

RETHINKING NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY IN THE LIGHT OF POST-COMMUNIST EXPERIENCE

By Paul Peachey

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With the Soviet system collapsing, both as ideology and as empire, what will be the fate of the peoples and nations within the former Soviet orbit? Realistically, what are their political options? On what political energies can these peoples draw as they seek to reconstitute themselves? These questions were addressed in a symposium held May 15-16, 1992, in a retreat west of Washington, D.C. The occasion was the exploration of a study undertaken by Ghia Nodia from the Institute of Philosophy in the Georgian Academy of Sciences in Tbilisi. Nodia conducted this study during the 1991-92 academic year, which he spent as senior research scholar at the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in Washington. The paper he presented in the symposium bore the above title.

Already prior to this, since the mid 1980s, conversations and exchanges have been underway between colleagues in the Georgian Institute and the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Those contacts began with a visit by American scholars to Tbilisi in 1984, sponsored by the Institute for Peace and Understanding, shortly before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in Moscow. Nodia has been a key figure in the subsequent exchanges between the Catholic University and the Georgian Institute. He was accompanied during his stay in Washington by his wife Zenab, also a philosopher and translator of philosophical works, and daughter Irene.

Fourteen persons participated in the May, 1992, symposium, eight of whom presented papers, responding directly or indirectly to Nodia. These, together with the Nodia study, will eventually be published by the Council for Research in Philosophy and Values at Catholic University, co-sponsor of the symposium with the host, the Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community. The present report has a three-fold task. First I shall summarize salient features of Nodia's analysis and projection. Second, without providing a full summary of the other papers, I will draw on them to comment on Nodia's argument. Finally, in keeping with the focus of this journal, I will briefly elaborate on the religious dimension of the precarious post-communist epic.

Democracy Between Liberalism and Nationalism

Nodia focused on "the logic of [the] democratic enterprise" in an attempt to unravel the complex historical and conceptual relations among nationalism, democracy and liberalism. His paper begins with the proposition that what "has happened in, or to, the Communist countries, and what is happening there now, is not something restricted to a particular region of the world. It is a part of the common experience of humanity." This is the case, not primarily because of the world-wide political and economic repercussions of the Communist collapse, though these are important, but rather because the "unity of the world is mediated... by participation in the common realm of ideas and values." That "common realm," however, does not fully comprehend what is transpiring in the former Soviet domain. Thus those events compel us "to rethink (the) basic ideas and values on which the Western civilization is grounded."

The first major attempt at such rethinking, Nodia proposes, is Francis Fukuyama's study, The End of History. To Fukuyama, the collapse of communism means the global triumph of liberal democracy, leaving no viable alternative to liberal democracy for the organization of society. By implication, then, the concept of history refers to the humanity's long upward struggle to achieve the liberal democratic triumph. With the achievement of that goal, "history" ends.

In his embrace of liberal democracy, Fukuyama shares as well the distrust of nationalism frequently expressed by liberal intellectuals. To them, nationalism is part of the "backwardness" and "barbarity" that liberal democracy surmounts. In that light, nationalism appears as an extension of non-rational and predemocratic tribal solidarity, a threat to the individualism and the liberties that liberal democracy both presupposes and champions.

According to Nodia, however, Fukuyama, in embracing liberal democracy, substitutes the human need (and striving) for recognition for self-interest (and economic determinism) as the mainspring of human action, as posited by liberalism. To conceptualize this need for recognition, Fukuyama borrows the Greek term, *thymia* (passion of the mind). Nodia concurs, extending the notion to nations as well, that is, to nations as actors within the international arena. And recognition entails equality, the demand by persons and by nations to be accorded equal dignity with

others in their respective arenas.

Nodia accepts Fukuyama's main thesis regarding the triumph of liberal democracy as his own point of departure. But with regard to Fukuyama's assessment of nationalism, Nodia demurs. (Fukuyama appeared in the scholarly gathering at the Kennan Institute when Nodia presented his final report a few weeks after the above symposium was held.) Nationalism, in Nodia's view, is politically created, hence linked to democracy, rather than only or primarily a tribal vestige. Meanwhile, however, ethnic and nationalist turbulence in the formerly communist areas of Europe would appear to lend more support to Fukuyama's reading than to Nodia's.

Nonetheless Nodia makes his case. Democracy, he maintains, is "a set of rules, (the) validity of which depends solely on the willingness of a certain community . . . to observe these rules." But setting the boundaries of the community that is subject to those rules, Nodia maintains, "lies beyond the logic of democratic enterprise." The "rationalist logic" of democracy does not provide criteria whereby to determine who to include within the political community or how to vote. "Historically, democracy has emerged in separate communities; and a force which claimed to provide some sort of criteria, and settle the problem of defining those political units for democracy, was **nationalism**. 'Nation' became another name for 'We the people.'"

Further, the Greeks assumed originally that popular self-rule was possible only in small ("face-to-face," in modern parlance) communities. Modern democracies, on the other hand, are large and impersonal, hence "artificial." The people (as in "we the people") is a vast population aggregate, constituting a unity only in the imagination. Nodia here refers the reader to Benedict Anderson's work on Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism. That is, "nations" and "democracies," alike are deliberately created, mental constructs rather than immediately observed or experienced realities.

Thus viewed, nationalism, at least in some measure, surmounts rather than extends tribalism and ethnicity. The "evolution of pre-modern ethnic communities to modern nations was mediated by historical contingency and *conscious political effort*" (emphasis added). In any event, Nodia concludes that the "idea of nationalism is impossible, and incomprehensible, without the idea of democracy, and there never exists a democracy without nationalism."

Moreover, existing liberal democracies, once established, remain dependent on non-rational, non-political foundations. Here it is useful to recall Emile Durkheim's emphasis on the "non-contractual element" in the contract. Similarly, Nodia maintains that many liberals both misinterpret and underestimate the role of nationalism in the democratic enterprise. Extreme liberalism, in ignoring these non-rational presuppositions and underpinnings of democracy, jeopardizes the very liberties it seeks to advance.

Once having rescued nationalism from obloquy, however, Nodia is quite prepared to recognize its intrinsic ambiguity, and hence its vulnerability to illiberal and undemocratic pathology. Indeed, he observes, that, in a world of nations, "to say that some one is "a 'nationalist' means saying next to nothing, because, being 'nationalist,' that person may be *liberal* or *fascist*" (emphasis added). The nationalist enterprise, the creation of "we the people," may abort. In practice, then, the problem is not nationalism as such, but rather its miscarriage.

We can only note in passing the vast literature on nationalism. Though variously conceptualized, positive and negative forms of the phenomenon are usually recognized. The former are usually more liberal, rational and political, the latter more ethnic, non-rational and romantic. The latter takes the nation as given, and as by nature, entitled to its own state. The eighteenth century German writer, Johann G. von Herder, was a proponent of the romantic conception of nationalism. Nationalism in Eastern Europe was thought to be of this variety. But surveying or assessing this literature was not Nodia's immediate task.

After Communism, What?

As already intimated, the European peoples in the former Communist orbit now aspire to full membership in a democratic Europe. But with civil society and free institutions thwarted or destroyed under Communist rule, integration into a new Europe cannot be achieved overnight. Meanwhile the collapse of the Communist system leaves an ideological as well as an economic void. Nationalism, often compounded with religion, is the most coherent and enticing candidate to fill the void. But in the absence of a developed civil society with its free institutions, the non-rational "primordial" elements in nationalism tend to gain the upper hand, confirming thus the worst liberal fears. As economic hardship and political insecurities mount, democratic hopes pale, alongside inflated ethnic or nationalist emotions.

Nodia does not deal directly with the current ethnic turmoil in the former Soviet orbit, as distinct from nationalism. While competing national claims are turbulent enough, ethnicity appears the more flammable. Case by

case variations make general definitions of, and distinctions between, nationalism and ethnicity extremely difficult. To begin, one might simply say that an ethnic group is a people too small to be a sovereign nation, though group size alone does not adequately distinguish. Much of the current turmoil arises from ethnic rivalries or attempts of small ethnic groups to establish political independence. Meanwhile, as Nodia notes in passing, most nations arose by assimilating and transcending lesser ethnic groups. There is no standard formula leading to such an achievement, nor does Nodia offer one.

As indicated, here we focus on nationalism, itself varied and problematic enough. Among the various nations comprising both the former Soviet Union and hegemony, Russia itself possesses certain advantages--population, territory, resources, dominance, and the like. But these advantages come at great cost. Above all, the Russian state has always been imperialist. Now, not only an ideology, but also an empire, is falling apart. Building a new kind of state is more difficult task than merely renewing an existing order. Given the scale and the complexity of territory and populations, the task of reconstruction in Russia itself, is truly daunting.

Among the other formerly Communist nations, whether incorporated in the Union or under Soviet hegemony, communism had been introduced for the most part by foreign conquest. In those instances, the present collapse permits the repudiation of both alien ideology and foreign occupation or control. But the effort to escape the foreign yoke often disrupts as well the interdependencies that are normal between geographically contiguous peoples.

Finally, during the Soviet era, nationalism, often linked to religion, was frequently the sole refuge from Communist domination. In part because of the popular respect it thus acquired, nationalism flows inevitably, as indicated, into the ideological vacuum left in the wake of communism. The destruction of civil society by the Soviet system, the weakness of liberal democratic traditions and of independent economic institutions, all these makes masses of people vulnerable to ethnic or nationalist agitation.

The solution? Much painful "history," no doubt, lies ahead. Nonetheless there are assets that can be exploited. Despite the loss of seventy years, and in important respects, the destruction of much of the social and cultural capital of the various peoples, identifiable national communities survive. Industrial, educational, and other dimensions of modernization, essential to democracy, after all made some advances under communism. Indigenous liberalizing energies are at work as well, and new democratic leadership is emerging. The impulse to jettison a failed order is understandable. Nonetheless this is no time to squander resources.

Self-evidently, the post-Communist fate of these various peoples rests with themselves. Nodia maintains nonetheless that, as he observed at the outset, the global context, may well be decisive. Returning to his opening theme, he concludes:

All this (the difficulties noted above) raises quite legitimate fears that the post-communist world is going to plunge into a series of wars and repeat the history of Europe between two world wars (...). An only counterbalance to that is the **presence** of the Western world, which is, of another historical era. I have underlined the word "presence," because I have not much hope of direct international involvement, attempts of mediation, economic sanctions, etc. They have proven to have very limited effect (although in some particular cases even that limited effect make them wholly justified). The real counterbalance of nationalism based on "recollecting" the historical past is an alternative version of nationalist sentiment: an effort of "joining the civilized world as an equal and dignified member."

Responses to Nodia

Nodia believes that the way in which Communism broke up in the Soviet Union confirms the validity of his approach. He sees the "Western liberal mind scared by the 20th century experience of European nationalism." This leads at least in part to "a one-sided understanding of the phenomenon of nationalism and its relation to democracy," and therefore to a failure of "mainstream Western political science to catch up with the developments in the former Soviet Union." Thus, while on the one hand, the Western experience sets the stage and the goal for the new era, it fails, on the other hand, to fully comprehend the post-Communist landscape.

By the same token, however, Nodia's reasoning can be seen as a reflection of his own historical location. Nations emerged in eastern Europe long before the rise of liberal democracy. Inevitably, then, these nations (and nationalisms) are the baseline from which democracy in that region must be built. It is far more useful to identify and list the creative potential in specific situations than to speculate regarding more ideal starting points. In Nodia's instance the setting has led to definitions and perspectives that the American experience would be unlikely to

produce, just as the reverse was true in the approaches of the American writers.

Apart from Ghia Nodia, writers in this symposium were all American. Michael W. Foley and his student, Matthew Carr, both from Catholic University, drawing on comparative perspectives, particularly the struggle of the French for national definition, since their revolution two centuries ago, lent support to Nodia's thesis that democracy is a political construction, though not necessarily arising with popular support. But just as "'democratic attitudes' are neither necessary nor sufficient for the successful launching of a democratic polity, so too are nationalistic sentiments neither necessary nor sufficient for the constitution of a political 'we'."

Near the end of their paper, Foley and Carr cite a statement by Marshall Pilsudski, champion of Polish independence during the first third of our century: "*It is the state which makes the nation, not the nation the state*" (emphasis added). This statement is aptly applicable to the American experience. The record, of course, shows a growing sense of an indigenous identity emerging among the colonists during the eighteenth century, prior to the Declaration of Independence (1776). Nationalism was aborning. Fundamentally nonetheless, in the rise of the United States of America, the new state was the catalyst of the "nation," rather than the other way around. Most of the early immigrants came to the United States, renouncing their native loyalties in favor of citizenship in the new land.

The symposiasts however, dealt mostly with the nature of democracy and its inherent ambiguities and dilemmas, obviously less concerned with the problems of nationalism. Stephen Schneck, a colleague of Foley's in the Department of Politics at Catholic University, briefly described the debates between the "federalist" and "anti-federalists" prior to the adoption of the US constitution (1789). At issue was the balance between central and dispersed initiatives and authority. The one party feared the concentration of power in a central government, the other the factions that would arise when power is dispersed. Some of these issues, as Schneck spelled out, appear already in Aristotle's political writing. Alluding, however, to Nodia's appreciation of nationalism, Schneck observed that at least "since Aristotle, students of democracy have recognized the irony that enduring democracies seem to require an undemocratic foundation."

Claes G. Ryn, another Catholic University colleague, less sanguine than Nodia at the global prospects of democracy, spelled out the distinction between "constitutional or representative" democracy, on the one hand, and "plebiscitary or majoritarian" democracy, on the other. In championing the former, he regards the distinction as "fundamental and all-important," and deplores the fact that "the proponents of world-wide democracy show scant awareness" of it. Moreover, while by definition the American system is "constitutional" and "representative," plebiscitarian trends have been in increasing evidence.

These two conceptions represent "two wholly different forms of popular rule." They "imply radically different views of human nature and society and have radically different institutional entailments." "Constitutional or representative" democracy is "popular rule under self-imposed restraints and representative, decentralized institutions." It assumes "a society in which the lives of most citizens are centered in small, local and chiefly private associations. It has many centers and levels of power. Regional and local entities can exercise independence."

Plebiscitary democracy, by contrast, aspires to rule by the popular will of the moment. It opposes representative, decentralized structures that limit the power of the numerical majority." The most significant meaning of "the people" is "precisely the undifferentiated mass of individuals." "Plebiscitary democracy expands and centralizes government and erodes local and private autonomy."

Ryn sees the eighteenth century writer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as the classic protagonist of the plebiscitarian model. Rousseau, Ryn observes, is at once "a radical individualist, who 'liberates' man from traditional groups and associations, and a radical collectivist, who makes the undifferentiated whole the sole legitimate political entity." But collectivism thus conceived becomes in practice "rule in the name of the people by a central authority."

Rousseau, of course, was a source of Marx's thought. In fact, the entire Marxist-Leninist project may be viewed as a giant historical experiment, as it were, testing Rousseau's conception. Though the experiment failed, historians will long debate the sources of that failure. To what extent was failure due to intrinsic flaws in the scheme, and to what extent to the particularities of Russian and regional history and culture? Has the socialist vision in fact been definitively discredited? Were there no positive achievements deserving retention and emulation?

In the opening paper, following Nodia's introduction, George McLean placed the entire discussion in a philosophical context. He was the one symposiast to comment on the whole range of issues raised by Nodia. McLean, a Catholic University philosopher, who heads the *Council for Research in Values and Philosophy*, concurred in Nodia's judgment that liberal democratic thought tends to slight the non-rational aspects of human

reality. But if a rationally conceived ideal order became "the root factor in the Communist suppression of individual rights in the past, this bears a frightening implication, namely that the same rationalist basis in liberal democratic theory can generate in liberal thought a blindness which can lead to equally ruthless suppression of national identities."

McLean, however, as a post-Vatican II thinker, acknowledges breakthrough in the modern uses of reason. But "time and again a philosopher achieves a brilliant new breakthrough, only to turn it from a creative achievement to destructive weapon by attempting to reduce all understanding to his or her new insight." McLean cites Hegel's "idealism," and Marx's "materialism" as examples. Marxist Leninism, on the collectivist side, and Hobbesian individualism are instances in which "theoretical axioms" translate into "metaphysical totalities."

Thus if the Western experiences and debates concerning the construction of democracy, alluded to above, deserve attentive reading in the nascent democracies in Eastern Europe, McLean alerts such readers to flaws that are common to both liberalism and Marxism. Though communism in the east and individualism in the west appear as polar opposites, these "isms" tend(ed) to operate as "metaphysical totalities" in the respective systems.

Professor Nodia, McLean observes, drawing on Immanuel Kant, rightly points to the limitations of rationalism as a key impediment in appreciating and working with issues of national identity, aspirations and values . . . human life and relationships transcend neat categorization. Freedom is by definition not necessitated and love as self-giving is essentially unique and spontaneous. If freedom and love are the highest human realities then the search for what is required for them, and hence manifest by them, promises to be an especially penetrating exploration into the heart of being itself. While at one level the human mind is merely a function of matter and an instrument of progress, beyond that set of universal, necessary and ultimately material relations, Kant points to the reality of human responsibility in the realm of practical reason. If the man being is responsible then there is about him a distinctive level of reality irreducible to the laws of physical nature. This is the reality of freedom and spirit which characterizes and distinguishes the person.

Whereas in Kant's thought the transcendent is hypothesized, McLean views the transcendent as real.

It is not possible here to condense or summarize the entire sweep of McLean's rich discussion. Utilizing the openings emerging in the Roman Catholic Vatican II Council, he offers an incisive interpretation of "the new sensibility to the person in our day." This emerges dialogically in the Western experience, dialogically, that is, given the inherent pluralism of the culture. While the Christian conception is transcendently grounded, the teachings set forth in Vatican II exhibit the church's learning in that dialogical process.

Religion in the "Post-Communist Experience"

An organizing concept for McLean is "the awareness of person emergent in this century," and "the intensifying . . . sense of subjectivity in modern times." The history of this century can be described, he continues, "as the abutment of the notion of person and hence of peoples against the rationalistic liberalisms and communalisms as they existed in the first part of this century." In effect the emerging concept of the human being challenges the reductionist anthropologies to which rationalist liberalism and collectivism respectively lead.

Significantly, with regard to Western personalism, as indicated above, the sources of that conception are multiple. According to McLean, new affirmations of personal dignity and liberty, appearing in Vatican II documents, reflect secular advances in Western society since the Renaissance. If, the "medieval Christian notion of the dignity of the person as a child of God," was not alone sufficient to account for the modern conception, it was nonetheless necessary. The transcendental grounding of the human spirit is retained.

Christianity, or biblical faith, however, though profoundly personal, is not individualistic in the liberal sense. Religion generally, in McLean's view, "challenges humans to measure themselves against the perfection and holiness of the divine." Responded to properly, this challenge "opens and energizes the individual and the community." But the Church's corresponding lofty calling tempts it "to confuse itself with the divine and also usurp supreme power." That temptation was addressed in the final paper in the symposium, offered by the present writer.

Christianity, as we know, served as nation-building energy among the peoples of Europe. Beginning with Armenia and Georgia early in the fourth century C.E., European chieftains in region after region, over the next millennium, adopted Christianity as a state religion. Such adoption was feasible, thanks usually to the previous, often heroic, pioneering of the missionary orders. Medieval Christendom was the combined result of missionary and political enterprise.

Whatever the reading of the medieval achievement in the divine mystery--that is not ours to judge--its

legacy as model for the modern era is at best ambiguous. On the one hand, the erstwhile fusion of church, nation, and state may seem congruent with an incarnational faith, with the overture of the God who "loves the world" (John 3:16), or with the parable of the mustard seed. On the other hand, assimilation of the "church" into the temporal order (Christianity as national or state religion) hardly accords with New Testament imagery of the *ecclesia militans*, the Kingdom that comes without observable signs (Luke 17:20), the "little flock," God's people in *diaspora and in tension with "the world."*

Whatever the verdict, historical conditions today neither favor nor permit the identification of Christianity or church with nation or state. Global population movements as well as aspiration to liberal democracy, however remote the goal of the latter in given instances, render any notion of national or state "churches" anachronistic. Societies moving into the liberal democratic ambience are by definition pluralistic, not only or primarily because of ethnic and religious diversity, but because modernization, personal empowerment and participation leads to constantly emerging diversity. Admittedly, new problems arise, many still to be solved. But only a throw-back into some form of totalitarianism will permit a return to the religious uniformity that appeared desirable in earlier times. The vision of the kings of the earth casting their crowns at the feet of the risen Lord is eschatological, not historical.

In the current insecurity and uncertainty in eastern Europe, it is hardly surprising that here and there, in the older church traditions, the yearning for a restoration of religious establishment should arise. But it may be asked: is this temptation to be fought out in the first instance in the political arena? Or is it not in the first instance a spiritual challenge to be met by believers, by the churches themselves, in terms of their own Gospel resources?

Vigen Guroian, a theologian in the Armenian church in the United States has recently raised these questions within that communion. The burden of a traumatic and unpurged past rests heavily on the Armenian people, he observes, both in their Caucasian homeland and in dispersion (especially the two Americas). There was the Turkish genocide ("Armenocide") of 1915, followed in less than a decade by the Soviet takeover. The spiritual and psychological wounds of the former trauma, says Guroian, "are still open and bleeding, festering with self-pity and vengefulness."

During the past twenty-five years, Guroian reports, Armenian artists and writers have begun to address these problems. "Conspicuously absent, however, from this flush of artistic and scholarly work has been theological reflection on the event and its consequences for religious belief . . . the crisis of faith and morality which became the legacy of the Armenocide (has) not been addressed forthrightly" by the church either theologically or pastorally. Most Armenian church leaders, he maintains, "have refused to recognize that the Armenocide brought Armenian Christendom to an end." Having "served Armenian nationalism in the past the church lacks the theological tools needed to distinguish faith from patriotism and to develop an ethic grounded in its christology." The Armenian church, Guroian concludes, should be articulating a new model of national church, one which confesses Christ in an Armenia 'come of age.' It must come to terms with what it means to be its own 'diaspora' among the people to whom it once gave an identity as a Christian kingdom and nation. A church in the habit of sacralizing the existing social order and naming it Christian must learn how to critique the secular orders in which it finds itself and provide vital communities of faith and reconciliation from which persons in public life can take the inspiration, conviction and courage to temper Armenian nationalism and set moral limits to the use of power.

As indicated, Guroian himself has begun to speak out publicly and in various publications. He also attended the latter part of the symposium described here, though receiving his invitation too late to permit a written response to the Nodia study.

Both the Armenian problem and Professor Guroian's observations are offered here to illustrate the anomaly of the European legacy of national Christianity rather than to assess the Armenian experience particularly. In any case the present writer has no familiarity with Armenian affairs, beyond the impressions left by two brief visits a decade apart to Yerevan and Etchmiadzin.

Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust survivor who for decades has been the most eloquent cathartic voice speaking out of that horror, is quoted as addressing the Mayor of Kiev during an early visit there: "What do we do with our memories? We must deal with them or they will crush us." Reconciliation, hence repentance, forgiveness, healing and renewal, not in the first instance nation-building, are at the heart of Gospel, and thus of the vocation of communities of Christian faith--in eastern Europe, as everywhere.

Conclusion

Ghia Nodia, himself considerably younger than the "October Revolution," was educated and made his career under the Soviet Union. Georgia, though one of the fourteen republics comprising that Union, kept its own

ancient cultural identity nonetheless. The Georgian Institute of Philosophy, though formally articulated with the Soviet Academy of Sciences, carried forward the classic philosophical enterprise. This was the ambience in which Nodia lived and worked. Knowing the Communist project from within, yet living from perspectives reaching beyond, he brings great strength to the present task.

In his paper, Nodia presented a coherent challenge, though without tying it to a particular belief system. He sees the world, and hence also the former Soviet peoples, moving toward liberal democracy. He recognizes as well the perils enroute. In this symposium he challenged his American colleagues, as it were, on their own turf: first, with regard to the grounding of liberal democracy; and second, with regard to its implication.

First, Nodia challenged the "economic determinism" underlying the Western conception of liberal democracy, an irony indeed, coming from someone brought up under Marxist teaching. After all, that supposedly was the Marxist heresy! Admittedly, while the substitution of Fukuyama's (and Nodia's) *thymia*, can hardly be swallowed on the spot, it deserves careful thought.

Secondly, the implication of Nodia's challenge may be more readily grasped. We can no longer simply assume that democracy will everywhere arrive by the same route or take the same form that has taken in the United States. Modernization and liberalization is succeeding in a number of countries, while displaying many features that differ from those characterizing Western precedents.

We must thus be prepared to see central and eastern European countries proceed in their own manner. This includes a readiness to acknowledge the creative potential in nationalism. Moreover, that acknowledgement bears directly on the limits of liberalism and individualism that are becoming increasingly evident in the United States. Doubts concerning the fate of what might be called the communal infrastructure of that society have become increasingly disturbing. Nodia invokes the Aristotelian substance/form distinction to describe nationalism. The substance is ethnic, the form, political.

He recognizes that, while "the illiberal flesh of ethnicity" cannot be "subdued," it can and must be "tamed." That task, as we have seen, is doubly difficult where ethnicity or ethnic nationalism is compounded with "religion." Given the assimilation of church and nation in many of the former communist lands, "religion" appears as a key variable in the post-communist future. And though questions of a political nature are acute and, as Nodia indicates, will have to be addressed "rationally," the crux of the matter is intrinsically "religious" (in this case, Christian). Will Christians, and their churches, carry out the ministry of reconciliation with which they are entrusted, or will they succumb to the smoldering ethnic hatreds already igniting here and there? Will their confreres around the world join and sustain them in that task? The world is waiting.