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Is it inevitable in Central and Eastern Europe that we must choose between binary forms of political discourses—modernity vs. tradition, “Western, cosmopolitan civilization” vs. “national identity”? These false alternatives were parts of the heritage of enlightened absolutism bequeathed to its “intelligentsia.” As an outcome of autocratic and totalitarian regimes, these dichotomies were revived. Opposed though similarly unproductive, they mark attempts to create identity in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Liberty and the search for identity, especially liberalism and nationalism which were intertwined and almost inseparable in the first half of the nineteenth century, were on opposite poles for many people in Europe later on and after 1989–90. Defining and comparing the roots, history and variants of this opposition in different geographical regions of Europe is a task and can be a way forward, so long as caution is taken against the usual schematic models of the original backwardness, the different romantic nationalistic Sonderweg and their various national mythologies of uniqueness.

In this context it was inevitable to face up to the *damnosa hereditas* of the old fashioned empires, their heirs’ unsolved fundamental problems and their peoples’ unprocessed pains, fears and humiliations. In order to understand them one needs to break with the traditional path of national histories by digging out the suppressed heritage of the Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman empires, including their dissolutions. This pioneering book provides European case studies by top quality experts from the United States, Europe and Eurasia. The volume seeks to uncover and analyze various relationships between liberalisms and nationalisms, national identities and modernity concepts, nations and empires, nation-states and nationalities, traditions and modernities, images of the self and the others, modernization strategies and identity creations.

“Liberalism was not only the first modern ideology, it was also the first secular movement to have an international presence. The scholarly articles in this collection, skillfully edited by Iván Z. Dénes, examine liberal ideas and movements from Scotland to the Ottoman Empire. From these studies we gain a number of important insights not only into the variety of liberal nationalisms, but also into the unity and diversity of European history. This is, therefore, a timely contribution to both historiography and contemporary politics.”

Professor James J. Sheehan

Dickason Professor in the Humanities, Stanford University, President of the American Historical Association

“One lesson to be learnt from this collection of articles is that the fragmentation of liberal traditions in large parts of Europe needs to be re-examined in order to distil already existing liberalisms from the national cultures themselves. Indeed, the allure of mid-19th century romantic and passionate liberalism, adding an enlightened patriotism to the sensitivity to global injustice—in contrast to more recent, dryer and technical versions—suggests that liberalism needs to rediscover the political language through which it spread popular hope and inspiration. This rich volume contributes to that task, while attesting to the new kind of trans-European intellectual cooperation that is open, pluralist and self-critical—in short, that is itself quintessentially liberal.”

From the Foreword by Michael Freeden

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Edited by Iván Zoltán Dénes



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Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

Iván Zoltán Dénes is historian of ideas, Professor, Chair at the Department of Political Theory and History, Faculty of Jurisprudence and Political Science, Debrecen University. He has published seven books (including four monographs), several scholarly articles, edited and contributed in nine books, was awarded by the British Academy, the Fulbright Association, the International Exchange of Scholars, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study scholarships for studying. He is founder and president of the István Bibó Center for Advanced Studies, Budapest, and an elected member of the Academia Europaea, London.

On the cover: *La fratellanza dei popoli*, 1849, steel-engraving.