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*Diversity as a basic element of Europe . . .*

Allow me to begin with the banal statement that the approx. 750 million people inhabiting the Ural region up to the Atlantic speak at least 70 different languages and live in more than 50 states. These many languages and the diversity of the cultures and mentalities form a true emblem of this continent. It is also probably one of the most significant elements that has led to the flexible spirit, to the artistic and economic development, and in politics, to the development of significant achievements, like that of human rights.

Of course, this diversity over such a small area also has negative aspects, negative aspects that, reaching out over the religious wars, stretch to the sad climaxes of our century.

In Europe, there is virtually—and this is a feature of the diversity—no language or cultural community, which does not see itself as a minority in view of others. Every one of the European nationalities is integrated in a network, in which it forms a majority on the one hand, but a minority again on the other.

If we have to learn something from this history, it would be: no power, irrespective of the weapons it had, has ever been able to force its own mentality, language and culture on another people against their will.

*The crisis of Europe . . .*

There have been two historic events, which have put this continuity of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence to the most extreme test: first, the idea of the nation-state postulating the unity of language, culture, state and army which has never really been able to be put into practice in any of the states. Combined with creating a myth and a sense of mission, this idea led to the world wars, and today is, unfortunately, still a significant basis for states and it still constitutes an example for the states which are forming in Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand under the argument of a higher ideal, Soviet communism has had a devastating impact with its totalitarian system and levelling out of all historical differences (the wonderful area where we are now holding our congress is an example of this).

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The consequences for national minorities in both models range from almost satisfactory solutions through disregard and right up to ethnic cleansing, which is unfortunately happening again.

We are now doing our very best to pick up the threads of European heritage and put this into practice through today's state environments. I would like to try and list a few criteria defining how to be fit for Europe at the end of the 20th century. My central theory is:

Being fit for Europe mainly has to do with how minorities and majorities are treated.

### **1. For national minorities, it is a matter of developing critical solidarity with their own state.**

In a state which upholds democratic rights, the principle of majority decision applies. With this principle, minorities come off second best in all vital questions and thus depend on assistance.

#### *International support . . . .*

The international mechanism of law should be pointed out here. The individual human rights are indubitably the most significant achievement in modern Europe. They form the *sine qua non* for the justification that state institutions exist. In collective rights, in contrast, there are still huge gaps. The framework convention for the protection of national minorities and the charter to protect regional and minority languages are both not yet in force, but by far do not meet the quality national minorities need and the expectations they have.

Other important aspects to 'open' up fronts are bilateral agreements, concrete meetings and interactional activities between national minorities and members of communities speaking the same or a different language outside their state borders. An example of well-functioning interaction across borders is the German–Danish border region. But here too applies: these kinds of activities are based on the voluntary principle.

#### *Minorities are primarily dependent on themselves . . . . :*

As national minorities have to fight for their cultural rights because they have to be granted rights in the fields of education, culture, law, administration, etc., and without these, cannot preserve and uphold their values and mentalities, they have had to acquire a critical function. Since these matters first have to be asserted against—depending on the situation—the will, the indifference and incomprehension of the majorities.

#### *From a defensive to an offensive awareness . . . .*

On the other hand, solidarity means that these minorities have to remain capable of carrying out dialogues, i.e. primarily to have to inhibit any intention of secession. They also foster the vision of peaceful coexistence even when the majority makes use of power mechanisms. They can do this because national minorities embody the prototype for tomorrow's Europeans, and they try to make this into reality in their environment. They want to depart from the nation-state and move towards a state inhabited by various communities; in addition to their own language, they also speak the language of the majority, they are multilingual, they uphold cultural contacts beyond their own borders. They have no easy task, but one which is far more promising than they are aware of, as they are contributing to tomorrow's Europe.

### **2. The most important feature of the majority is active tolerance.**

#### *Few models of multinational state organisations . . . .*

Unfortunately, there are only few state models in Europe that have actually put the idea of coexistence for various languages and cultures into practice. Each of them has its own history and can consequently not be seen as a model. On the other hand, as already mentioned, there is no pure nation-state model, in which the language and cultural community coincide totally with the national boundaries. Bearing this in mind, each state resembles a phantom.

#### *The national-state model—a phantom . . . .*

The fate of our century was to chase the phantom. This is expressed in the expression

nation-state. I think we have to finally depart from the short-term disturbances in the general weather situation in Europe (to use a meteorological expression). The term ‚national‘ refers to what unites a group of people: a territory, a language and a culture, a deep emotional bond. Everyone has to be granted the right to uphold this community feeling, which cannot be relinquished without great privation. It belongs to the fundamental rights of man. A modern state has to provide the bases and the framework conditions for this. The state can be called the organisation model, which allows its citizens to pursue mutual business in the best possible way. Here, mutual business can be on various levels, ranging from district, region, and state to supranational and international institutions. Dominating thoughts here are expert knowledge, usefulness and opportunity.

*Excursion . . .*

*Please allow me a remark on this: I am convinced that the tensions between the majority and national minorities could be better lessened if the sensitive issues affecting the feeling for one's country were allocated to a decision-making structure that is as deeply institutionally anchored as possible. A delegation of authority to make decisions in educational and cultural issues to those who are directly affected also increases the chances of solidarity for minorities on the higher institutional level; this in my opinion, is anything else but conducive to secession. If members of the majority interpret it in this way, it is then to be understood as falling back into the ideology of the nation-state, and a scapegoat has to be found (for example in economic issues) for problems which seem impossible to solve. The first to take the role of scapegoat are always national minorities.*

There are, of course, close cross-connections between the ‚nation‘ and the ‚state‘. For example, what *raison d'état* defines, is of decisive significance for the preservation of ‚national‘-sensitive fields, like that of education. Despite mutual interdependency, the difference has to be worked out. If this ‚de-mixing‘ is not carried out, proper decisions can be so charged with national feeling that argumentative discourse can give way to demagoguery or even proof of power or powerlessness.

*Ceterum censeo . . .*

I have attempted to work out intellectual attitudes that are of significance in order to give our continent, ‚this north-western fringe of a huge land mass‘ a future, which links up with the old values and achievements, and which chiefly highlights the fact that Europe is and will remain a continent of minorities without losing a central element of its justification for existence.

## Presentation of FUEN

1. Founded after the second world congress in Versailles, FUEN (Federal Union of European Nationalities) has, over the 50 years of its existence, changed nothing in its purpose. It sees itself as the lawyer of national minorities, who are endeavouring to preserve and promote their identity in majority states. FUEN pursues its aim based on recognition of democratic, rule-of-law principles. It rejects the use of violence just as separatist or nationalistic tendencies, stands up for peaceful and constructive coexistence with the majority population and highlights the aspect of mutual enrichment through coming together and through dialogue.

The around 750 million people inhabiting the region from the Ural to the Atlantic speak at least 70 different languages. Today, they share more than 50 states, of which the vast majority (over 30) have been set up as nation-states, i.e. on the principle of one language and culture. Of the states conceived as nationality-states, only Belgium and Switzerland have proven resistant to the national-state principle.

That the problems between majorities and minorities have still today not been solved, is documented by the fact that FUEN comprises 32 regular members, 36 associate and 32 corresponding members. Almost half of the member organisations joined our organisation after the opening up of the East and the fall of the Iron Curtain. This has made FUEN into the most representative organisation for national minority issues in Europe. Its significance is underscored by the watching-brief status FUEN has at the Council of Europe and the UN.

2. National minorities have to be subordinate to the dominant principles of **rule of law and democracy**. Here, the principle of majority decision rules and minorities often have to assert themselves against/with majorities. This dilemma formed the basis for FUEN's tasks:

3. On the one hand, a great step forward towards guaranteeing human dignity has been taken this century with the implementation of **human rights**. This is why top priority must be given to observing human rights in future. We have unfortunately not been able to develop alternatives to the model of the nation-state as still exists in Europe and to secure this sufficiently politically and legally. Neither downwards in decentralised forms of power distribution nor in supranational legal mechanisms which could set clear limits to the sovereignty of nation-states. The decision by Wilson at the end of the First World War to introduce the expression 'national self-determination' into the international issue, in fact, turned out more as 'dynamite' (Wilson's Foreign Minister, Robert Lansing) than as a peace-making instrument.

4. That is why the second direction FUEN works in is to achieve better **regulations for the protection of national minorities on an international level**. Some progress has already been made. The charter on the protection of regional and minority languages and the framework convention on the protection of national minorities are on their way to ratification and implementation. In this field, the extension of individual rights to collective rights, we are unfortunately still far from a really satisfactory solution.

#### **5. Inner-state culture for the solution of conflicts**

The ideological conflicts in Europe have taught us two things: first that it is impossible to force behavioural patterns and collective modalities onto other groups against their will. Second, that every group community must have the right and the chance to preserve its independence.

For both of these, it is necessary to guarantee free development of lingual and cultural identity and to foster mutual dialogue.

In its work, FUEN particularly endeavours to give dialogue the absolute priority, i.e. to enter into this with members, organisations and institutions of the majority as well as of the national minority.

6. To strengthen national minorities by **international solidarity** (exchange of information, study visits, joint occasions, etc.). FUEN offers a broad platform and a wide range of possibilities with its events.

7. Move from a defensive blocking strategy to an **offensive mobile strategy** for national minorities.

FUEN endeavours to give national minorities positive self-esteem. They are the actual representatives of a varied lingual and cultural Europe. They are the pioneering spirits of a peaceful Europe: first of all, by fostering the smaller parties. This focuses on the quality of what has grown historically, they highlight collective roots with a clear past. Considering utilisation, they form an 'offensive wall' with the message: there are other values. Thus they emphasise a feature of Europe, that of variety and diversity, which co-determines the civilising, intellectual, artistic and economic role of 'this north-western fringe of a huge land mass', as Doris Lessing calls our continent.

On the other hand, members of national minorities always depend on dialogue with the majority. They naturally have a command of the 'big' neighbour's language, they are bilingual and plurilingual language users and, being this, have a great advantage over monolingual Europeans. Knowledge of the neighbour's language and of another internationally known language enables them to build bridges, to open up dialogues. They trust knowledgeable discourse, and not violence and power.