

MODERNITY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

FRAGMENTATION AND UNIFICATION IN EUROPE SEEN THROUGH MAURITIUS

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L'Express Culture and Research (Port-Louis), spring 1992. The idea for this article came during a conversation with Dev Virahsawmy in his home in Mauritius. We were talking about the then current attempts in Europe to build a shared identity (the Maastricht treaty) and were both struck by the parallels with Mauritian nation-building.

What can we learn from Mauritius? In the author's opinion, analysts of the present turbulent situation in Europe could profit from a detailed look at Mauritian society. The fragmentation of Eastern Europe and the ongoing unification of Western Europe are both marked by negotiations over social identities and an uncertain relationship between nationhood and ethnic identity. Because of peculiar historical circumstances, Mauritians are virtually born experts in these issues, and contemporary Mauritian culture and society can in important ways shed light on the current changes in Europe.

Introduction: Fission and fusion in Europe

The apparently contradictory movements of social fusion and fission, of integration and fragmentation, of homogenisation and differentiation, which are currently taking place in Western and Eastern Europe, respectively, are frequently described as paradoxical and puzzling. As Western Europe is struggling to transcend the boundaries of nationality and the nation-state, Eastern Europe is reinventing chauvinistic nationalism and is dissolving into mutually antagonistic groups of smaller and smaller compass. In post-

Stalinist Czechoslovakia, for example, the first minority to raise its head and demand independence were the Slovaks, who felt that they were being dominated by the Czechs, who responded by quickly changing the name of the country to the Federal Czech and Slovak Republic -- not that this improved matters much. Shortly after the Slovak secessionist movement was a reality, it was the Moravians' turn. Feeling that they were a junior partner in the Czech part of the Federal Czech and Slovak Republic, some Moravian politicians demanded sovereignty on behalf of Moravia in order to put an end to Bohemian domination. -- Now, as if this were not enough, some "communalist" politicians (to use a Mauritian term) in Silesia (Schlesien in German, Slask in Polish) on the outskirts of Moravia are now also demanding sovereignty... To the question of "how many potential nations are there in the world", the answer must be: infinitely many.

At the same time as this is happening in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia is at war with itself, the Soviet Union is being fragmented into an unknown, but growing, number of independent entities; Anti-Semitism and gross discrimination of Gypsies are again a common sight in Central and Eastern Europe, and Russian-bashing (to borrow once again from Mauritian vocabulary) has become a popular sport all along the very long fringe of the former Soviet Empire -- from the Baltic Sea to the Caspian.

We are also witnessing, simultaneously, an unprecedented attempt at tight regional integration in Western Europe. The European Community (EC), initially a European Economic Community (EEC) of six countries, has swelled to twelve member-countries and now insists on being more than a mere free-trade association. Common legislation in many areas has already been implemented, barriers of taxes and duties are being removed as well as passport controls at national borders -- the very symbol of the nation-state. The common currency, the ECU, will soon be a reality (despite British protests), and the coordination of foreign policies is under way. Before the turn of the century, a European army may be a reality. Indeed, the project of the European Community, in its strongest federalist version, strongly resembles the projects of the Stalinist Soviet Union and Titoist Yugoslavia, if

we disregard the differences between the economic systems. All these visions aim at enabling ethnically diverse people to live peacefully within a unified political system, which in turn draws advantages from the increased size of its subject population. In the case of Stalinism, the main benefactor was the Soviet state; in the case of the European Community it is the large private enterprises.

Both kinds of states or political communities are multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. It is this kind of political organisation that Central and Eastern Europeans are revolting against; it is the very same kind that Western Europeans are willingly entering. A question which has frequently been posed during this strange and unexpected period of dramatic political change, is this: How can such a paradoxical situation be possible? Since the question is usually asked by Western Europeans and North Americans, the answer is usually that Eastern Europeans are "less developed" and "more primitive" than the westerners, and that they too must go through a phase of violent and chauvinist nationalism before they can sort out their differences in a peaceful and civilised manner. After all, the enlightened Western European analysts note, we were not so good in the past either; just look at the Nazi period, or the French assaults on the Algerian liberation movement, or for that matter, the many wars being fought in the western part of the European continent before 1945.

Such an analysis is, of course, crude and misinformed, and it gives little credit to the peoples of post-Stalinist Eastern Europe, struggling as they are to come to terms with their own time. It is at this point that it is tempting to apply insights from recent Mauritian history and contemporary Mauritian society onto the European scene, in order to show that the processes of seeming fragmentation and unification in Eastern and Western Europe, respectively, are really articulations of the same process. The keywords, which I shall elaborate on in a moment, are modernity and social identity. Mauritius provides important cues for an understanding of the turbulence in contemporary Europe, and I am convinced that most Mauritians who have followed events in Europe have a much more profound intuitive

understanding of these events than most Europeans.

Being a long-standing student of Mauritian society, and being simultaneously engaged in the very exciting and very uncertain processes of social change taking place in Europe, I have found Mauritius a source of insights which can be of extraordinary value for an understanding of the European situation. Mauritius contains, in a very visible and compact way, the same ambiguities and problems of social identity as the much larger and much more complex European continent does. The very project of building Mauritian nationhood since 1968 brings out the same tensions, and the same opportunities, as that negotiation over social identities which is taking place all over Europe today. Mauritius has also actually proven very capable of dealing with the same problems which are haunting large parts of the European continent today. I shall try to show this while discussing the European issues.

The nation-state and ethnic groups

Nationalism, which is presently at large in virulent and destructive forms in the former Soviet Union, in Yugoslavia and elsewhere in Europe, is a child of modernity and the industrial revolution. Nationalism is, briefly, an ideology which holds that the political boundaries of a state should be congruent with the cultural boundaries of a territory; that is, that every "people" should have its state and that a state should only contain one "people" (cf. Gellner, 1983). Few states actually fulfill this criterion; first, very few "peoples" have their territory entirely to themselves, secondly, only an estimated 12 of 165 nation-states are truly homogenous states. The only ethnically homogenous state in Europe is Iceland.

It has often been argued that nationalism has profoundly democratic aspects, as in the case of the French Revolution, when the revolutionaries proclaimed that the French were a people with a shared culture which therefore ought to have equal rights, and for this reason wished to introduce democracy and do away with the privileges of the aristocracy. Other aspects of French nationalism have been less democratic, such as the insistence of the French

state to impose French language and culture on the ethnic minorities living in the country, like the Basques and Bretons (cf. e.g. Bourdieu, 1982).

Nationalism generally does not function in democratic and liberating ways for subject peoples, be they within or outside of the country, due to its stubborn insistence that it represents a people which should encompass all those living in the country. We need only think of the Aborigines of Australia or the Jews of the Third Reich to acknowledge the relevance of this point. The history of the latter is well known; the former were either brutally exterminated, or forcefully or simply thoughtlessly assimilated to an alien culture, with the result that less than fifty Aboriginal languages exist today, as compared to two hundred and fifty at the time of European colonisation.

The nation constitutes itself in contrast to that which it is not. Within the nation, all are postulated as being equal, and it is in this regard nationalism has been seen as progressive and liberating. Those who are not included in the nation, however, are potential enemies. And they need not be foreigners; in many cases, they are ethnic minorities who resist assimilation into the dominant group (cf. Eriksen, 1992b, for a full discussion). A hypothetical Mauritian society where say, Indian Muslim (or Franco-Mauritian, or...) culture and religion were embedded in the state and furthered in the national media, in the educational system and in official administration, would contain many such potential enemies; namely, all of those who did not associate themselves with that particular ethnic culture. As Mauritian readers will know, arguments along these lines were invoked by some politicians who were against independence in the 1960s; indeed, Gaëtan Duval threatened, on at least one occasion, that in independent Mauritius, all women would have to wear saris. In doing so, he extrapolated from the history of the European nation-state, where minorities have very often been denied elementary rights such as the right to a minority language and a minority religion. Nationalism is, in the words of Tom Nairn (1977), the Modern Janus: it is ambiguous in that it creates solidarity and equality in some respects, whereas it is bluntly chauvinist and potentially very destructive in others.

Nationalism is, further, not a "natural" fact, although many nationalists would

have us believe that it is. Nations are the creative inventions of humans, they are imagined communities (Anderson, 1983). They exist only in so far as people believe that they exist and act accordingly. --Does a Kenyan nation exist? we may ask, knowing that Kenya contains at least sixteen major ethnic groups with widely different languages, customs etc. The answer is not simply "yes" or "no": rather, the Kenyan nation exists for some people, in some situations, when Kenyan citizens believe that such an abstract community is relevant to their lives. Concerning Mauritian nationhood, a similar discussion is strongly present here -- as every Mauritian knows -- and the answer is not a simple one here either. In 1985 a schoolboy wrote, in an award-winning essay, that although the Mauritian state came into existence in 1968, the idea of Mauritianity (what I would call the Mauritian nation) came into existence in September, 1985, namely during the first Jeux de l'Océan Indien. Does the Czechoslovak nation exist? Many of us thought so, but so many Czechoslovak citizens disagree that we may have to reconsider.

The confusion concerning nationhood has to do with a lacking distinction between nation and nation-state. The latter has an objective existence, and it always proclaims to symbolise a nation containing a large number -- if not all - - of its citizens. The nation-state contains some of the objective trappings of nationalism, such as a national flag and a national anthem, a constitution, a parliament, an educational system and a national budget. However, if that state is not recognised as legitimate by a sufficiently large number of citizens, we may eventually witness the emergence of nationalisms directed against the nation-state, which frequently have the aim of secession and the setting up of their own nation-state. This was done successfully by Norway in 1905, in a peaceful revolt against Swedish hegemony. Today, nobody would seriously doubt the existence of the Norwegian nation; before 1905, however, many (Norwegians and others) claimed that Norway belonged to a larger Scandinavian nation, where Denmark and Sweden also took part. Had history taken a different turn, the Scandinavian nation -- as a community imagined by its members, embedded institutionally in a Scandinavian nation-state -- might have existed today.

Unlike what is popularly believed -- indeed, unlike what is claimed by nationalists -- nations are recent inventions and are thus not the ancient communities they masquerade as. This is obvious to every Mauritian, living in a country where nationhood is visibly recent and is visibly being invented on a day-to-day basis; we should nevertheless be aware that the case needs not be extremely different in the case of European nations. So there is nothing natural or inevitable about the constitution of nations. They are the products of modernity and industrialisation, and they are also the imaginative creation of self-proclaimed peoples. Before a large segment of the population became literate, it had not struck the average French peasant that he belonged to a French nation. He belonged to his village, and that was it. Before one learns to read maps and manipulate large numbers, one simply cannot imagine the abstract community that a nation is -- containing as it does an immense number of people whom one will never know personally, but to whom one is expected to be loyal (see Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983, on nationalism; see Goody, 1986, on the significance of literacy).

The difference between nations and ethnic groups, according to common analytical usage today, concerns their relationship to the state. To begin with, we can say that a nation is an ethnic group whose leaders insist that they ought to have their own state. However, there seem to exist non-ethnically based nations; in other words nations such as the Mauritian one which are not founded on an ethnic basis. Although this is a trivial fact in Mauritius, it is a thorny theoretical issue. We should also remember -- and again, every Mauritian knows this -- that there are many ethnic groups who do not insist on having their own state. This is not an elementary truth to many Europeans, despite the fact that there are about 10,000 ethnic groups in the world and only 165 nation-states at the latest count. It is inconceivable that every ethnic group, every culture-bearing group, should have its own state, and yet that is the very rhetoric that is tearing Central and Eastern Europe to pieces. The former Yugoslav state was actually remarkable in that it did not insist on the cultural assimilation of the various ethnic groups who made up the country, but allowed them to retain their customs, religions and languages. Nobody had ever threatened Slovenian identity at the time when Slovenian politicians

decided to break out of the union. Why, then, was it so important for them to achieve full sovereignty?

The answer must be sought in the peculiar historical circumstances which have led to effective Slovenian secessionism and the recent uprise of numerous other ethnic and nationalist movements in Europe. Whereas the Cold War and the authoritarian Stalinist political system served to freeze political boundaries, they are now suddenly negotiable. Due to the strong link between political boundaries and cultural identities bequeathed by nationalist ideology since the early 19th century, this new flexibility has also led to an increase in ethnic consciousness. In many cases, the two go together. The political leaders of people X in the Soviet Central Asia invent their nationhood and proclaim their cultural unity; simultaneously or a month later, they proclaim their sovereignty as a nation-state and apply for membership in the UN. Ironically, the very Stalinist ideology which sought to eradicate ethnic identities and replace them with socialist ideals, has in fact served to strengthen those identities: through spreading literacy and through modernising the population through industrialisation, Stalinism laid the foundations for modern ethnic organisation and modern nationalism in many formerly "backward" parts of the Soviet Union. They have now read about successful liberation movements in other parts of the world, and have discovered that they need not always be part of the Soviet Union; they can re-define themselves as Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks etc. and reject those identities proposed by the state. The Slovenians, for their part, have discovered that they need not be Yugoslavs, and have been quick at shedding that aspect of their social being which suggests that they are a subject population in a Greater Serbia (which is, rightly or wrongly, how Slovenians tend to depict Yugoslavia).

My own approach to these problems arises from my professional training as a social anthropologist and by my involvement with peace research. The first question must therefore be: How can human suffering be reduced to a minimum in these turbulent times? The second question will be: How can cultural survival and ethnic identity, obviously very important to a great many

people, be ensured without a simultaneous fragmentation of the world into thousands of little states? It seems that recent Mauritian history gives some clues as to the answers to these extremely important questions, and we shall return to this in a moment.

The nostalgic yearning: Ethnicity and modernity

Not very long ago, it was commonplace among social theorists to believe that modernisation would gradually eradicate ethnic groups and ethnic group identity, and that nationalism would as a consequence become a less vibrant ideology. With the coming of meritocracy in the labour market, of uniform education and subsequent cultural homogenisation, the ethnic allegiance would weaken. Since every ideology needs to deliver its goods in order to be adhered to, and since ethnic ideologies in such a thoroughly modernised scenario would cease to have any goods to deliver, they would die. Or so one thought. Actually, quite recent developments have shown the opposite to have been the case in many places.

It was with the coming of modern education that ethnic self-consciousness became possible at all, and it was out of the alienation of factory work and the physical displacement into urban faubourgs that the nostalgic yearning for the "old times" grew. People began to read (and write) books about their own culture, thus turning "the culture" into a thing which they could manipulate and use self-consciously in political action, claiming that "this is our culture, and we demand our rights!". This is very modern, but it is at the same time traditionalist. Ethnically oriented politicians are not traditional, but they are traditionalist; that is to say, they are in favour of traditions which are to a great extent been lost. They appeal to the nostalgia of their potential electorate, invoking the virtues of a hazy past when the world was still, presumedly, of one piece. One may put it like this: One's grandparents worked the land and followed old customs without reflecting about having "a culture": To them, they simply did things the way things should be done. Then, one's parents did everything in their power to shed the impediments of tradition: They wanted to be modern and secular, they wore Western clothes and tried to forget their parents' rural dialect. Finally, there is the present generation,

which is alienated and uprooted, *déracinée*, in search of its roots. This, in many parts of the world, is the traditionalist generation. For example, it can be seen among the Greenlandic Inuit ("Eskimos"), whose young politicians have managed to make the vernacular language the national one; it can be seen among Australian Aborigines, who read ethnographic accounts of their grandparents in order to reconstruct their lost tradition, -- and then, there are the Tamils of La Réunion, who are inviting pundits from India to come and teach them how to carry out "their" religious rites, which they have long forgotten. In Mauritius, it would not be difficult to find examples of politicians working along such lines, appealing to the nostalgia of their potential electorate.

It is this nostalgic yearning which has set the emotions of Central and Eastern Europeans on fire in recent years. For over a generation, they were taught to forget the past and become good socialists instead of adhering to tradition; they were moved from their village communities into anonymous factory towns; now is the time of counter-reaction and the imaginative re-invention of the past, which is of course always portrayed as a glorious time, devoid of all the suffering, disease and feudal repression which were really very widespread in the pre-Stalinist era.

A central paradox of modernity is this. In a certain sense, one can say that it is only after losing one's culture that one realises its value and starts to militate for its recognition. In Norway, the most avidly traditionalist Saami ("Lapps", the nomadic ethnic minority in the north of the country) are usually highly educated individuals, settled in an apartment in the capital and working in the Ministry of Justice or a similar place. It is easy to dismiss such ethnic or national quests for roots as being "inauthentic" or "contrived", but we should not underestimate their power. The loss of innocence entailed by modernity is a tremendous psychic shock which people take great pains to overcome. In a context of constant flux, change and uncertainty, ethnic and national identities are clutched, grasped at, as something fixed and stable. As already Marx said of modernity, "all that is solid melts into air". Ethnic and nationalist ideologies try to prevent the very identity of individuals from melting into air.

As already remarked, an opposite process of unification seems to be taking place in post-Maastricht Western Europe. The ideologists of the new United Europe try to depict "European culture" as one single culture at the detriment of "national cultures" through stressing that which Europeans presumably have in common. One tries to invent a European nation, where Greeks presumably have something in common with Irishmen which they do not have in common with Turks. This requires, of course, an extensive rewriting of history, which has frequently been written as "the destiny of a nation", read nation-state. Now, the nation-state is to be accorded less importance, but the boundaries against the east and south are to be accorded greater importance. So although the miracle of Classical philosophy and civilisation was not actually a "European" phenomenon -- this cultural revolution took place simultaneously all around the Eastern Mediterranean -- it must now be described as though it were so, in order to persuade Western Europeans that they should be loyal to the European Community. Through the attempt at inventing a European culture, one excludes non-Europeans. Had the scenario been different, involving e.g. a rapprochement between Greece and the Arab world, history would have been rewritten in an entirely different way.

Although the ideological project of Western Europe seems radically different from those of Eastern Europe, we see that they have several aspects in common: They involve a rewriting -- a re-invention -- of the past, and as a consequence, of the present. As Immanuel Wallerstein has recently (1991) reminded us: history is not a product of the past, but a response to the requirements of the present. There is no such thing as an "objective" history book. Both processes involve the definition of self through the Other; "that which we are not". In the case of Eastern Europe, this has led to strong negative stereotyping and violence.

Both processes are taking place in the confusing and unclear geopolitical context of post-Cold War Europe, where new alignments of groups and countries, new boundaries and new identities are suddenly made possible. Identities, formerly taken for granted, are now under negotiation. People ask:

Who am I? And unlike Mauritians, they believe there is one true and objective answer to the question. Unlike the great Edouard Maunick, they cannot understand that one can be *nègre par préférence*. Europeans may therefore, in an urgent way, ask questions such as: Am I an Estonian or a Soviet? Am I a Basque, a Spaniard or a European? And they want clear, unambiguous answers.

These processes of change in Europe involve a formidable negotiation over identities, and we should not be too certain about the outcome.

Some Mauritian parallels

Although I have explicitly dealt with Europe in this admittedly sketchy discussion of nationalism, ethnicity, identity and modernity, Mauritian readers will have recognised issues of crucial importance to their own society. It is at this point that Mauritius is so remarkable: in having a public discourse about nationhood, ethnic identity, modernisation and social identities which is much more sophisticated than that which can be found in every European country. Let me therefore round off the article by pointing out some parallels between the centrifugal and centripetal processes in Europe and the discourse over ethnicity and nationhood in Mauritius.

First, Mauritian society brings out the main ambiguities, and difficulties, in the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism. Mauritian politicians and intellectuals have since independence tried to create -- yes, invent -- the Mauritian nation. Three main ideological tendencies can be discerned here. The first, which has been called *pluriculturalisme mauricien*, depicts the Mauritian nation as being identical with the "cultural mosaic", the discrete traditions of the constituent groups. According to this ideology, the cultural unity postulated by nationalism should be sacrificed for the benefit of the cultural rights of minorities. This tendency, which is quite influential in Mauritius -- from the Legislative Assembly to everyday situations -- preaches tolerance and rejects the dogmatic nationalist idea that people ought to be culturally similar if they are to live in the same state. A similar ideology is sorely called for in great parts of Europe, and if it were to gain currency, it

might improve the conditions for say, Gypsy minorities, ethnic Russians in Lithuania or for that matter, Muslims in France.

The second tendency could be labelled the policy of the highest common denominator (Eriksen, 1990, 1992a). Here, the nation is construed in such a way as to create cultural similarity without interfering with ethnic identities, and without resulting in the dominance of one particular ethnic group. The use of colonial symbolism in Mauritian nationalism is one example of such a willingness to compromise; another example was the ingenious idea to celebrate the abolition of slavery and the arrival of Indian indentured labourers on the very same day, thus reconciling the two largest groups. A third example of this line of thought was the introduction of English as a (semi-) official language. English being a language which is not associated with a particular ethnic group, it has been a successful compromise (although it must be added that its use as medium of instruction in schools is catastrophic).

The third tendency in Mauritian nation-building attempts to combine the two poles -- it simultaneously preaches the virtues of unity and of diversity. By today, every serious Mauritian ideologist tries to reconcile these apparently contradictory requirements: In some respects, the citizens of Mauritius must have something in common in order to constitute a society, but in some respects, they must be allowed to be different and adhere to specific cultural traditions. In Mauritian newspapers, one can almost daily read contributions to this discussion; one can similarly walk into a hotel anywhere in the island and engage the customers in a dialog over the same topic. It is indeed a strange place to be for an anthropologist interested in the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism...

This last perspective is virtually lacking in European discourse over nationhood and identity, which usually either neglects ethnic minority rights or accuses the state of violence and oppression. The reason for this sad fact has to do with the nature of European nationalism, which squarely identifies the state with an ethnic group. So if one is a second-generation Muslim

immigrant in Britain, one cannot conceivably be recognised as a real Briton. In this, Mauritius is much more advanced than virtually every European country. It should be added, nevertheless, that there are ideologists working for the implementation of a similar model in the European Community, where a wide European identity does not preclude a more narrow ethnic one: they claim that one may simultaneously be a European and, say, a Dane or Italian. This is a trivial fact for every Mauritian; to every European, it is certainly not. As I write, Serbs and Croats are slaughtering each other, fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries because their leaders insist that a country should only contain members of one ethnic group, and if there are still minorities, they should be accorded no special rights.

Mauritius, too, was on the verge of civil war in the 1960s, and its present success at containing ethnic conflict was hardly predicted at the time, when most "experts" believed the island would soon blow up in a bloodbath caused by unemployment, abject poverty and ethnic hatred. The current success of Mauritian society has a number of causes, and both many of its politicians and its population have shown remarkable flexibility and an unusual spirit of tolerance (see Eriksen, 1990, 1991, 1992a, for more detailed treatment of this). The most remarkable aspect of this country, regarding the tension between the hegemonic claims of the state and minority rights, consists in the great ability at compromise and respect of others -- which has in some way or other been present in Mauritian society ever since the signing of the Capitulation in 1814, when the settled Frenchmen were guaranteed that they would be allowed to retain their culture, customs and religion. There is in Mauritius a great awareness of the dangers inherent in making a multi-ethnic society into an ethnic project. It is certainly not flawless, but Mauritius provides better solutions in these regards than virtually every other country in the world.

Paradoxes of reconciliation

The Mauritian success creates its own problems. One, which is a present research interest of mine as well as being a concern to a great part of the island's population, consists in the consequences of inter-ethnic marriages at the level of ethnicity and identity. The proliferation of inter-ethnic marriages

is itself an indicator of relaxed and amiable relations between the groups, and also suggests that the cultural gap between them has diminished because of modernisation. They now work in the same places and eat lunch together, they watch the same programmes on national TV (and on RFO), read the same newspapers (formerly, only a small elite read newspapers) and their children go to school together. However, with the widespread occurrence of inter-ethnic marriages, the end of ethnicity is close at hand. For what of the children; what do they become? If the answer is that they become Creoles or "population générale" because this is already a "mixed" group, then the end of ethnicity is near nonetheless. Instead of containing fairly discrete cultural groups, Mauritius will then become a society of people with the most diverse origins. My "coloured" acquaintance in Rose-Hill, who counts as many as 16 nationalities among his ancestors, will then become typical instead of being something of an exception, and Mauritius will cease to be a multi-ethnic society. Tant mieux? Perhaps, since such a society would not be able to accommodate communalism and *protection de montagne*, and inter-communal fighting would be impossible, although *les préjugés de couleur* (de Chazal) would possibly still exist.

But let us look at it from the individual's point of view. In dealing with the fragmentation of Eastern Europe, I have argued the psychological importance of belonging and a fixed identity in the face of rapid change and flux (see Giddens, 1991, for a thorough discussion). "The end of ethnicity" obviously entails the end of something very dear to many people, something many are willing to make great sacrifices in order to retain. The Stalinist dogma, attempting as it did to instigate cultural change by decree, was massively rejected by the subject populations as soon as they got the opportunity to voice their opinion. They now insisted on the right to be Poles, Czechs and Lithuanians. Perhaps the beginning of the end of ethnicity will entail the creation of a Mauritian people with no divided loyalties, but the psychological cost of creating a people with no past can be enormous. As Stalinism led to a resurgence of ethnic sentiment in the ravaged landscapes of Central and Eastern Europe, so does integrationism in Western Europe already inspire a strengthening of local ethnic identities. People are afraid of losing their past

and their sense of belonging.

The two processes of integration and fragmentation are not opposed or mutually exclusive; they are rather like two sides of a coin, or instances in a wavelike motion. The current end of ethnicity, as witnessed particularly in urban and industrial Mauritius, is therefore likely to nourish its counterreaction in self-conscious ethnic movements in the future, as it has done in uncertain periods in the past (viz. e.g. the PMSD of the late 1960s and the PSM after the 1983 rupture). The strength and influence of these movements cannot be predicted, but in the future they will probably be more visible than they are presently. My personal prediction is that the process of cultural and social amalgamation will win out in the long run and that the "communities" as we know them today will vanish, but that remnants of ethnic identities will remain in certain, possibly large segments of the population.

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