Bibó gave lectures at the University of Szeged on the history of political thought and the development of state forms. During the years of Communist takeover in 1948-1949 he was not allowed to teach. In 1950 the new regime wanted to pension him, but he found employment as a librarian. He remained silent during the early 1950s when the Stalinist Mátyás Rákosi (1892-1971) ruled Hungary.

After years of enforced silence, Bibó played an important role during the days of the 1956 revolution. As Minister of State in Imre Nagy's coalition government Bibó drafted a proclamation entitled „For Freedom and Truth” in which he warned the world powers to demonstrate the force of the principles contained in the United Nation's Charter and the strength of the world's freedom-loving peoples. He appealed to the major powers and the United Nations to make a wise and courageous decision to protect the freedom of Hungary (*For Freedom and Truth. Proclamation*, November 4, 1956. In: *Bibó: Democracy*, 325-327).

On May 23, 1957, Bibó was arrested and was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released in 1963 under a general amnesty. He found an employment at the National Statistical Office and worked there as a librarian. He had no opportunity to participate in public life or to publish in Hungary. In 1971 he requested early retirement for medical reasons. During the last decade of his life he wrote a fundamental work in the spirit of Kant on international institutions and understandings: *István Bibó: The Paralysis of International Institutions and the remedies. A Study of Self-Determination, Concord Among the Major Powers, and Political Arbitration*. London 1976.

About the biography of Bibó see Sándor Szilágyi: *István Bibó, Central Europe's political therapist*. In: *Bibó: Democracy*, 527-546.

⁴ See footnote 2.

states. As a Central European political thinker he fought for democracy and federalism in Central Europe.

The life-long challenge for Bibó was to interpret the role of the European social development through the emergence of the common democratic state organisation principles. He fought for the implementation of these principles in the Hungarian society. In his view the Hungarian society, as a satellite of the Soviet system, broke with the state organisation principles of Western democracies. This is why he was so highly motivated to keep alive the ability for an eventual reintegration of the Hungarian society into the Western social processes, even after 1945. In order to do this, he analysed the deformations of the democratic state organisation principles in the Central European social development.

Bibó believed that in belonging to a democratic European society, one had to identify oneself with the system of democratic liberties, as the historical product of the European social development. In Bibó's view, the history of the democratic European idea was a permanent fight for the implementation of shared democratic principles and for the idea of human rights in social organisation. The role of shared principles was to achieve a peaceful coexistence between the different nations that composed Europe. Such social organisation required that the citizens would have knowledge of the *rules of the game* of social organisation. Furthermore, it was also a way for legal enlargement and modernization. That is why Bibó found it necessary to examine the European social development and to search the progressive ideological driving force behind the controversial European culture.

In his essay on the European social development Bibó expressed his belief in the intelligent creative power of European culture, which would be able to develop a programme for a lawful democratic social organization. He was convinced that a democratic European system of states could continue the fight for the humanisation of power and authority. His conviction was based on his assessment on the development of European democracy, which, in his view, was a long process of moving away from authoritarian rule toward a system of truly representative governments, accountable to a mass electorate. It was in everybody's interest to participate in this fight and in the discussions on the humanisation and the rationalisation of the social organisation.

Bibó favoured the idea of European unity. He was influenced by Kant's ideas on the principles of a peaceful state organisation. In agreement with Kant, Bibó was also in favour of a federal system of republican states in Europe based on shared, democratic state organisational principles and on the ideas of human rights and duties. Of course, he hoped that the Central European states would be part of such federation. In his view, the centuries old idea of a European unity played a very important oppositional role against the unlawful expansionist power policy of European authoritarian

national states and of national empires. It worked as a »shaper of shared principles« for a democratic European union.

In his meditations on European culture, Bibó tried to locate the tendencies that acted in the direction of freedom, peace, and the humanisation of the fight for power. In parallel, he also analysed all those events and tendencies, which acted against a peaceful co-operation among people. He also emphasised the Greek, Roman, and Christian religious basis of the European culture. Greek political thinking and constitutionalism, the Roman legal state organisation, and the Christian moral principles formed the basis of the European culture. The whole of the Christian/European state organisation idea was based on an active, legal human social organisation programme. It represented the idea of a policy of conscious association among peoples, based on legal and moral principles. That is why European culture accepted the ideas of the freedom of thinking, of social improvement and human rights. This is the guarantee of a permanent social development and made longer stagnations caused by despotic rulers impossible.

Bibó also analysed the importance and the evolution of the clergy in the development of European culture. The clergy could evolve toward the division of the secular and spiritual, as well as the subordination and regulation of secular policy by religious moral rules. Bibó had a great appreciation for Saint Augustine. In his interpretation, Saint Augustine, in his perfect *City of God*, proposed rules for the secular, political community organization. He actually combined the practice of the Greek and Roman legal political state organisations with religious morality to yield a framework for rulers. The importance of Saint Augustine was – in Bibó's view – that he established a high moral measure for the sovereign; the sovereign rulers had to become the representatives of social improvement. This high moral requirement for sovereign power constituted the basis for the European social organisation. Consequently, Bibó said, it was the idea and practice of the legal and moral state organisation that, based on shared legal and moral principles, could differentiate the European social organisation from the despotic one. The lawful social organisation policy of the clergy and the permanent social critique of intellectuals ensured a freedom of thinking. This freedom of thinking, on its turn, became the guarantee for the permanent development of the European society.

In Bibó's opinion the feudal, vassal system was in line with the basic ideas of this social organisational programme. Feudalism represented a legal, contractual framework among the members of the ruling class. To criticize social organisation of the ruling class remained possible. A representative system could develop from this kind of feudal system. In his words: »Medieval feudalism, that is, the fact that the feudal lord represented his vassals, also made it possible to create an institution of public life where one person could represent others in the political sense. Initially it was the

lord who represented all of his subjects, and later other, more independent forms of representation were developed.«⁵

The emergence of the European civil society represented a new phase in the modernisation of the principles of social organisation. It was the urban development, which strengthened industry, trade, banking, and financial affairs. The towns played an important role in the emergence of a new civil society that was different from the feudal way of life. Its citizens, in cooperation with the rulers, changed the political influence of the privileged nobility insignificant. Analysing this period, Bibó however emphasised the differences between the French, the English, and the Dutch social organisation. He differentiated them on the basis of the freedom in social organisation, of the strength of the centralisation policy, and of the continuity of the legal modernization policy. Bibó regarded the Dutch social organisation as the earliest example of a defence, economic, and social union. He thought that it was the Dutch example that inspired the revolutions both in England and America, and it was the model for all bourgeois societies born in similar manner.⁶ The Dutch and the English revolutions – as well as the earlier Swiss one – were organic outgrowths of medieval constitutionalism. In contrast, Bibó regarded the concentrated power of the French absolute monarchy as strongly damaging the logic of the policy of legal enlargement.

Bibó criticised the French Revolution, which opened a new chapter in the history of the radical turning points in society. He regarded the French Revolution as the most and the least successful revolution of European history. In his words: »Most successful because it made possible such a thorough and rational re-organization of society as had never before been accomplished by a revolution, least successful, because it aroused so much fear that the western world has not recovered from it since.«⁷

Bibó believed that the French citizens would have been satisfied with a constitutional monarchy ensuring a civil development. He rejected the idea of enforcing democratic reforms through a revolution because such events could not remain in harmony with reality. Revolutionary violence automatically leads to distortions of the constitutional state. As a consequence, tragic impasses could emerge in social development. In his view, for example, it was the French Revolutionary terror which created two entirely unproductive types of individuals who seem to prevail, and who are now irrevocably entrenched in European thinking: »the professional reactionary and the professional revolutionary«.⁸ The presence of these two *sterile types* in European society led the social organisation policy away from a real problem-solving attitude toward a world of artificial interests.

⁵ Ibidem, 444.

⁶ Ibidem, 446.

⁷ Ibidem, 449.

⁸ Ibidem, 451.

This process, again, deformed the rational and lawful association policies. This deformation resulted in two phenomena. The first one was the phenomenon of nationalism in Europe. Nationalism was a dangerous impasse on the way of a democratic and federal association policy among people in the age of popular sovereignty and self-determination. The second phenomenon was the strengthening of the equality principle and the sharpening of the class struggle, which were the results of the emergence of the Marxist and Leninist ideology. In a society where the principles of democracy became confused, Fascism and Stalinism could gain social support. Bibó regarded these phenomena as logical consequences of the unsuccessfulness of the French Revolution.

Bibó favoured the idea of a constitutional state and federalism, based on a problem solving policy of legal enlargement. He also favoured a modernisation policy through a democratic association policy, compromises, and reforms. This is why he regarded the system of democratic political rights and of human rights and fundamental freedoms as the most important achievements of the European social development. According to his analysis, the English political practice and the ideological programme of the French Revolution played a very important role in the elaboration of democratic liberties, although the roots of such a policy can be found in the Greeks, Roman and Christian social organisational ideas. The key elements of the system of democratic liberties are, in his words, as follows: »The separation of powers; a broadly representative parliament created by general elections, an executive branch that is either responsible to the parliament, elected by the people for a specific length of time, or subject to the popular recall; a judiciary which is independent of the executive branch, (indeed with jurisdiction in one form or another over the executive itself); a free press making possible the public supervision of all these institutions; freedom of conscience, assembly and other civic rights; and extensive local autonomy. All of these form an interconnected and mutually reinforcing system which no link could be removed without damaging the whole.«⁹

Regarding the practice of modern systems Bibó made it clear that although people could not act directly through these democratic institutions, they could prevent rulers to act in a way that would be diametrically opposed to their clearly expressed will.¹⁰ For Bibó this kind of social development represented the essence of the European idea. Bibó understood the importance of the historical development in the system of modern liberties and the social organisation of the Western democracies, which ensured a permanent reform policy. This is why the Western democracies, after they had changed the feudal system to develop a democratic, civil system, did not produce social revolutions. Addressing his own political environment,

⁹ Ibidem, 468-469.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 468.

it is on this basis that he tried to convince his contemporaries that adopting the Western system of democratic liberties would not represent any danger for a *socialist* system. A modern society does not need any aristocracy or any other ruling groups; a highly educated elite suffices. Consequently, by adopting the Western system of democracy, the *socialist* countries would be able to create a free society and reintegrate into the mainstream of European culture.

The great merit of Bibó is to have shown his contemporaries that only a democratic federal constitutional state organisation was a proper safeguard against the tragedies caused by Fascism or Stalinism. Only the adoption of the Western democratic system could defend against Marxism, Leninism and Communism, which ended in the emergence of totalitarian dictatorships. Only the Western system could represent the real interests of the people by pursuing a lawful democratic reform policy. He believed that the socialist goals were only perspectives for the future, and they could only be achieved through a permanent and conscious fight for democratic rights and reforms. At the same time, Bibó also warned his contemporaries, pointing out that a corruption of the moral programme of democratic liberties could lead to deep crises, mass hysterias, and massacres. Therefore, it would be necessary to continue the movement started by the Age of Enlightenment, based on a rational search of social realities instead of imaginations. This is how he began to analyse the Central European and, especially, the Hungarian societies.

The Hungarian society of falsehood based on the national idea

After the Second World War Bibó began to write historic, social, and psychological essays concerning the Hungarian society. In his view the main problem of the Hungarian society was that the democratisation process of the country stopped after the defeat of the revolution of 1848. The deadlock of Hungarian democracy paralysed the social progress of the country. It contributed to the strengthening of nationalism.¹¹ The March Front (from 1937) – in Bibó's words – »revived the reform spirit of 1848« because the Hungarian democratic reforms were never accomplished. To create a western type democratic society in Hungary remained a permanent challenge for the representatives of the Hungarian democracy during the twentieth century, too. But in Hungary the aim of democracy, of social development, of freedom, and of complete liberation of people never could become a national program of social improvement as it happened in the case of the Western democracies.

¹¹ *A Márciusi Front tíz esztendeje* [1947]. In: *Bibó István összegyűjtött munkái*. Eds. János Tóth [a. o.]. I-IV. Bern 1981-1985, I, 252-254.

In his essay on the crisis of the Hungarian democracy (1945) Bibó emphasised that there were two fears endangering the chances of the Hungarian democracy which remained further between two extremes after the war: the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the reactionary development. This was caused by the fact that the Hungarian politicians could never implement the principles of the Western democracies in Hungarian society. Regarding the chances of democracy in Hungary Bibó's conclusion was that it depended on the Hungarian people: »Our domestic development does not necessarily depend on the vagaries of the external environment; the two are interrelated, and it is up to us to make our internal development more balanced, more autonomous, and thus more likely to influence our external situation.«¹²

As a consequence he believed that Hungary had to implement the general rules of a democratic society in the country.

A deformed Hungarian society based on falsehood (false statements, and ideas) appeared in Bibó's essay entitled the „Deformed Hungarian Character and the Dead-Ends of Hungarian history”.¹³ In his view the unsuccessful application of the democratic ideas in Hungarian society contributed to the strengthening of nationalism after the *Ausgleich* of 1867 when a – from constitutional, political, economical, ideological, and social point of view – false and unchangeable state structure was created. This was the result of the fact that after the defeat of the revolution of 1848 Hungary's leaders, and the intelligentsia, focused on their fears of the dismemberment of the Hungarian Kingdom. All this, with the attempts of the land owning classes aiming to defend their property, resulted in the false and controversial edifice of the Compromise of 1867. Democracy in Hungary was paralysed by the dualist structure of the Habsburg Empire, which strengthened the position of the Hungarian Kingdom. The Hungarian politicians including the liberal nationalists, too, aimed at safeguard the unity of the Hungarian Kingdom under Magyar domination. Thus Bibó blamed the Austro-Hungarian Compromise for strengthening of Magyar nationalism and for making impossible the federal or confederal reconstruction of the Habsburg Empire.

He strongly criticised the triumph of nationalism, which continued to deform the whole Hungarian society and eliminated the chances of a democratic social development. In Bibó's view nationalism was based on false ideas and prejudices. It created an imagined national ideology in the service of the interests of the ruling classes. This national ideology became the organizational factor of the society. It resulted that the real interests of the people remained forgotten. Consequently the feudal aristocracy saved its

¹² *The Crisis of the Hungarian Democracy* [1945]. In: *Bibó: Democracy*, 89-151, here 89, 122, 148.

¹³ *Eltorzult magyar alkat, zsákutcás magyar történelem* [1948]. In: *Bibó István összegyűjtött munkái* I, 255-286.

rule; the peasants remained under the same conditions as the feudal serfs. Thus Hungarian society was organized following false ideas during the domination of the national idea.

Bibó thought that the Hungarian society got a chance to advance democracy in 1918. But the forces of democratisation were soon paralysed by the collapse of the Hungarian Kingdom for which Bibó blamed the fear of the dissolution of *historical Hungary*. This fear created a shock for the Hungarian ruling classes, and for the liberal and democratic nationalists, too. Under this shock of the collapse of Hungary the leaders of the October revolution did not want to sign the expected peace. They gave the power into the hand of the leaders of the proletarian socialists who tried to defend the country by an armed revolt.

Bibó made responsible the insistence of the Hungarian politicians on the nationalist image of *historical Hungary* for the creation of a new falsehood that constituted the ideological basis of the Horthy regime. Actually the politicians of the Horthy regime signed the Trianon treaty. At the same time as a compensation for the big territorial losses of Hungary they began a policy of irredentism. It was based on the so-called *myth of Trianon* that aimed at the revision of the treaty and the re-establishment of the *historical Hungary*. The politicians of the Horthy regime blamed for the dismemberment of the Hungarian Kingdom the idea of national self-determination which they regarded as a lie, a *world-swindle*, because three million Hungarian became subjects of alien nation states, and it led to the proletarian revolution which wanted to eliminate the old conservative society. They presented the principle of national self-determination, as an evil, which, though proclaimed as its guiding principle the idea of national liberation, finally resulted in national exploitation. They regarded the Károlyi government as the *loser* of Hungary. These explanations were attractive for the ordinary people, who – in Bibó's view – could not understand that all this happened as a result of the irresponsibility of the politicians in a transitional period of the democratic principles and not because of the badness of the new democratic ideas of diplomacy. These new ideas were based on democracy and human rights. But the European national states were not democratic states. The *Trianon myth* reinforced the fears of national perish and led to the blind alley policies of injured irredentism and anti-Bolshevism. In Bibó's opinion the instincts of a healthy and democratic policy-making were completely destroyed. In his words: »These instincts were gradually replaced by an increasingly entangling set of unrealistic political dogmas, focusing on the restoration and viability of *historical Hungary* and the historical hierarchy of its society.«¹⁴

Bibó thought that similarly to the system of the *Ausgleich* it was not possible to develop the platform of the Horthy system in direction of democ-

¹⁴ *The Jewish Question in Hungary After 1944* [1948]. In: *Bibó: Democracy*, 155-322, here 178.

racy. This is understandable because the aim of its creators was to create immobility and changelessness in the society. The immobility of both structures (the structure of dualism and the Horthy system) explains that the Horthy regime could safeguard the national view of the Ausgleich during his twenty years Trianon revisionism policy. Horthy's play with the national idea, based on the *Trianon myth* was actually a hypocrisy aiming at the reconstruction of *Great Hungary* or *historical Hungary* (Hungarian Kingdom). On the one hand he continued to argue with the idea of the state of Saint Stephan (like the generation of 1867), which became a strengthened national myth. On the other hand he pursued a forced Magyarisation policy. In this political and social atmosphere the Hungarian society became very reactionary and rightist. The falsehood of the whole Horthy system resulted in Hungary becoming the ally of Germany, and after the Second World War the same happened to Hungary as before: Hungary lost every possibility of territorial change and the century old social hierarchical structure collapsed. This was the result of the untruth and false imaginations on the interests of the Hungarian nation state that ruled the Hungarian society after the revolution of 1848 under the aegis of the national idea. This was the result of the rule of fears, national grievances, and the *Trianon myth*.

In Bibó's presentation the same happened to the German society after the Versailles treaty. The German hysteria¹⁵ shows parallels with the Hungarian one. In Germany the treaty of Versailles played the same mythological role than the Trianon one for Hungary. It made clear the material and moral defeat of Germany for the whole world. It caused a minority feeling that was compensated by a power mania. The humiliation of the Germans – by using the old, conservative principles of peace making: dictated peace, the declaration of being a *warrior criminal nation*, reparations, disarmament, and the interdiction of *Anschluss* – gave the possibility for the policy to create a mass hysteria in the German society based on the national idea. Because the Versailles treaty did not allow the German nation to live with the right of self-determination, Hitlerism could play out this fact as a means of political propaganda. Hitler demanded the right of self-determination of the German peoples over their territories. At the same time, the right of the non-German peoples for self-determination was denied. The German forces were activated only in the interest of the nation and not of the freedom. Hitler eliminated all the principles of the European democratic coexistence. But, as an irony of fate, the reason of the success of his international policy was the illusion that he acted until a certain point in harmony with the facts and the European values regarding the principle of national self-determination and so he could play out and cheat his democratic contemporaries. The Hungarian reactionary nationalists played

¹⁵ *A német hisztéria okai és története* [1942]. In: *Bibó István összegyűjtött munkái* I, 107-184.

the same game regarding the idea of national self-determination and the Trianon treaty. To misuse and falsify democratic federalist ideas became the general political tactic of the reactionary Hungarian nationalists.

The problems with the idea of self-determination

The principle of national self-determination in the lack of democratic states became a very discussed although not necessarily rejected diplomatic organizing principle in the age of Bibó. This principle, which played such a controversial role in the history of Eastern and Central Europe, was one of the main subjects of Bibó's life-work.¹⁶ As a result of all the important changes in the years 1989-1991 his fundamental work on the democratic federalist idea of self-determination seems to have some actuality nowadays. Bibó was always convinced that the East European territorial issues should be settled by self-determination, aided by an impartial international court of arbitration. While a realistic approach for the issues of 1945-46, are his thoughts on self-determination, written in 1967-70, still pertinent today? This remains an open issue and merits further discussion.¹⁷

Bibó basically believed that in the age of popular sovereignty the territorial organizing principle could only be based on the idea of self-determination as the equivalent of toleration in democratic states. Explaining self-determination in a broader sense as underpinning ideas of autonomy or personal cultural autonomy or confederation, or federation, he stressed that in his age, by adopting this principle, people created mostly nation states. He believed that the period of democratic nation states was an important step in the process of world integration. Theoretically, self-determination had to be the basis of every form of democratic state. The other principles were only the significance and the criteria influencing the actual or potential course of nation formation. He emphasised the strength of the linguistic (ethnic) principle in Central and Eastern Europe in his age, and stressed that every linguistic (ethnic) group had to be equitably delimited in the framework of democratic constitutional federate states. At the same time he emphasised that the linguistic (ethnic) principle could only be a significant factor, an orientation for where people might live. This principle could not determine states on basis of folklore or linguistic curiosity, but only on the basis of linguistic (ethnic) connections representing genuine societal and political processes.¹⁸

¹⁶ *A nemzetközi államközösség bénultsága és annak orvosságai* [1976]. In: *Bibó István összegyűjtött munkái* IV, 967-1207; *The Principle of Self-Determination: Critiques and Justification* [1967-1970]. In: *Bibó: Democracy*, 357-421.

¹⁷ Éva Bóka: *From National Toleration to National Liberation (Three Initiators of Cooperation in Central Europe)*. In: *East European Politics and Societies* 13 (1999) 3, 435-474.

¹⁸ *The Principle of Self-Determination* 397-398.

Nevertheless the linguistic (ethnic) principle remained a contradiction in Bibó's logic. Namely, the equitable delimitation of peoples by territorial autonomy would not solve the national and minority problems till language and ethnicity was accepted as an orientation for state making as political force. The questions remained: What will follow? How will people conduct themselves in this new situation? Why will they stop their linguistic and ethnic conflicts? Why begin to cooperate when there is something that stereotypically disguises power aspirations? National self-determination can only be accepted as viable diplomatic organizing principle if it can offer worldwide security, ending conflict and war. If experience shows the opposite, than the linguistic (ethnic) national principle must be abjured as a political force and as the legal principle informing state formation. In this case only a cultural meaning remains. The representative of policy has to be the democratic federal state. Therefore each state has to be based on democratic political rules and human rights of universal validity. The federative principle has to change the idea of nation state everywhere. The individual, national self-determination means a decision to live in a democratic community and to act following the generally accepted democratic rules and human rights. This is the way towards the free association policy that is blocked by the nationalism of the nation states. Otherwise we will never survive the period of nation states and their conflicts directed by the interests of the nation states. Nationalism is the serious illness of European culture; it activates the *enemy images* of human psychology and paralyses democratic development.

Finally it would appear that the essential conditions considered by Bibó (humanization of authority, pure democracy) make of his whole political treatise on self-determination a utopia on world peace. Faced with the realities of his age, Bibó in his *real utopia* proposed an alternative, approaching the classical idea of world peace by state organisation based on the idea of democratic self-determination as the basic principle of human rights. Whether he was right or not is open to discussion.¹⁹

Bibó's ideas on a European federation

Analysing Bibó's ideas of a European union, it is evident that he was in favour of a federation of constitutional states, based on shared, democratic principles and human rights. Every attempt for a democratic federation was seen as a tool to achieve a peaceful cooperation among peoples in Europe. As a follower of Kant's ideas on eternal peace, he favoured the

¹⁹ Péter Kende has already begun this discussion with his lecture at the conference on „The actuality of the oeuvre of Bibó”, organized in Szeged in 1992: Péter Kende: Önröndelkezés Kelet-Európában tegnap és ma. In: *Bibó István életművének aktualitása* 130-144.

creation of a democratic community of democratic constitutional federal states based on shared principles and legal harmonisation. He also emphasised the importance of morality in a system of democratic constitutional states. His most important problem was how to break the mentality that confined peoples' thinking among the political borders of European national states. He was also in favour of the peaceful cooperation between Germany and France, as a precondition for a federate policy in Western Europe.

As a political thinker he also realised that, in his age, only an economic union was possible in Western Europe; the political establishment of the nation states would not agree to surrender sovereignty to supranational institutions. However, he, like Jean Monnet, also believed that a federate type legal organisation of the economic cooperation and its supranational institutions would promote the permanent democratisation in each European state. Consequently, the system of democratic liberties and human rights would develop into shared principles, honoured by every state, and a European legal system would finally develop. As a result, the importance of the political borders would gradually diminish and finally disappear. National states would turn into democratic federate states, on the basis of the personal principle. In other words, the idea of nation-state would lose all its importance; only language and cultural traditions would remain as a sign of difference among the states. Finally, he was hopeful that, eventually, the Soviet Block would also dismember and the Central European states would also join this process.