

Hanoi, 28 February 2015

Opening speech of Ambassador of Switzerland Andrej Motyl on key elements of Minority Rights during the Book presentation on the Hmong Minority at the Swiss Residence, March 4th, 2015

The Hmong - among us, us among Hmong

Dear Excellencies, Scholars and Friends

With my wife Christine we are honored to have you in our residence for this afternoon – early evening event. A warm welcome to all of you!

*Equally welcome to Mr. Manh Tien a young Vietnamese scholar who will be this evening's guest speaker on a **very inspiring subject**, that he has treated in his book:*

*That key theme is the “**Weltanschauung**” of the people of Hmong, as he has observed it during 3 years of focused work in diverse parts of Vietnam. Weltanschauung means the view of the world around them but also beyond by a particular person or group of persons. I believe the book is a useful and intriguing contribution to the Vietnamese debate about their self-definition as a nation. I would hope that this evening could be just a beginning of more such debates which in any multiethnic country are needed, or rather are indispensable.*

*Thus I hope this evening could also be used for a broader discussion: Namely the one of essential recipes **how to “harness” the ethnic and other differences of the peoples in this or any other country for the common good**. Harnessing means also celebrating the beauty of diversity, of its surprise elements, it also stands for the imperative of the permanent curiosity about and new discovery of each other.*

*Dear Friends. Before I give the floor to Mr Tien, let me put some theses on the wall on what are some written and unwritten laws or **commandments** of peaceful, creative, enhancing cohabitation of diverse people in one state, I have collected/received them from some foremost experts in Switzerland especially for this event:*

- **Beware of Tyranny of Majority.** Jean Jacque Rousseau's Volonté Générale can be a great but can also be a horrible idea. When majority imposes its views on parts of the society and those views are too painful for the minority to accept - then this volonté générale can be highly oppressive and in the end destabilizing.
- Minorities are not an exotic, colorful segments or appendixes but **a key constituent part of the country they inhabit.**

- One of each **multiethnic State's key Goals** must be to respect, to promote and to “**celebrate**” the minorities as state and to promote these attitudes among the peoples of the country.
- A **prerequisite of a real Protection of Minorities is the Protection of Basic Rights** like:
 - Freedom of Religion
 - Fair active and passive Political Rights assuring the participation of the Minorities in the political Decision taking.
 - Adequate Procedural Rights in Administrative and Judicial Matters.
 - Adequate Access to Professions, to Services (Health, Education)
 - Adequate Promotion of Culture
- **Affirmative Action** can be necessary, where Minorities **had been discriminated** against in the past or still are at the present.
- The **Public Media** have a key role of promoting a fair, profound picture and understanding of each other.
- Provinces or even districts have to determine the **right mix of measures** according to the situation on the ground. (Bottom Up approach)
- **Quotas for Minorities:** In the Parliament, in the Administration, in the Police,
- Even **Veto Rights** in some key questions can be needed.

Minority rights have to be flexible, be adapted to the realities on the ground and as said before must be **inspired from Bottom up**, from the communities themselves and in a lesser degree from some, even if well meant, designs from the Summits of State Power.

These are some key thought from our Swiss perceptive, many of these elements we have learned the hard way, incl. for the price of religious or ideological wars, others we learned from others. We still have to learn a lot more, to do much better, **but we are aware of it and that is the beginning.**

I hope and trust that we all will have an inspiring evening. Thank you!