

Preface

We see countless examples of politicians who lack moral vision mechanically copying each other's practices. They repeat the mistakes of their predecessors and contemporaries because they lack the capacity to think ahead. But history also provides us with abundant evidence of the opposite: wise statesmen who understand the great challenges of their times and are able to deliver the necessary solutions – often averting disaster. History only repeats itself if we allow it to. That is why this collection of essays is so relevant today. The authors carefully examine the ways in which states have organised themselves throughout history, providing the reader with a wealth of fascinating reflections. They also demonstrate the truth of the old adage that there is nothing new under the sun: even in ancient Rome, arguments raged about the wisdom of reforms imposed from above and conceived by legal scholars alone.

Today, the sovereign state defines many of the essential parameters of our lives. Yet it is also true that in our modern age, the time-honoured concept of the nation as we know it is under attack. On the one hand, many of the world's largest corporations now wield far more economic power and political influence than most countries. On the other, there are continuing attempts to make the Westphalian model a relic of the past by entrusting an ever-widening range of public affairs to international organisations. Fortifying statehood, however, requires a clear understanding of where it comes from, how nations are built through the work of generations upon generations.

King Stephen's political foresight ensured that Hungary became a model of Christian nation-building, and thus the central theme of the essays on Hungarian history is generally celebratory. Our country has kept its statehood intact for more than a millennium. The National Avowal of the Fundamental Law upholds this tradition: "[W]e do not recognise the suspension of our historic constitution due to foreign invasions." The constitution of a thousand-year-old nation could not more accurately express the integrity and noble spirit that characterise the thinking of Hungarians in the 21st century. The facts of history preclude us from surrendering our independence, and reinforce our devotion to it.

Europe is organically structured, in terms of geography, language and ethnicity, and this diversity is our greatest asset. Yet, time and again, the forces that fail to appreciate this wonderful richness rear

their ugly heads. In fact, they see diversity as a distraction and try to turn it into an unnatural monotony. In the past, a failed attempt was made to unite the peoples, but this experiment in juristocratic reform proved to be a dead end. Habsburg absolutism, which ignored national diversity, and the revolutionary fervour of Napoleon Bonaparte, which temporarily subjugated all of Europe, also failed. The brutal empires of Hitler's and Stalin's socialism wreaked terrible havoc and were consigned to the dustbin of history.

We are once again facing an enormous challenge. Behind the decisions of the bureaucracy in Brussels, which fancies itself a political actor, a European superstate is emerging, with the United States of America as its model. However, the U.S. constitutional tradition itself is diverse. The Eurocratic elite has opted for the more progressive version of the American ideal, which radically disregards tradition. Thus, virulent individualism and relativism became the guiding principle of the European federalist agenda. Central Europeans recognise the ends and the means: first, they indoctrinate our children to weaken the family. For when the family is weak, the nation – and state – are also weak. Our natural communities have always been the main barrier facing the internationalist forces in realising their ambitions. Second, they intend to eradicate institutions of the sovereign state because they impede the movement of global capital. Third, they seek to erase the differences between religions and, if possible, to abolish them altogether. The world's great religions teach self-control and self-discipline, which is a further obstacle to unbridled consumption.

These hegemonic aspirations, however, are doomed to failure because they run counter to the uniqueness of our human nature. Attempts to homogenise empires from ancient times to the present have all failed. All over the world, national consciousness is making a comeback. Europe will not be excluded from this trend for long. Hungary is the first swallow in the new spring of nations, and is seen as an inspiration by people of common sense from the United States to Europe. From the dawn of our history, Hungary's purpose has been to participate in European affairs as a strong, self-reliant and independent state. This was the case for a long time after the establishment of the Christian Hungarian state. More difficult periods followed later, but we never gave up on Hungarian sovereignty and the relentless pursuit of it, even in the face of the conquering ambitions of foreign empires. Every year

on March 15th and October 23rd we remember how this nation rose up when its freedom was taken away.

Building and preserving a state that can assert its sovereignty and national interests is more important than ever for Hungarians of today, because, to recall the timeless words of Count István Széchenyi: “He whom God created Hungarian and does not champion the cause of his nation is not a noble man.” This collection of essays provides potent intellectual ammunition for this no small challenge. Today, Hungary not only protects its own constitutional identity, but also emerges as the conscience of Europe. Armed with the insights gained from these articles, we can now confidently state what we have always suspected: Hungarians may not be right now, but they will be. We have every reason to continue to fight courageously, relentlessly, and with our heads held high for the preservation of our national independence and a free Hungary.

I congratulate the authors on their excellent work and wish you a pleasant reading.

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Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office